

The Belt and Road Initiative connects Hong Kong and Poland (with photo)

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in Berlin (HKETO Berlin) together with the Hong Kong Trade Development Council (HKTDC) and the Polish Chamber of Commerce (PCC) jointly organised a seminar on Hong Kong's role as a facilitator for Polish businesses under the Belt and Road Initiative. The seminar was held in Poland's capital Warsaw on February 22 (Warsaw Time).

The event aimed to identify opportunities for Polish businesses to make use of Hong Kong as a platform to expand to Chinese or Asian markets and to participate in projects together with Hong Kong business partners under the Belt and Road Initiative. Participants of the seminar came from Polish government agencies as well as from the business, trading and investment sectors.

Following the opening remarks by the Director of the Department for International Cooperation of the Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Technology, Mr. Arkadiusz Porąbki, HKETO Berlin's Director Betty Ho introduced Hong Kong's role as the gateway to China under the Belt and Road Initiative. Ms Ho particularly emphasised Hong Kong's strengths as an international financial centre and regional legal hub, located in the heart of Asia. "With our rule of law and an inexhaustible pool of talents and experts, Hong Kong offers privileged access to the Mainland of China to Polish companies", She said.

Ms Ho also outlined how policy co-ordination, financial integration, trade and investment, facilities connectivity, as well as cultural exchange would contribute to the improvement of people's livelihood under the Belt and Road Initiative. Based on the example of the bilateral relations between Hong Kong and Poland, Ms Ho explained how the Initiative would further enhance market integration and regional economic cooperation.

Other speakers of the seminar, included the Regional Director, Europe of the HKTDC, Mr William Chui; Warsaw Consultant of the HKTDC, Mr Maciej Wilk; and the Head of Corporate Relations of the Bank of China in Poland, Mr Bartosz Komasa, elaborating on opportunities for Polish exporters and practical aspects of economic collaboration with Hong Kong and China under the Belt and Road Initiative. The seminar was concluded by the signing of a cooperation agreement between the PCC and the HKTDC, and followed by the Chinese New Year Reception jointly hosted by HKETO Berlin and HKTDC later the same day.

About HKETO Berlin

HKETO Berlin is the official Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government representative in commercial relations and other economic and trade matters in Poland as well as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Switzerland.



Unemployment stays low in Wokingham

The latest unemployment figures show Wokingham is the seventh lowest constituency for unemployment with a rate of 0.7%. Locally and nationwide there are substantial vacancies which is encouraging for those who are currently between jobs or looking for work for the first time. 380 people of working age were without a job in January, 55 fewer than January 2017.

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President Juncker participates in the informal meeting of the 27 EU Heads of State or Government, 23 February 2018

As part of the [Leaders' Agenda](#), today EU leaders, including President **Juncker**, will hold an informal discussion on institutional issues, including the composition of the European Parliament after the UK leaves the EU and the nomination of the President of the European Commission. Leaders will also discuss the future of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) after 2020. To prepare today's discussions, last week the Commission published its contribution to the debate with [proposals on ideas for a more efficient European Union](#) and [options for a new, modernised, long-term EU budget](#). On the latter, the Commission will table its formal proposal for the next long-term EU budget on 2 May. In the meantime, the Commission will continue listening to all stakeholders, including via the [public consultations](#) on the priorities of the EU that were launched in January 2018. President **Juncker** will participate in the press conference with President Tusk, currently scheduled for 18:00 CET. Follow live on [EBS](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

