

Company and director fined for exposing workers to fall from height risks

A solar panel installation company and its sole director have been fined for failing to manage and control fall from height risks.

Reading Crown Court heard how, after a concern was raised by a member of public, a Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspector made a visit to the site where Sasie Limited was installing solar panels on the roof of a commercial building. On this visit the inspector identified two workers on the roof without any form of fall protection and a prohibition notice was served.

When the HSE inspector returned to the site three days later there was further unsafe work being carried out on the roof. An investigation by HSE found that the unsafe work was allowed to continue by the director, Mr Kelly despite a member of public bringing it to his attention and the serving of the prohibition notice.

Sasie Limited of Waterway Street, Nottingham pleaded guilty to breaching Sections 2(1) and Sections 33(1)(g) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and also Regulation 6(3) of the Work at Height Regulations 2005. The company was fined £10,000 and ordered to pay costs of £6,300.

Mr Ean Marsden Kelly of Waterway Street, Nottingham pleaded guilty to breaching two counts of Section 37(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and was fined £500.

Speaking after the hearing HSE inspector Dominic Goacher said “Falls from heights are the one of the biggest causes of workplace fatalities and major injuries.

“All work at height must be properly planned irrespective of the task being undertaken and those in control must ensure suitable control measures to prevent falls are in place throughout the duration of the project”.

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain’s national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. hse.gov.uk
2. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: legislation.gov.uk/
3. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

4. Further information about best practices can be found in freely available HSE guidance
<http://hse.gov.uk/construction/safetyopics/roofwork.htm>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

Speech: Dr Phillip Lee's speech at Centre for Social Justice launch event

Thank you very much for inviting me along to this launch event today. Firstly can thank the team at Centre for Social Justice for this insightful report. It not only raises a number of pertinent points about the challenges which female offenders, and the services responding to them face, but also outlines practical and creative proposals we can take to tackle them.

Secondly, I would like to emphasise an important theme that runs throughout this report: the need for a multi-agency, gender-responsive approach to female offenders that brings together local and national partners in a coordinated and accountable manner.

Female offenders are some of our most vulnerable members of society and often have complex needs. As articulated in the report, a significant number of these women have histories of mental health issues, substance misuse, trauma and abuse, homelessness, poor education and unemployment.

For many, these issues have developed prior to their involvement with the criminal justice system. Many of these women are also likely to be already known to, or already engaged with, different public services before they even commit a crime.

Despite this, we know that outcomes for a significant number of women remain persistently and unacceptably poor.

We must address these issues at the outset if we want to reduce crime, reduce reoffending, protect victims and the public.

Achieving this requires a joined-up approach from the relevant Government departments, national and local statutory services, and the voluntary sector, to develop a coordinated, multi-agency response. I'm pleased to say we are making some real progress in achieving this. And, this is a principle that also underlines my female offender strategy.

Whole System Approach and women's centres

As set out in the report, we are investing £1 million pounds seed funding to

support local areas to develop new ways of working with female offenders by adopting a multi-agency – often termed Whole System – approach.

The whole system model brings together local agencies, criminal justice, statutory and voluntary. Together they provide the holistic, targeted support a female offender needs, with shared investment and outcomes. The National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies are key partners, ensuring that female offenders receive targeted, wrap-around support both through the gate and in the community.

Women's centres are often at the heart of many of these Whole-System Approach models. And I have been impressed by the women's centres that I have visited. Over the past year I met staff and service users at Nelson Trust and Anawim, which are both providing valuable support to vulnerable women.

I recognise the hugely important role that these women's centres can play in supporting female offenders and those at risk of offending. Our best response to female offending must be one that is locally-led.

Liaison and diversion

Another recent success commended in the report is that of Liaison and Diversion (L&D) services. L&D services place clinical staff at police stations and courts to provide assessments and referrals at an earlier stage. In doing so, we can intervene early to support people with mental health, drug and alcohol issues as soon as they come to the attention of the criminal justice system.

L&D services will be operating across 82% of England by the end of March 2018, and across 90% of the country by the end of March 2019. Full rollout is expected by 2020/21.

And we are going further. NHS England are currently enhancing 'women's pathways' across all L&D services, to address the specific needs of women in the criminal justice system.

