

Court of Justice of the European Union: appointment of nine judges

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On 28 February 2018, the representatives of the governments of the member states appointed nine judges and three advocates-general to the Court of Justice of the European Union. Their term of office is six years, starting from 7 October 2018.

The appointments were made as part of the partial renewal of the composition of the Court of Justice, which takes place every three years.

Eight persons were reappointed as **judges**:

- Mr Alexander Arabadjiev (Bulgaria)
- Mr Jean-Claude Bonichot (France)
- Mr Thomas von Danwitz (Germany)
- Mr Carl Gustav Fernlund (Sweden)
- Mr Egils Levits (Latvia)
- Mr Constantinos Lycourgos (Cyprus)
- Mr Jiří Malenovský (Czech Republic)
- Ms Alexandra (Sacha) Prechal (Netherlands)

Ms Lucia Serena Rossi (Italy) was newly appointed as judge.

Mr Yves Bot (France), Mr Giovanni Pitruzzella (Italy) and Mr Maciej Szpunar (Poland) were appointed as **advocates-general**. The appointment of Mr Bot and Mr Szpunar was a renewal of their term of office.

In total, the term of office of 14 judges and five advocates-general will expire on 6 October 2018. Five judges and two advocates-general still have to be appointed in 2018.

The Court of Justice is composed of one judge from each member state and eleven advocates-general. The judges and advocates-general are appointed for a term of office of six years, which is renewable. Every three years a partial replacement of judges and advocates-general takes place.

The judges and advocates-general are appointed by common accord of the governments of the member states after consultation of a panel responsible for giving an opinion on prospective candidates' suitability to perform the duties concerned. They are chosen from among individuals whose independence

is beyond doubt and who possess the qualifications required for appointment, in their respective countries, to the highest judicial offices, or who are of recognised competence.

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[27th Management Board takes stock of implementation of recently signed Operational Plans](#)

On 27 and 28 February 2018, the 27th meeting of the Management Board of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) took place in Valletta, Malta to take stock of the implementation of the Agency's operational support in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece and Italy. The meeting also discussed management and administrative issues.

The Management Board meeting, which was chaired by Mr. Wolfgang Taucher, also focused its discussions on the latest asylum trends in the EU+ as well as the implementation of the Dublin Regulation.

Members of the Management Board, which represents all of the Member States in the EU+, as well as the European Commission and UNHCR, discussed the implementation of the new Operational Plans that were signed between EASO, Greece, and Italy, respectively, as well as the updated Special Support Plan (SSP) that was signed with Cyprus, in December 2017. These Plans provide a mandate for EASO's operational support activities for the asylum authorities in the three countries throughout 2018.

The Operational Plan signed with Greece sustains EASO's existing activities, including supporting the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement, Dublin processing and capacity-building through training and workshops. In parallel, the Operational Plan signed with Italy has added a new dimension to EASO's activities in the country by mandating the Agency to have an enhanced role in supporting with the handling of registration of applications for international protection, including through the preparation of files in the National Asylum procedure. This measure aims at relieving some of the pressures on the Italian Asylum System. Similarly, the extension of the SSP with Cyprus provides for EASO to support backlog management and in the field of reception and open accommodation.

The Management Board also discussed the asylum trends for 2017, which were released by EASO in January on a [newly enhanced interactive portal](#). Amongst numerous findings, EASO revealed that the EU+ received 43% fewer asylum applications in 2017 than 2016. Syria remained the most common country of origin of applicants, with more than 98,000 applications. Together with

Iraqi, Afghan and Nigerian nationals, these four main countries of origin constituted one in three applications throughout the EU+ in 2017. During the meeting, the Management Board also discussed the latest asylum findings from January 2018, which will be published in the coming days.

The meeting also held an exchange on the state of play regarding the functioning of the Dublin system as well as ongoing preparations for the future transition of EASO into the EU Agency for Asylum (EUAA). Once the EUAA Regulation is adopted, the Agency will see its mandate and responsibilities significantly enhanced, while the Management Board will also take on new roles.

Lyell Centre closure

The BGS's Edinburgh office at The Lyell Centre has been closed today (28 February) and staff sent home due to severe weather and poor travelling conditions.

EU announces €24 million to address the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine

The funding comes as the European Commission and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs are organising a high-level conference in Brussels to raise awareness about the humanitarian consequences of the conflict in eastern Ukraine.

On the occasion, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"Four years of conflict have put a tremendous strain on the civilian population in eastern Ukraine. We cannot overlook that there's a humanitarian crisis at the European Union's doorstep. Supporting all those in need, wherever they are, is a priority for the EU. Our new aid package will provide essential assistance such as food, healthcare and education for children."*

The new EU funding will help address the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations along the contact line including in the non-government controlled areas. It will help those who fled the conflict areas to neighbouring countries. The EU, together with its Member States, is the biggest donor of

humanitarian aid, early recovery and development assistance to Ukraine. With today's announcement, the EU has now provided over €677 million since the beginning of the conflict in 2014.