L'Union européenne mobilise la communauté internationale pour la région du Sahel

La Conférence internationale de haut niveau sur le Sahel qui s'est tenue aujourd'hui à Bruxelles sous l'égide de l'Union européenne, des Nations Unies, de l'Union africaine et du groupe des pays du G5 Sahel (Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritanie, Niger, Tchad) a permis de confirmer l'engagement politique aux côtés des pays du Sahel, de mobiliser un montant de €414 millions d'euros en soutien à la force conjointe du G5 Sahel, et de renforcer la coordination et efficacité de l'aide au développement durable de la région. A cette occasion, le Président Jean-Claude **Juncker** a déclaré: *"Face à tant de facteurs d'instabilité si étroitement liés les uns aux autres, les réponses que nous apportons doivent être conséquemment ambitieuses et complètes. Sécurité et développement vont de pair et nous devons continuer à mobiliser tous les instruments dont nous disposons pour en garantir des effets visibles dans la région. Avec 100 millions d'euros mobilisés par l'Union européenne, nous doublons ainsi notre soutien en faveur de l'opérationnalisation de la Force conjointe du G5 Sahel, et je suis heureux de constater que tous les partenaires et amis du Sahel se sont joints à nos efforts."* Avec 8 milliards d'euros d'aide au développement (2014-2020), l'UE est le principal donateur pour les pays du G5 Sahel. Le discours d'ouverture du Président **Juncker** est disponible [ici](#) ainsi que les [remarques de la Haute Représentante/Vice-Présidente Federica Mogherini](#). Vous trouverez davantage d'informations dans le [communiqué de presse](#), la [fiche technique \(Q&R\)](#), la [fiche informative](#) ainsi que le [communiqué conjoint](#). Les [photos](#) et les [discours d'ouverture](#) de la Conférence sont disponibles sur EbS. (Pour plus d'information : Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

L'Année européenne du patrimoine culturel présente à la Foire du livre de Bruxelles

A l'occasion de [l'Année européenne du Patrimoine culturel 2018](#), l'Union européenne est présente à l'événement culturel de premier plan à Bruxelles qu'est la Foire du Livre du 22 au 25 février – une vitrine d'exception pour 65 000 visiteurs, 198 exposants, 500 éditeurs représentés ainsi que 950 auteurs venus de Belgique, d'Europe et du monde entier. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissaire européen chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, a déclaré: *"La littérature est une part essentielle de notre patrimoine commun de l'Europe et nous célébrerons son rôle à sa juste mesure pendant l'Année européenne 2018 du patrimoine culturel. Les œuvres de certains écrivains comme Shakespeare, Franz Kafka ou Sándor Márai sont des trésors nationaux, mais elles font aussi partie de l'héritage culturel commun de l'Europe. Ces auteurs sont bien sûr des héros nationaux, ou locaux, mais ce sont également des héros européens."* Demain, samedi 24 février à 11 heures, la Foire du Livre organisera un débat sur l'importance du patrimoine immatériel en Europe et sa signification pour notre identité commune. Plus d'informations sur le programme et sur l'Année européenne du Patrimoine culture sont disponibles [ici](#) et [ici](#). (Pour plus d'information : Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184).

Eurostat: Janvier 2018 – Le taux d’inflation annuel en baisse à 1,3% dans la zone euro – En baisse à 1,6% dans l’UE

Le taux d’inflation annuel de la zone euro s’est établi à 1,3% en janvier 2018, contre 1,4% en décembre 2017. Un an auparavant, il était de 1,8%. Le taux d’inflation annuel de l’Union européenne s’est établi à 1,6% en janvier 2018, contre 1,7% en décembre 2017. Un an auparavant, il était de 1,7%. 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)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

La Commission européenne présente au Salon de l’Agriculture à Paris pour célébrer l’agriculture française

