

International trade in goods in 2017 – A third of EU trade is with the United States and China – At Member State level, trade within the EU largely prevails

In 2017, the **United States** (€631 billion, or 16.9% of total EU trade in goods) and **China** (€573 bn, or 15.3%) continued to be the two main goods trading partners of the **European Union** (EU), well ahead of **Switzerland** (€261 bn, or 7.0%), **Russia** (€231 bn, or 6.2%), **Turkey** (€154 bn, or 4.1%) and **Japan** (€129 bn, or 3.5%).

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

News story: Ilford pupil celebrated in international short story competition

A school pupil recognised in an international short story competition has today (Monday 26 March) been awarded a prize for her success by Education Minister Nick Gibb, as part of the ongoing celebration of the history of the Commonwealth.

Alyssa Malley, aged ten, a pupil at Churchfields Junior School in Ilford, scooped third place out of 1,600 entries from across the Commonwealth. Alyssa's prize-winning story focused on ending conflict through recognition of the common values shared by people across the globe.

The annual Commonwealth Class Writing Competition – which is run by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the British Council – was themed around 'peace' this year and the first and second prizes were awarded to pupils from India and Pakistan.

This international recognition builds on the rising standards in our schools, with over 15,969 more pupils in Ilford in schools rated good or outstanding than in 2010 and 95 per cent of Ilford schools given this rating at their last inspection.

School Standards Minister Nick Gibb said:

Congratulations to Alyssa on this achievement. Despite fierce competition, it is brilliant to see a pupil from Ilford recognised on the global stage.

Thanks to the hard work of teachers and our reforms, academic standards are rising in England, with 1.9 million more children in good or outstanding schools than in 2010.

This determination to offer every pupil a world-class education was evident at Churchfields Primary School, where I saw first-hand how pupils were broadening their understanding of the Commonwealth and its unique history.

In a visit to the school, Minister Gibb presented Alyssa with a certificate and a £30 book voucher to celebrate her achievement.

Nick Gibb presented the pupil with an award recognising her success in the Commonwealth Writing Competition. This is the second consecutive year in which pupils from Churchfields Junior School have been successful in this prestigious event, in which so many other students throughout the world take part. Alyssa commented that she was proud so many people across the world would hear her message of peaceful problem solving and she was looking forward to writing more stories in the future.

Mr Gibb also visited a lesson where pupils were being taught about the Commonwealth and what it means to be a member of this unique historic institution. Teachers were using an [education resource pack](#) – produced by the Department for Education – which aims to illustrate the importance of the Commonwealth to young people today.

Headteacher Mrs Emeny said:

Writing is a strength of Churchfields Junior School and the ministerial visit was a great opportunity for Nick Gibb to see our world-class school in action. As he toured the classrooms, I was pleased by his comments about the high levels of achievement and excellence he witnessed across the curriculum. During his visit, the Minister spoke to staff and pupils about our school ethos and how the wealth of opportunities we provide enable pupils to develop outstanding language and maths skills, as well as a deep cultural understanding.

Today's focus on the Commonwealth comes ahead of the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting which will be hosted by Britain in April. Leaders, business, civil society and young people from around the world will meet to discuss a common future.

Sinead Russell, Senior Literature Programme Manager and Joe White, Literature Coordinator at the British Council from the judging panel said:

It was a privilege to read so many excellent stories from around the world. Although every story differs in its approach to this year's theme, what they all have in common is a depth of humanity and a feel for language which, quite frankly, humbled us.

All of the winning stories and highly commended entries, each illustrated by Tarsila Kruse, Children's Book Illustrator, can be seen on the British Council's Commonwealth Class [website](#).

Writing tips from Children's Writing Fellow for Northern Ireland, Myra Zepf and former Children's Laureate, Anne Fine can be downloaded [here](#).

The Commonwealth Class initiative enables schools to take part in online competitions and work on projects with the aim of giving young people a hands-on international learning experience based around the Commonwealth family of countries.

Press release: Events to find out more about North East natural flood management

Weardale residents can find out more about how a £2.1million natural flood management project could reduce their risk of flooding and create a haven for wildlife in a series of events to be held next month.