Background

Humanitarian needs in particular in the non-government controlled areas are on the rise, notably due to restrictions of humanitarian organisations' work in these areas, and the suspension of payment of social benefits, including pensions. The provision of essential services, such as water and electricity, is constantly hampered on both sides of the contact line by indiscriminate shelling.

Today's conference will discuss ways to strengthen crisis response notably through better linking of humanitarian assistance, early recovery and more medium – and long-term reform to improve social cohesion and economic development.

EU funding ensures the provision of food, water and healthcare, including psychosocial activities, essential household items, emergency housing repairs, protection, and education to children.

The EU has repeatedly expressed concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine and constantly called for the full implementation of the Minsk agreements. The EU urges all parties to the conflict to re-establish full access of all international humanitarian organisations to the non-government controlled areas and to allow smooth and speedy delivery of humanitarian assistance in line with humanitarian principles and International Humanitarian Law in order.

For More Information

[Factsheet 'Ukraine'](#)

[Opening speech and press statement by Commissioner Stylianides at the conference](#)

[Photos of the conference](#)

Daily News 28 / 02 / 2018

College meeting: European Commission publishes draft Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement

The European Commission has today published the [draft Withdrawal Agreement](#) between the European Union and the United Kingdom. The draft Withdrawal Agreement translates into legal terms the [Joint Report from the negotiators of the European Union and the United Kingdom Government](#) on the progress

achieved during phase 1 of the negotiations, published on 8 December 2017, and proposes text for those outstanding withdrawal issues which are mentioned in, but not set out in detail, in the Joint Report. It also integrates the text on the transition period, based on the [supplementary negotiating directives](#) adopted by the Council (Article 50) on 29 January 2018. The draft Withdrawal Agreement is published online in accordance with the Commission's transparency policy. The Commission has presented the draft Withdrawal Agreement now to first allow for time for consultation with the Member States and the European Parliament and, subsequently, for negotiation with the United Kingdom. Given that the Withdrawal Agreement needs to be agreed and ratified before the withdrawal of the United Kingdom, it is important to leave sufficient time for negotiation. The overall Article 50 Withdrawal Agreement will need to be concluded by the Council (Article 50), the European Parliament, and the United Kingdom according to its own constitutional requirements. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229-91382; Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500)

EU announces €24 million to address the humanitarian situation in eastern Ukraine

The European Commission announces today €24 million in humanitarian assistance to address the needs of conflict-affected people in eastern Ukraine. On the occasion, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *“Four years of conflict have put a tremendous strain on the civilian population in eastern Ukraine. We cannot overlook that there's a humanitarian crisis at the European Union's doorstep. Supporting all those in need, wherever they are, is a priority for the EU. Our new aid package will provide essential assistance such as food, healthcare and education for children.”* The new EU funding will help address the basic needs of the most vulnerable populations along the contact line including in the non-government controlled areas. It will help those who fled the conflict areas to neighbouring countries. The EU, together with its Member States, is the biggest donor of humanitarian aid, early recovery and development assistance to Ukraine. With today's announcement, the EU has now provided over €677 million since the beginning of the conflict in 2014. Video of Commissioner **Stylianides'** speech and statement will be made available on [EbS](#) at today's high-level conference in Brussels organised by the European Commission and the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on the humanitarian crisis in eastern Ukraine. Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

#investEU: New interactive map shows EU support to SMEs

Helping small businesses get improved access to financing is a top priority for the EU. Thanks to the many financing programmes of the European Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF), hundreds of thousands of

SMEs and entrepreneurs across Europe have received the financial boost they needed to start, grow and scale up their businesses. Now you can see exactly where the money has gone. The EIF and the Commission have launched a new, interactive map which allows you to zoom in down to street level to see which kinds of small businesses have received EU financing. You can search by financing programme, by sector, or simply move the map around to pinpoint the location that interests you the most. The map is available at <https://www.eif4smes.com/>. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

La Commission lance un groupe de travail sur l'Afrique rurale pour renforcer le rôle de l'agriculture dans les politiques de développement

La Commission européenne a créé un groupe de travail sur l'Afrique rurale afin de renforcer notre partenariat avec les pays africains dans les domaines de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation. Le groupe aura entre autres comme tâches de livrer des recommandations quant aux moyens d'utiliser l'expérience des politiques de développement rural en Europe pour créer des activités rémunératrices dans les territoires ruraux en Afrique, et de proposer des stratégies pour soutenir les jeunes africains souhaitant travailler dans le domaine agricole. Le Commissaire **Hogan**, qui a présenté le groupe dans une réunion conjointe des commissions du développement et de l'agriculture du Parlement européen et annoncé à cette occasion l'ouverture de l'appel à candidatures, a dit: *"Je suis convaincu que l'agriculture et l'alimentation ont un rôle prééminent à jouer dans le renforcement de notre partenariat avec l'Union Africaine et que nous devons renforcer nos efforts de coopération. Je souhaite que le groupe de travail sur l'Afrique rurale travaille étroitement avec l'Union Africaine."* La Communication sur le futur de l'agriculture et de l'alimentation publiée en novembre 2017 avait d'ailleurs souligné que la future politique agricole commune devrait contribuer à la mise en œuvre des conclusions du Sommet de la Valette en s'attaquant aux causes premières de migration. Le groupe de travail devra rendre son rapport final d'ici janvier 2019. Il sera composé de 11 membres ayant une expérience dans les secteurs liés à l'agriculture, au commerce ou au développement et ses membres seront nommés à titre personnel. [L'appel à candidatures](#) reste ouvert [jusqu'au 23 mars 2018](#). Plus d'informations sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise la création d'une entreprise commune par Oney Bank et 4Finance Holding