Le [Salon international de l’Agriculture](#) ouvre demain ses portes à Paris pour une quinzaine de jours et la Commission européenne y sera représentée par plusieurs Commissaires qui feront le déplacement ainsi que par un stand qui accueillera les nombreux visiteurs du Salon. Ce rendez-vous annuel incontournable est l’occasion de célébrer la diversité de l’agriculture française alors que se préparent les propositions législatives pour une [politique agricole commune plus simple et plus moderne](#). Cette année, trois Commissaires européens viendront y faire un tour: Phil **Hogan**, Commissaire à l’agriculture, y sera le 24-25 février, à l’inauguration du Salon ; Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissaire à la santé et à la sécurité alimentaire, le 1^{er} mars; et Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissaire aux affaires économiques et monétaires, à la Fiscalité et à l’Union douanière, le 2 mars. Lors de ses deux jours de visite, le Commissaire **Hogan** s’entretiendra avec de nombreux représentants du secteur agricole, et rencontrera également le ministre français de l’agriculture, Stéphane Travert, le 24 février. Le Commissaire **Andriukaitis** participera quant à lui à un dialogue citoyen le jeudi 1^{er} mars portant sur le thème “L’Europe dans mon assiette : manger mieux, jeter moins”. Ce dialogue aura lieu sur le stand de la Commission européenne à partir de 12h et sera transmis en direct [ici](#). Le dimanche 24 février, Michel Barnier, négociateur en chef de la Commission européenne, visitera à son tour le Salon, accompagné par le Commissaire **Hogan**. Les équipes de la Commission seront par ailleurs disponibles tout au long de l’événement pour expliquer aux visiteurs les actions européennes en place pour soutenir et promouvoir une alimentation plus durable et plus saine. Les politiques européennes en matière d’agriculture, d’environnement, de sécurité alimentaire et de santé animale et végétale y seront présentées de manière interactive et ludique. La France reste le premier pays bénéficiaire de la Politique Agricole Commune. Plus d’informations sur la PAC en France sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel: [+32 229 56 185](#); Anca Paduraru – Tel: [+32 2 299 12 69](#); Clemence Robin – Tel.: [+32 229 52509](#); Aikaterini Apostola – Tel: [+32 2 298 76 24](#))

Commission to host a roundtable on cryptocurrencies

On Monday 26 February, the Commission will host a roundtable on “Cryptocurrencies – Opportunities and Risks” in Brussels under the chairmanship of Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Commission Vice-President in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union. Participants will exchange views on how the EU institutions, supervisors and Member States should respond to the challenges posed by fast technological developments, and seize the opportunities they offer. So-called cryptocurrencies (virtual currencies) and their underlying blockchain technology is affecting many sectors of the economy, including finance. In this context, the goal of the Commission is to ensure investor protection, market integrity and financial stability while taking full advantage of these new technological developments. The discussion will be organised around three themes: cryptocurrencies and their implications for financial markets, investor protection and market integrity in relation to cryptocurrencies as an emerging asset class, and the potential and challenges posed by initial coin offerings (ICOs). Participants will include EU institutions, EU countries, supervisors, central banks, industry, academics and crypto entrepreneurs. Vice-President Dombrovskis will brief the press on the outcome of the meeting in the Berlaymont VIP corner on Monday 26 February at 13:30 CET, and [Europe by Satellite](#) will transmit it live. *(For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)*

Future of EU finances – Commissioner Oettinger visits Spain

Commissioner Günther H. **Oettinger**, in charge of Budget and Human Resources, is visiting Spain on 26 February as part of his tour across EU Member States (#MFFtour27) aimed at gathering views on the future of EU finances and the EU’s multiannual budget post-2020 (#EUBudget). In Spain, the Commissioner will meet with Minister for Finance and Public Function, Mr Cristóbal Montoro, Secretary of State for the Budget, Mr Alberto Nadal Belda, and State Secretary for the European Union, Mr Jorge Toledo. The Commissioner appears before the Spanish Parliament Joint Committee for the EU, with the President, Ms Soraya Rodríguez Ramos and the spokespersons and other members of the Committee. He also participates in a working lunch with the Business Leaders Forum. The Commission kicked off this debate on 28 June 2017 with the publication of its [Reflection paper on the future of EU finances](#), available in all EU languages (also in [Spanish](#)). Stakeholders’ views will be taken into account when preparing the next MFF, to be presented in [May 2018](#). See a speech “[A Budget Matching our Ambitions](#)” given by Commissioner Günther H. **Oettinger** at the conference “[Shaping our Future](#)” on 8 January 2018. *(For more information: Tove Ernst- Tel.: +32 229 86764; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Vice-President Ansip and Commissioner Gabriel heading to Barcelona for Mobile World Congress and discussions on 5G deployment

On Monday begins the yearly [Mobile World Congress](#) in Barcelona, Spain. Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** and Commissioner for the