The Weardale Natural Flood Management (NFM) pilot project will see the Environment Agency investigate and deliver natural features across 100km squared area to reduce the risk of flooding to 141 properties.

The project team is currently carrying out an assessment of NFM techniques that might help reduce flood risk in Weardale and takes in towns and villages including Stanhope, Westgate, Eastgate and Wolsingham.

The Environment Agency is working on the project with Natural England, Forestry Commission, Durham County Council and the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership.

They want to work with local farmers and landowners who are interested in getting involved in the project to assess the impact of different NFM features. Over the coming months, the North Pennines AONB partnership will be taking the lead in approaching farmers and landowners to discuss voluntary involvement in the scheme. They will be supported by Wear Rivers Trust.

A series of information events for communities is taking place in April to

find out more about what it means for them and how they can get involved, as well as capturing their local knowledge about flooding history in the area.

First step in 'pioneering project'

Environment Agency Project Manager Kirsty Hardy said:

This is the first step in what is a pioneering project to explore and deliver natural flood management features to reduce flood risk, as well as enrich the landscape and habitat of what is a beautiful area of countryside.

Until December this year we will be assessing different techniques and our colleagues at the North Pennines AONB Partnership, supported by Wear Rivers Trust, will be speaking with local farmers and landowners before we can then identify any suitable locations for potential delivery of natural flood management features.

This project is ultimately going to increase our understanding of the impact natural flood management can have on reducing flows along tributaries on the Upper River Wear.

We're hosting a series of events where people can find out more about natural flood management and how they can get involved, as well as help us understand past flooding in the area. This really is an exciting project where the community can play a key role and I'd encourage people to come along.

Early discussions

Rebecca Barrett, Biodiversity Lead for the North Pennines AONB Partnership, added:

We have already had some early discussions with a number of farmers and landowners in Weardale. They are interested in the project and are happy to discuss ways to help reduce the impact of flooding on their community.

It is a pleasure to meet with the people whose land management activities play such an important role in the appearance and function of our landscape and we are looking forward to developing the project in partnership with them over the coming months.

All drop-in events take place between 2.30pm and 7pm on:

Date	Location
4 April	Westgate Village Hall, Front Street, Westgate, DL13 1RX
5 April	Wearhead Village Hall, Wearhead, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DY

Date	Location
10 April	Cowhill Village Hall, Bishop Auckland, DL13 1DA
11 April	Eastgate Village Hall, Eastgate, DL13 2HU
12 April	Stanhope Community Association, Front Street, Stanhope, DL13 2NQ

In March 2017 the Environment Agency announced £15million of funding had been made available for NFM schemes nationally. The Weardale project will allow the Environment Agency to gather and understand evidence to support that natural flood management can play a role in reducing flood risk.

NFM features are specifically designed to work with the natural processes in the landscape to slow river flows and reduce flood risk. As with traditional flood walls and embankments they are a tool to help reduce risk but can never eliminate the risk of flooding entirely.

Police appeal for information on fatal traffic accident in Tai Po

Police today (March 26) appealed for information on a fatal traffic accident in Tai Po on March 20 in which a 22-year-old man died.

At about 2.50pm that day, a private car driven by a 57-year-old woman was travelling along Ting Kok Road towards Kowloon. When approaching near Fung Yuen Road, it reportedly knocked down the 22-year-old male cyclist who was crossing the road.

Sustaining head and limbs injuries, the man was rushed to Prince of Wales Hospital in unconscious state. He was certified dead at 3.42pm the next day (March 21).

The private car driver was arrested for dangerous driving causing death. She was released on bail and is required to report back to Police in late-April.

Investigation by the Special Investigation Team of Traffic, New Territories North is underway.

Anyone who witnessed the accident or has any information to offer is urged to contact the investigating officers on 3661 3800.