A specific women's lead will be appointed in each service to focus on this. Services will:

- offer to see all females who come into custody
- provide females with the choice of the gender of their practitioner
- offer gender-sensitive tools for screening
- and provide effective onward referrals to gender specific and sensitive services.

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he needs of particular groups such as women sex workers and foreign national women, will also be considered. These pathways will be co-designed with women with lived experience.

This will mean that more female offenders will be diverted away from the criminal justice system in the first place, away from charge, or to a

community sentence. I firmly believe that early intervention is an important part of our response to female offending. Not only does it improve outcomes for these women but also their children, their families and the public as a whole.

Devolution

As the report outlines, Police & Crime Commissioners (PCC'S) have a real appetite to be more involved in a new approach for female offenders.

This is extremely welcome. PCCs play a valuable role as visible and accountable leaders of the local police and crime systems. And Combined Authorities bring together several services which are crucial to reduce reoffending.

I recognise the potential benefits that a more locally-led system offers. I am keen to work closely with PCCs and Combined Authorities to explore this further.

It is crucial that we work more closely with these local partners to tackle the issues leading women into the criminal justice system.

To deliver this, we have signed devolution agreements with several areas, including Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, West Midlands and Greater London.

The Ministry of Justice is committed to exploring options to provide greater devolution of criminal justice responsibility and budgets to local commissioners.

Women at court

Another issue raised in the report was that of awareness of pre-sentence report writers of the disposals available in their areas. We have recently undertaken an audit of pre-sentence reports and assessment tools for female offenders at court. This looked at how we could take a more gender responsive and trauma informed approach towards the women we are working with.

Cross-departmental work is now progressing to increase the quality of assessments for female offenders and a work plan has been developed to take this work forward.

This work is also looking to increase the take up of effective community sentences in line with sentencing guidelines. This work is being carried out in partnership with the National Probation Service and Community Rehabilitation Companies (CRC's).

Workforce development

However, for these changes to have the necessary impact, it is essential that we have a gender informed workforce.

We continue to roll out Trauma Informed training to criminal justice

professionals. Training is now being extended across the National Probation Service and CRCs, as well as to prison staff.

We have also supported the wider Criminal Justice System roll out of the 'Safeguarding Children When Sentencing Mothers' training material completed by Dr Shona Minson.

This training raises awareness of the diverse implications of maternal imprisonment for children.

I would like to reiterate my thanks to Dr Minson for her invaluable work.

Benefits and employment

Today's report also rightly highlights the challenges which prisoners face when leaving prison, particularly around access to welfare support.

Prisoners are able to speak to a Department of Work and Pensions Work Coach before release. They can make an appointment at the relevant Job Centre as early as the day of release. Once the former prisoner attends the Job Centre to complete their claim, eligible prisoners can receive funds within hours.

However, we recognise that more can be done. That is why we are working with the Department of Work and Pensions to improve the process with the aim of enabling a claim in advance of release.

And I want to do more to help women into employment on release too. Getting and keeping a job can change people's lives and work is the best route out of crime. The prison and probation service have an important role to help offenders build the skills and experience they need whilst they're in prison so they can have the right attitude for work and get a job when they're released. As the Secretary of State outlined on 6 March, we will shortly be launching our Education and Employment Strategy. This will set out our approach to helping offenders get the skills they need to find a job and avoid the activities that landed them in prison in the first place.

Accommodation

Another factor that plays an important part in rehabilitation is accommodation. There is considerable evidence which tells us there is a link between lack of stable accommodation and reoffending. Suitable accommodation plays an important part in enabling offenders to get a job, into training, or registered with a GP.

HMPPS has undertaken some initiatives to improve access to accommodation, such as expanding the BASS contract to offer accommodation to offenders on licence.

We continue to work with all probation providers to help make sure offenders get the support they need to find accommodation on release.

But accommodation is a serious problem which requires a cross departmental response, as recognised in the report's recommendations.

We are working with Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government to improve access to housing for those being released from prison.

As part of this, we are investigating how Housing First and proposals regarding the private rented sector could help to ensure that offenders with complex needs, including female offenders, can secure suitable accommodation

This work will form part of the wider Government commitment to eliminate homelessness.