Digital Society and Economy Mariya **Gabriel** will both be attending the event at the beginning of the week. Vice-President **Ansip** will speak on Monday on the keynote panel discussion “The Future of the Industry: Transatlantic Digital Policy and Regulation” and participate in the Ministerial Programme for accelerating the uptake of next generation mobile network – 5G. Commissioner **Gabriel** will participate GSM Association’s (GSMA) Transatlantic Policy Dialogue. Both will hold a number of bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the congress with telecoms industry representatives and pay a visit to several exhibitions showcasing the newest technologies and innovative products available. The discussions on the congress will focus mainly on two topics: the development of 5G markets and the accompanying legislation [European Electronic Communications Code](#), and second, [net neutrality](#) and an open internet in Europe. Moreover, Vice-President **Ansip** and Commissioner **Gabriel** will participate in a lunch discussion with a group of CEOs from the GSMA. Vice-President **Ansip** will also meet the Chairman of the US Federal Communications Commission Ajit Pai and Indian Minister of Communications Manoj Sinha. He will also welcome the [new GSMA study on secure cross-border identification from mobile devices](#) and visit the [Graphene flagship stand](#) that will exhibit prototypes and demonstrations of the use of graphene. Commissioner **Gabriel** will visit the 5G public-private partnership stand and will announce the launch of the “[European 5G Observatory](#)” and “European 5G Pioneer Award” Contest. On Tuesday afternoon, Vice-President **Ansip** will pay a visit to the Barcelona Supercomputing Centre. More information on 5G deployment and planned reforms in spectrum management in two factsheets [here](#) and [here](#). Further details on the recent initiative on building European supercomputers can be found [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Le Commissaire Moscovici en Occitanie, France ce lundi et mardi

Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissaire pour les affaires économiques et financières, la fiscalité et les douanes, est en visite en Occitanie, France, lundi et mardi 26 et 27 février. La visite commencera par une réunion et une conférence de presse avec la Présidente de la région, Carole Delga. Ensuite, le Commissaire participera à la signature du lancement du projet de financement pour des PME géré par les Fonds européen d’investissement ([FOSTER Occitanie](#)). Il prendra part ensuite à un [dialogue citoyen](#) sur “L’Occitanie et l’Europe” à 16h30 le lundi. Ce dialogue sera [diffusé en direct sur Facebook](#). Enfin, le Commissaire participera à une table ronde avec les entreprises et représentants locaux sur le développement de l’économie occitane avec l’Europe. Pendant sa visite, le Commissaire visitera aussi trois projets fondés par les Fonds européen de développement régional: une opération de rénovation thermique à Colomiers, un groupe de projets locaux innovants à Labège, et ‘[l’Ecole de la 2ème chance](#)’ à Montpellier. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183; Enda McNamara – +32 229 64976)

EU Civil Protection Mechanism to gain satellite telecommunications system

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**

met with Luxembourgish Ministers Daniel Kersch, responsible for Home Affairs, Civil Service and Administrative Reform and Romain Schneider, responsible for Social Security, Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Affairs and Sport, on the occasion of a new Luxembourgish contribution to strengthen the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#): mobile, satellite-based telecommunications via the platform [emergency.lu](#). This platform will establish internet and telephone communication directly in the aftermath of a crisis – if and when conventional tools of communication are temporarily out of order. Commissioner **Stylianides** said: *“We welcome this contribution which is testimony to Luxembourg’s long-standing tradition of providing high added-value capacities for a better EU response to disasters in Europe and worldwide. The new telecommunication platform emergency.lu will establish internet and telephone communication as in the aftermath of hurricanes Matthew and Irma that destroyed communication infrastructure in the Caribbean.”* Commissioner **Stylianides** also met with Jan Jambon, Belgian Minister of the Interior. Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners’ weekly activities

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

[Speech by Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič at the Industry Days Forum on the Industry-led initiative on batteries / the EU Battery Alliance](#)

It is a great pleasure to open this Panel on the EU Batteries Alliance.

Our objective for the Alliance is simple, but the challenge is immense. We want, almost from scratch, to create a competitive and sustainable, battery cell manufacturing in Europe supported by a full EU-based value chain.

I am saying “almost” because we have what it takes to become world leaders – we have strong research and innovation, we have leading companies in all the value chain, we have strong recycling competence, a highly-skilled workforce, an attractive ecosystem, we have political, regulatory, and financial support (we will come back to that), but ... – and it’s a big BUT ...