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President Juncker participates in EU-Turkey Leaders' Meeting in Varna, Bulgaria

Today the Leaders' Meeting on EU-Turkey relations is taking place in Varna (Bulgaria). Hosted by Prime Minister Borissov, representing the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU, President **Juncker**, President Tusk and President Erdoğan will meet for a working dinner to discuss all aspects of current and future EU-Turkey relations. The main points of discussion will be cooperation in energy, security, the fight against terrorism and migration management and the EU's assistance for refugees in Turkey as the EU-Turkey Statement continues to deliver results. Earlier this month, two years on from the launch of the Facility for Refugees in Turkey, the Commission proposed to mobilise the second €3 billion tranche after the first part of the Facility was fully committed and contracted by the end of 2017. The visa liberalisation process and the inextricably linked domestic political situation and security matters in Turkey will also feature high on the agenda. The meeting takes place after European Leaders condemned Turkey's continued illegal actions in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Aegean Sea during the European Council last week as undermining regional stability and security. Energy cooperation will also be prominent in the leaders' discussion where EU leaders will once again stress that good neighbourly relations with all EU Member States are key for an enhanced energy security. Finally, counterterrorism actions and cooperation will also be part of this evening's dialogue. Ahead of the summit, following the European Council meeting last week where Turkey featured high on the agenda, President **Juncker** said: *"The differences in views between the EU and Turkey are many. It will be a frank and open debate where we will not hide our differences but where we will seek to improve our cooperation"*. A press conference will follow this evening, timing to be confirmed. Watch live on EbS [here](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Commission launches safeguard investigation into steel products to prevent trade diversion into the EU [Updated on 26/03/2018 at 15:30]

The European Commission today initiated a safeguard investigation on imports of a number of steel products into the EU. The safeguard investigation is one of the three types of measures the Commission announced in response to the US restrictions on steel and aluminium. It concerns products of all origin and its opening does not prejudge its results. However, the procedure can also result in imposition of import tariffs or quotas that would shield EU producers from excessive imports, if this proves necessary. The surveillance system for imports of steel – in place since March 2016 – has provided evidence that imports of certain steel products have been increasing. This trend may be even stronger now that the access to the US market has been limited and steel products from other parts of the world previously destined

to the US may be redirected to Europe, disturbing the market and skewing prices. The investigation launched today covers 26 steel product categories. It will in principle be concluded within 9 months; should provisional measures prove necessary, they can be adopted at short notice. The Commission continues to further examine the market situation and is prepared to react as appropriate. Safeguards are one of trade defence tools recognised by the World Trade Organisation. The EU investigation procedure follows strictly multilateral rules in this respect. (For more information: Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185)

State aid: Commission concludes Dutch guarantee scheme to support fast growing medium and large-companies involves no aid

The European Commission has found that the “Extended Growth Facility” (also known as “GO”), a Dutch guarantee scheme to support medium and large companies, does not involve State aid. The objective of the GO scheme is to improve access to finance for companies with a considerable growth potential. Under the scheme, the Dutch State guarantees 50% of new loans to companies, for up to 8 years. It will run until the end of 2023, with the maximum annual amount of loan guarantees fixed at €400 million. Loans guaranteed can range from €1.5 million to €150 million, for which a guarantee fee is paid to the Dutch State by the banks issuing the loans. The Dutch authorities expect that this scheme will encourage banks to issue these loans on a larger scale than currently. The Commission found that the guarantees give the Dutch State an appropriate remuneration level, ensuring that the scheme is self-financing, including administrative costs and the remuneration of virtual capital. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the Dutch State guarantee scheme does not constitute State aid to the banks, nor to the borrowing companies. A full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [NL](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission approves joint venture between IBM and Maersk

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed creation of a joint venture between International Business Machines (IBM) of the US and A.P. Møller Mærsk group (Maersk) of Denmark. The joint venture will engage in the development and commercialisation of a new digitisation solution intended to provide end to end shipment visibility and document management for global trade. IBM is active in the development, production, and marketing of information technology solutions, comprising software, systems and IT services. Maersk is active in container shipping, terminal services, harbour towage, logistics and energy. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the limited overlap between the joint venture’s digitisation solution and the companies’ activities. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8742](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control over Wyndham Vacation Rentals Europe by Platinum Equity Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Wyndham Vacation Rentals Europe -a business formed by Wyndham Vacation Rentals UK of the UK, Landal GreenParks of the Netherlands and Novasol of Denmark- by Platinum Equity Group of the US. Wyndham Vacation Rentals Europe is active in the serviced holiday rentals sector. Platinum Equity Group specialises in the merger, acquisition and operation of companies that provide services and solutions to customers in a broad range of businesses, including information technology, telecommunications, logistics, metal services, manufacturing and distribution. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited impact it would have on the market. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8825](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Tekfor by KKR