La Commission Européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle en commun de Finey Finance S.A., une entreprise commune nouvellement créée basée en Pologne, par Oney Bank S.A., basée en France, et 4Finance Holding S.A., basée au Luxembourg. Finey Finance proposera des prêts en espèces non garantis à une clientèle en Pologne. Oney Bank, contrôlée par Auchan Holding (France), offre des services

de crédit pour les achats effectués dans des magasins appartenant à Auchan Holding, à ses filiales ou à d'autres partenaires commerciaux. 4Finance, contrôlée par Tirona Limited (Chypre), fournit des prêts personnels en ligne, par l'intermédiaire de centres d'appels et de fournisseurs de crédit tiers. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait aucun problème de concurrence, car les chevauchements entre les activités des entreprises et les liens verticaux résultant de la transaction sont très limités. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site [internet concurrence de la Commission](#), dans [le registre public](#) des affaires de concurrence de la Commission, sous le numéro [M.8726](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Eurostat: Estimation rapide – février 2018 – Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro en baisse à 1,2%

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro est estimé à 1,2% en février 2018, contre 1,3% en janvier 2018 selon une estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. S'agissant des principales composantes de l'inflation de la zone euro, l'énergie devrait connaître le taux annuel le plus élevé en février (2,1%, comparé à 2,2% en janvier), suivis des services (1,3%, comparé à 1,2% en janvier), de l'alimentation, alcool & tabac (1,1%, comparé à 1,9% en janvier) et des biens industriels non énergétiques (0,7%, comparé à 0,6% en janvier). Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: 58615; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

Eurostat: PIB par habitant dans 276 régions de l'UE – Le PIB régional par habitant variait entre 29% et 611% de la moyenne de l'UE en 2016

En 2016, exprimé en standards de pouvoir d'achat (SPA), le PIB régional par habitant variait entre 29% de la moyenne de l'Union européenne (UE) dans la région bulgare de Severozapaden et 611% de cette moyenne dans la région d'Inner London – West au Royaume-Uni. Comme le montre le graphique ci-dessous, il existe des différences considérables dans l'UE et au sein des États membres. Cette information est extraite des données publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: 58615; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

New Commission initiative to improve administrative capacity in managing EU funds

The Commission is today launching [a call for participation](#) in a pilot action to help managing authorities in Member States further enhance the way EU funds are managed and invested. The selected candidates will receive support through a new approach, based on expertise from the Commission, in

cooperation with the OECD, and an integrated and coordinated use of available assistance and instruments. In particular, it will help managing authorities prepare a comprehensive roadmap with clear objectives, as well as implement identified actions. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“Cohesion Policy is more than just funding; it is also about making the best use of available funding. This can only be achieved via high quality administration which ensures that EU citizens benefit from the best possible results. This pilot initiative will assist selected managing authorities to prepare for the next financial period, beyond 2020.”* The [European Structural and Investment \(ESI\) Funds](#) channel over €450 billion to tens of thousands of beneficiaries over the 2014-2020 funding period. This pilot action is part of a broader Commission [initiative](#) to ensure effectiveness of EU funds on the ground, in line with the [Reflection Paper on the future of the EU Finances](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

La Commissaire Crețu à Paris pour discuter de l’avenir de la politique de cohésion

Demain la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** se rend à Paris, où elle rencontrera Nathalie Loiseau, la Ministre française en charge des affaires européennes et Jacques Mézard, le Ministre français en charge de la cohésion des territoires, pour évoquer le futur cadre budgétaire européen et la future politique de cohésion après 2020. *“Je suis ravie de rencontrer les ministres français en charge des affaires européennes et de la cohésion,”* a commenté la Commissaire avant sa visite, *“pour ce dernier, la dénomination même de son portefeuille montre toute l’importance que le gouvernement français accorde à ce principe européen fondamental. Nous avons besoin de plus de cohésion dans notre Union, surtout pour bâtir notre avenir à 27.”* La France bénéficie de plus de €27 milliards de fonds européens en 2014-2020, qui contribuent notamment à soutenir les PME et investir dans les infrastructures de Très Haut Débit. Plus d’information sur les fonds européens en France est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d’information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

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