Conclusion

As you know, my female offender strategy is due shortly. I hope to outline in this what further progress we have made in the areas I have highlighted today, and others, to address the challenges which female offenders face. This is a complex issue and one that I want to get right.

Thank you for having me here today to support the launch of this report.

The Lodzkie Region shows best practices in the circular economy

Members of the ENVE commission visited the Lodzkie Region on 14-15 March to get acquainted with best practices in the area of the circular economy.

The delegation has visited various projects in the fields of environmental protection, waste management, bioeconomy, renewable energy and eco-innovation. These result from the cooperation between private businesses, applied science and research institutes, non-governmental organizations and the Lodzkie regional authority.

Marshal **Witold Stępień (PL/EPP)**, member of the European Committee of the Regions since October 2011, was keen in organising a study visit in his homeland to present concrete projects created through public-private partnerships that bring both economic and environmental benefits to local communities.

“The Lodzkie Region illustrates how local governments can be change agents driving the shift towards circular economy models that lead to low-carbon communities”, said Witold Stępień (PL/EPP).

The Łódzkie Region is part of the European project “Synergic Circular Economy across European Regions” [SCREEN](#). Its goal is to develop a reference framework for the establishment of synergies between Horizon 2020, EU’s research and innovation programme, and the European Structural and Investment Funds related to the circular economy.

The ENVE delegation includes members **Bruno Hranić (HR/EPP)** , Mayor of the Municipality of Vidovec in Croatia, **Gillian Ford (UK/ EA)**, Member of the London Borough of Havering in the UK, **Marco Dus (IT/PES)**, Member of Vittorio Veneto Municipal Council in the Italian Province of Treviso, **Vytautas Vigelis (LT/ALDE)**, Member of the Municipal Council of Švenčionys district in Lithuania, **Ribányi József (HU/EPP)**, Vice-Chairman of the Tolna County Assembly in Hungary, **Andres Jaadla (EE/ALDE)**, Member of Rakvere City Council in Estonia, **Ioanis Sgouros (EL/PES)**, Regional Councilor of Attica in Greece, **Mary Freehill (IE/PES)**, Member of the Dublin City Council in Ireland, **Jaroslav Hlinka (SK/PES)**, Mayor of Kosice-South in Slovakia, **Giuseppe Rinaldi (IT/PES)**, President of the Italian Province of Rieti, **Vytautas Kanevičius (LT/ECR)**, Member of the Council of Kazlų Rūda Municipality in Lithuania and **Raymund Kovács (HU/EPP)**, Budapest XVI. District Representative.

These are the projects visited by the ENVE delegation:

Centre for Innovation and Technology Transfer, Medical University of Łódź: coordination between science and businesses for economic development in medicine and health. The Centre incubates new business ventures while providing administrative support at all stages of commercialization. Areas: oncology, neurology, neurodegenerative diseases, biomolecular sciences, cardiology, diabetes, allergy and immunology.

GREEN HUB: a non-formal initiative in zero waste and health. Green Hub is an initiative of local and regional NGOs, business, and researchers towards the circular economy.

Town of Brzeziny: implements a €5 million project on the production of clean electricity and heat, photovoltaic and solar collectors, wind farms and the creation of a transport system based on electric cars.

STEIG Sp. z o.o. – producer of BOXlife Polish Modular Houses: not for profit social enterprise, leader in the production of residential and service modules operating under social objectives, human rights, environmental, work and employment best practices integrating socially marginalized citizens.

Waste Management and Recycling Cluster: formed by businesses, research and development units, support institutions and consulting companies dedicated to environmental education. Collection, disposal, processing, recycling and transport of all types of industrial waste. Specialised in used electrical and electronic equipment. The cluster is supraregional and its impact goes beyond Lodzkie to include Wielkopolskie, Lubelskie, Lubuskie, , Malopolska, Masovia, Kujawsko-Pomorskie, Silesia, Świętokrzyskie and Zachodniopomorskie.

O-PAL RECYKLING: purchase, collection, recovery, processing and recycling of all types of waste.

STAL-CAR: Stal-Car is two licensed and authorised scarp yards operated since 2006. The company is in the forefront of the biggest automotive spare parts dealers in Poland.