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of sole control over Tekfor Global Holdings Ltd of the UK by KKR & Co. L.P. of the US. Tekfor manufactures and supplies components and assemblies for automotive transmissions, engines, drivelines, fasteners, and other special applications. KKR is a global investment firm which offers alternative asset management services to public and private market investors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because Tekfor is not active in the same product and geographic market as the markets in which KKR and its portfolio companies are engaged, or in any market that is downstream or upstream from the latter. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8763](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: International trade in goods in 2017: A third of EU trade is with the United States and China. At Member State level, trade within the EU largely prevails

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again slightly in 2017. The share of China has almost tripled since 2000, rising from 5.5% to 15.3% in 2017. The share of Russia in total EU trade had been decreasing since 2012 from nearly 10% to around 6% in 2016, and slightly picked up in 2017. The share of trade with Japan has fallen by more than a half since 2000 – from 7.5% in 2000 to 3.5% in 2017. As for Switzerland and Turkey, their respective shares in trade remained relatively unchanged over the entire period. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Andrus Ansip and Commissioner Thyssen participate in G7 Employment and Innovation Ministerial Meeting in Canada

Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Labour Mobility Marianne **Thyssen** will represent the European Union at the 2018 G7 Employment and Innovation Ministerial Meeting. The meeting, taking place in Montreal, Canada on 27 and 28 March, will be the occasion to discuss how G7 economies prepare for the jobs of the future. G7 Employment Ministers will discuss key topics such as the importance of partnerships with private sector, inclusive growth and supporting workers through transitions. Vice-President **Ansip** is co-chairing on Tuesday the session on artificial intelligence. He will give a speech on the importance of creating the right conditions for the development and use of new technologies: in Europe, this means the creation of a Digital Single Market. The Vice-President and Commissioner **Thyssen** will both speak on Wednesday in the joint session of Innovation and Employment Ministers focussing on the impact of transformative technologies on the labour market, the role of industry in supporting workers and policies and programmes for the jobs of the future. Commissioner **Thyssen** will formally present the European perspective on inclusive growth, stressing the importance of investing in people, a principle that is at the heart of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#). Representatives of social partners, engagement groups (Women7 and Youth7) and heads of International Labour Organization (ILO) and Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) will also contribute to the working sessions of the meeting. On the sidelines of the event, Vice-President **Ansip** will meet Japanese Parliamentary Vice-Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry Masaki Ogushi and Vice-Minister for Policy Coordination Masahiko Tominaga as well as Michael Kratsios, Deputy Assistant to the President and Deputy U.S. Chief Technology Officer. Commissioner **Thyssen** will hold bilateral meetings with French Minister of Labour Muriel Pénicaud, German Minister of Labour Hubertus Heil and Canadian Minister for Families, Children and Social Development Jean-Yves Duclos. Vice-President Ansip and Commissioner Thyssen will in addition visit Hec Montréal business school to meet local startups on innovation, skills and youth employment. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 55040; Sara

Une Europe qui protège: le Commissaire King participera à un exercice de coopération transfrontalière dans le domaine de la lutte contre le terrorisme