The next study visit of the ENVE commission will take place in Nijmegen in

April. Nijmegen has a lot to share when it comes to environmental and climate-friendly cities as it is the European Green Capital 2018.

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African Union – European Union relations: joint visit of AU and EU ambassadors to Central African Republic

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Daily News 16 / 03 / 2018

L'Union européenne octroie 50 millions d'euros en soutien au secteur de la sécurité au Liban

L'Union européenne a annoncé un montant de 50 millions d'euros d'aide au secteur de la sécurité au Liban, dans le cadre de l'engagement européen de longue date en faveur de la stabilité et de la sécurité du pays. De cette somme, 46,6 millions d'euros sont consacrés à la promotion de l'Etat de droit, l'amélioration de la sécurité et la lutte contre le terrorisme jusqu'en 2020, et 3,5 millions d'euros à la sécurité de l'aéroport international de Beyrouth – Rafic Hariri. La Haute Représentante/Vice-Présidente Federica **Mogherini** a annoncé ce financement au cours de la réunion ministérielle Rome II sur le soutien aux forces armées libanaises et aux forces de sécurité intérieures, qui a eu lieu hier à Rome. Elle a déclaré: *«Le Liban peut compter sur le partenariat de longue date avec l'Union européenne pour faire face aux défis auxquels il est actuellement confronté, en matière d'aide humanitaire ou de coopération au développement, mais aussi sur le plan de l'économie et de la sécurité. Avec ce nouveau soutien, l'UE confirme une fois encore son engagement en faveur de la sécurité et du renforcement des institutions du Liban, qui sont essentiels pour garantir la stabilité et l'unité du pays, dans l'intérêt du peuple libanais et de la région toute entière»*. Ce soutien s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'assistance globale de l'UE au secteur de la sécurité au Liban, avec plus de 85 millions d'euros investis dans l'ensemble du secteur depuis 2006. Les activités de l'UE incluent l'aide au renforcement des capacités des forces de sécurité libanaises, la gestion intégrée des frontières, la surveillance civile et l'atténuation des menaces chimiques, biologiques, radiologiques et nucléaires ainsi que le déminage. Le communiqué de presse complet est disponible [ici](#) ainsi que les [remarques](#) de la Haute Représentante/Vice-Présidente lors de la réunion ministérielle et la [déclaration finale](#) des participants. (Pour plus d'informations: Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833)

Startup Europe connects European ecosystems and supports scale up expansion

Over 200 founders, policy makers and project managers will attend the very first [Startup Europe "Campfire"](#) in Paris next Monday 19 March. This Campfire will see the official launch of the new Startup Europe for Growth projects whose aim is that startups and tech entrepreneurs achieve market success. The event itself will focus on new opportunities for startups and on the role of governments on, for example, unlocking access to markets for founders through policy, collaboration and partnerships. The Startup Europe Campfire is also the excellent moment to announce the 2018 edition of [the European Maker Week](#) that will take place on 12-19 May. On this occasion, Vice-President Andrus Ansip in charge of the Digital Single Market said: *"The Maker Movement represents a new way of allowing people – anyone – to become an entrepreneur, using the right technology even without specific training. Its approach to creativity will help build bridges between innovators and small and medium-sized enterprises, in turn helping Europe's startups to grow, expand and succeed. I am sure that this year's European Maker Week will be another success story, I wish the makers of Europe success – and fun"*. During [the upcoming European Maker Week](#), key stakeholders in each local community will be able to discuss the role of the Maker Movement in areas such as education, entrepreneurship, workforce development, manufacturing, community

revitalisation and community-based problem solving. They can already [register their events](#). The European Maker Week is an initiative promoted by European Commission and implemented by Maker Faire Rome in collaboration with [Startup Europe](#). A factsheet on Startup Europe is available [here](#) and you can find more information [here](#). *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Julia-Henriette Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)*

La Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique protégée du Portugal

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription de l' [«Amêndoa coberta de Moncorvo»](#) dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). L'«Amêndoa Coberta de Moncorvo» est un produit de confiserie obtenu à partir d'amandes douces grillées et enrobées d'une pâte de sucre et fabriqué dans la commune de Torre de Moncorvo dans le nord-est du Portugal. Les amandes ainsi préparées peuvent être blanches, au chocolat ou nature (appelées alors «peladinhos»). Elles sont particulièrement populaires pendant la période de Pâques. Le mode de fabrication est resté hautement traditionnel et artisanal et les femmes se consacrant à la production de l'«Amêndoa Coberta de Moncorvo» sont appelées «cobrideiras». Ces dernières années, différentes actions de formation ont été mises en place à Torre de Moncorvo en vue de transmettre ce savoir-faire à de nouvelles «cobrideiras» et de communiquer aux jeunes générations l'intérêt pour cette activité. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre plus de 1425 produits déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [DOOR](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). *(pour plus d'information: Enrico Brivio – Tel: +32 2 29 56172; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)*

Banking regulation: Commission launches consultation on the finalisation of Basel III

Today the Commission Services are launching an exploratory consultation on the last piece of banking regulatory reform that was launched at international level during the financial crisis and which was agreed by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision in December 2017. The consultation aims to gather views from interested parties on the potential impact that amendments may have on the EU banking sector and the wider economy, as well as to highlight possible implementation challenges. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *“EU banking regulation must provide a foundation for a stable banking system that supports the European economy. International cooperation in this matter is crucial to ensure financial stability and a level playing field for banks globally. The measures that were agreed by the Basel Committee represent the last major piece of the regulatory reform that was launched in the wake of the financial crisis. It is now essential that all major jurisdictions implement all elements of this agreement. The Commission will now carry out a thorough and detailed impact assessment and today's targeted consultation is the first step.”* The implementation of this agreement in the EU would require amendments to current banking regulations, in particular the Capital Requirements Regulation (CRR). Before considering

such amendments, the Commission will carry out a thorough impact assessment, in accordance with its Better Regulation agenda. The results of this consultation will inform the Commission's overall assessment. Respondents are encouraged to provide as much evidence as possible using this [link](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

Aides d'Etat: la Commission approuve le régime belge de compensation des coûts indirects des émissions liés au système d'échange de quotas d'émission de gaz à effet de serre

La Commission européenne a autorisé, en vertu des règles de l'UE relatives aux aides d'État, un régime belge visant à accorder aux entreprises grandes consommatrices d'énergie une compensation partielle pour les prix de l'électricité plus élevés découlant des coûts indirects des émissions liés au système d'échange de quotas d'émission de gaz à effet de serre (SEQE) de l'UE. Le régime couvre la période 2017-2020, avec un budget prévisionnel de 17,5 millions d'euros. La mesure bénéficie aux entreprises installées en région wallonne et actives dans certains secteurs particulièrement exposés à la concurrence internationale. L'objectif de la mesure est d'éviter une augmentation du niveau global des émissions de gaz à effet de serre qu'engendreraient des délocalisations d'entreprises dans des pays hors de l'UE ayant une législation environnementale moins stricte. La compensation prendra la forme d'un paiement direct aux entreprises éligibles, l'année suivant celle au cours de laquelle les coûts ont été supportés. Plus d'informations seront disponibles sur le [site internet de la DG Concurrence](#), dans le [registre des aides d'État](#) sous le numéro SA.49630. (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Diamond Transmission Partners by Diamond Transmission Corporation and Infrared Capital Partners

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Diamond Transmission Partners BBE (Holding) Limited by Diamond Transmission Corporation Limited ("DTC") and Infrared Capital Partners Limited ("IRCP"), all of the UK. Diamond Transmission Partners is an offshore transmission owner for the 'Burbo Bank Extension offshore windfarm, active in the transmission of electricity from this windfarm to the UK's national electricity transmission system. It is currently solely controlled by DTC, a holding company with activities in the electricity transmission sector. IRCP is an infrastructure investment management company active in financial advice and managing investments on behalf of investment funds. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there are no overlaps between 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.8728](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of Maersk Product Tankers by APMH Invest and Mitsui

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Maersk Product Tankers A/S of Denmark by APMH Invest A/S of Denmark and Mitsui & Co., Ltd. of Japan. Maersk Product Tankers A/S is active in the maritime tramp vessel sector for the transport of liquid bulk products, specifically refined oil products and certain chemicals. APMH Invest A/S is a holding company with interests in banking, infrastructure and financial investments in fixed income and securities. Mitsui & Co., Ltd is pursuing business that ranges from product sales, worldwide logistics and financing through to the development of major infrastructure and other projects. 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.8697](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de DRT par Ardian