Le Commissaire Julian **King** sera demain à Dunkerque, en France, où il assistera à un exercice de coopération transfrontalière dans le domaine de la lutte contre le terrorisme organisé par les autorités françaises avec des observateurs britanniques, belges et néerlandais. Exprimant sa solidarité avec les victimes de l'attaque de Trèbes, Julian King a dit: "*J'aimerais adresser mes condoléances aux victimes et aux familles et proches des victimes de la terrible attaque terroriste qui a à nouveau frappé la France vendredi dernier à Trèbes et Carcassonne. Et je voudrais également saluer le courage extraordinaire du gendarme qui a pris la place d'un des otages. Au niveau européen, nous continuons notre action en soutien aux Etats membres pour renforcer ensemble notre combat contre le terrorisme.*" L'exercice, simulant une attaque terroriste sur un ferry touristique, vise à mieux renforcer la coopération transfrontalière dans le domaine de la lutte contre le terrorisme et à préparer les forces de l'ordre de la région à une telle éventualité. Cet exercice s'inscrit dans le cadre plus large des efforts de l'UE pour renforcer notre résilience face aux attaques terroristes. En octobre 2017, la Commission a présenté un paquet antiterroriste qui listait un ensemble de mesures à prendre au niveau de l'Union ainsi que des États membres pour renforcer la sécurité de l'UE et de ses citoyens. À la suite de l'exercice, le Commissaire King discutera de la lutte contre la radicalisation et la coopération police-douane avec les autorités locales à Lille. Un point presse aura lieu suivant l'exercice. Pour plus d'informations sur les efforts de la Commission pour construire une Europe qui protège, veuillez consulter la fiche d'information [en ligne](#). (For more information: Natasha Beraud – Tel.: +32 2 296 74 56; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Le Commissaire Hogan participe à un dialogue citoyen en Belgique sur la future politique agricole commune

Le Commissaire à l'agriculture et au développement rural, Phil **Hogan** participe aujourd'hui à Wuustwezel en Belgique à un [dialogue citoyen](#) sur la future politique agricole commune. Le Commissaire **Hogan** répondra aux questions des participants aux côtés de M. Joris Relaes, administrateur général de l'institut de recherche pour l'agriculture et la pêche du gouvernement flamand (ILVO), Mme Kirsten Haanraads, responsable des affaires publiques de l'association Natuurmonumenten, M. Hans Huijbers, Président de ZLTO, une organisation représentant des agriculteurs et horticulteurs, et M. Pieter Verhelst, membre du conseil d'administration du Boerenbond. Depuis la présentation des [orientations de la Commission sur l'avenir de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation](#) en novembre dernier, le Commissaire **Hogan** a pris part à de nombreux dialogues citoyens pour écouter les points de vue et attentes des citoyens et parties prenantes et répondre à leurs questions. Les dialogues

citoyens sont une caractéristique régulière du travail quotidien de la Commission Juncker. Depuis le début du mandat, plus de 130 dialogues ont eu lieu dans plus de 80 villes. (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario- Tél.: +32 229 56 172, Clémence Robin – Tél.: +32 229 52509)

Commissioner Andriukaitis in Italy

On 27 March, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner for Health and food safety will be in Italy. In Milan he will hold a meeting with the representatives of the Italian Observatory of Mediterranean Diet, attend the Inauguration Ceremony at San Raffaele University and visit the Ca' Granda Ospedale Maggiore Policlinico to partake in a meeting with the European Reference Networks. Commissioner will then visit Turin to participate in a Citizens' Dialogue at the University of Turin that will be webstreamed [here](#). *"I am looking forward to engage in a dialogue in Turin about health and food safety, issues that are very close to citizens' hearts. Moreover open discussions are key to bring people into the heart of debates over our common future. The point of democracy is indeed to be able to get together and exchange views"*, he said ahead of the visit. (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

Commissioner Navracsics travels to Bulgaria for cultural heritage events

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will be in the city of Plovdiv, Bulgaria, on Monday, 26 March, to open a conference on ["Cultural Heritage: for a more Sustainable Europe"](#), organised by the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU and the European Commission. The Commissioner will highlight the fact that culture and cultural heritage are high on the EU agenda, as we celebrate the [European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018](#), and as discussions on a new EU Agenda for Culture and the funding of cultural initiatives in the post-2020 budgetary period are ongoing. During the conference, Commissioner **Navracsics** will also participate in the presentation of the [European Heritage Label](#) to the nine new sites recently awarded the title for celebrating or symbolising European ideals, values, history and integration. The [press release](#) on the launch of the European Year of Cultural Heritage as well as the [Eurobarometer results](#) on the cultural heritage are available online. Plovdiv will be a European [Capital of Culture](#) in 2019. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tél.: +32 229 56184)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)