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de Dérivés Résiniques et Terpéniques SA (DRT) par Ardian France SA, toutes deux basées en France. DRT est une société active dans la fabrication de dérivés de résine de pin. Ardian est une société d'investissement privé indépendante qui gère des actifs en Europe, en Amérique du Nord et en Asie. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, compte tenu de son impact très limité sur la structure du marché. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site internet concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8810](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Schoeller Allibert by Brookfield and Schoeller Industries

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the joint acquisition of Schoeller Allibert of the Netherlands by Schoeller Industries, also of the Netherlands and Brookfield, of Canada. Schoeller Allibert is a manufacturer of returnable plastic packaging for material handling. Schoeller Industries belongs to the Schoeller group and is active in returnable packaging solutions, supply chain systems and intellectual property services. Brookfield is a global asset manager. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited overlaps between the companies' activities and the presence of several alternative competitors. The operation was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8795](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100;

Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: Job vacancy rate at 2.0% in both euro area and EU28

The job vacancy rate in the euro area (EA19) was 2.0% in the fourth quarter of 2017, up from 1.9% recorded in the previous quarter and from 1.7% in the fourth quarter of 2016, according to figures published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In the EU28, the job vacancy rate was 2.0% in the fourth quarter of 2017, stable compared with the previous quarter, but up from 1.8% in the fourth quarter of 2016. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)*

Eurostat: Annual inflation down to 1.1% in the euro area

Euro area annual inflation rate was 1.1% in February 2018, down from 1.3% in January. In February 2017, the rate was 2.0%. European Union annual inflation was 1.3% in February 2018, down from 1.6% in January. A year earlier the rate was 2.0%. These figures come from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)*

Eurostat: Annual growth in labour costs at 1.5% in euro area

Hourly labour costs rose by 1.5% in the euro area (EA19) and by 2.3% in the EU28 in the fourth quarter of 2017, compared with the same quarter of the previous year. In the third quarter of 2017, hourly labour costs increased by 1.6% and 2.2% respectively. These figures are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Avramopoulos in Niger for Ministerial Conference Against Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** is in Niamey, Niger today to participate in the Conference Against Migrant Smuggling and Human Trafficking with Ministers of Interior and Foreign Affairs of countries from the European Union, the Sahel region, West Africa and North Africa. Participants include delegations from France, Italy, Germany, Spain, Niger, Burkina Faso, Chad, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Libya, Mali and Mauritania. Hosted by the Nigerien Minister of Interior, the conference is an opportunity to discuss ways to strengthen cooperation on migration and follow-up to the [leaders meeting](#) held in France in August 2017. A joint statement will be issued this afternoon and will be available [here](#). *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 2 296 74 56; Tove Ernst –*

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Vice-President Katainen in Helsinki, Monday 19 March

Vice-President **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, travels to Helsinki, Finland, on Monday 19 March. He will visit the [EPIQUS Social Impact Bond Project](#) in Vantaato with journalists. The project, which is supported by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), provides fast-track integration training and job-matching for migrants and refugees. Also during his visit, the Vice-President will attend a [hearing](#) by the Finnish Parliament's Education and Culture Committee on "Multiannual Financial Framework Post 2020 – reforming the framework programme on research and innovation". In addition, Vice-President **Katainen** will meet Mr Samu Konttinen, CEO of F-Secure and Mr Mikko Hyppönen, Chief Research Officer of F-Secure to discuss cyber threats, dual-use products and F-Secure strategy. He will meet Mr Risto Siilasmaa, Chairman of both F-Secure and the Nokia Board of Directors, to discuss artificial intelligence. The Vice-President will also meet with Mr Petteri Orpo, Minister of Finance, and Mr Jyri Häkämies, CEO Confederation of Finnish Industries. Furthermore, he will deliver a [keynote address](#) at a seminar on the Future of European Defence, organized by the Advisory Board for Defence Information, where he will present EU defence cooperation and its future. (*For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361*)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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