We do not – as yet – have a scaled up manufacturing capacity in battery cells.

And what we are missing on, is huge: by 2025, the market in Europe is the European battery market could be worth around €250 billion per year^[1]. As large as the entire Danish economy. Do we want to leave this to our global competitors?

To capture this market, or a great part of it, we need between ten and twenty Giga factories in Europe. It has been estimated that the size of the investment required is around €1 billion per 10 GWh. So even if this is not scientific, we would need around 20 billion euros investment. This is a huge investment of course. But it is within our reach (recall 250 billion euros mobilized thanks to the Juncker plan).

While this effort must be industry-led, the **scale** and **speed** needed means that this can only be a combined effort.

It is for the EU institutions, primarily the Commission and the European Investment Bank, and Member States to pool our resources and co-operate to create a supportive framework for this investment.

Since October the Batteries Alliance has helped to generate considerable traction with concrete projects and actions emerging.

EU industry has done its homework and shown that there is a willingness to make the investment and take the risks.

They are ready to take the lead.

Therefore, I am very pleased that I am joined by Peter (Carlsson – Northvolt), Holger (Gritzka – Terra-E) and Ghislain (Lescuyer – Saft) to give us a “*front line*” view on the projects they are carrying out, and the challenges they are facing.

The European Investment Bank is also a strategic partner. I am delighted that Andrew is here to tell us more about its proactive role and, of course, the recent approval of a first loan through the Innovfin EDP facility.

And we will also hear from Diego about the excellent work of InnoEnergy – and its network of more than 80 industrial and innovation actors – to jointly propose 20 priority actions to establish a full competitive value chain in Europe. Diego, I will be particularly interested to hear about the proposals for a value chain centred on “green” high performance batteries. Meaning: sustainable and responsible supply of raw materials, clean energy based production process, recyclability and second use. I am convinced this should be the basis for our global competitive advantage.

I have followed very closely the work of the industry and many Commission services have participated in it. There are many extremely interesting actions that we need to pursue, including:

- o simplification of approval procedures and permitting processes in the EU;

- o Imaginative ways of reducing the carbon footprint of battery manufacturing; and
- o Financing demo projects.

I could – but will not – continue.

This session, like the Alliance, needs to be driven by the Industry. We, the Commission, are here as system integrator or facilitator.

Within the Commission, I have secured the support from all my colleagues in the Energy Union project to ensure that the Alliance is a priority across the board.

We have also reached out to interested Member States – most recently last week in a high-level meeting – and we are now looking into very practical ways forward to create the right conditions for industry investment. This can only be a joint and concerted effort.

[1]InnoEnergy

[The EU industry's 20-point priority action plan \(under EU Battery Alliance\)](#)

[EU mobilises the international community for Africa's Sahel region](#)

The International High Level Conference on the Sahel, co-chaired today by the European Union, the United Nations, the African Union and the G5 Sahel group of countries (Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Niger), has mobilised political support for the Sahel region, **€414 million** to support the Joint security Force of the G5 Sahel whilst reinforcing the coordination of sustainable development efforts in the region.

On the occasion, President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *“Instability has many factors so our response must be linked and ambitious. Security and development must go hand in hand. To do so, we must continue to mobilise all the instruments we have at our disposal. The EU has doubled its support to €100 million to reinforce the operationalisation of the G5 Sahel Joint Force and I am proud that all our friends and partners of the Sahel joined us in these efforts.”*

Key outcomes of the High Level Conference:

- **Reinforced political support to the region:** A [Joint Communiqué](#) was adopted, reaffirming support to assist the G5 countries in bringing greater stability to the region. Important support was given to the Mali peace process: those that threaten the process can face sanctions.

- **Increased financial assistance for security:** the EU doubled its funding to the G5 Sahel Joint Force to €100 million, which aims to improve regional security and fight terrorism. The EU and its Member States together contributed to half of the international support of the Joint Force. This new funding fully meets the needs of the Joint Force and gives it the means to improve security conditions in the region.
- **Better coordination of development efforts:** with €8 billion in development aid over 2014-2020, the EU is the biggest donor to the G5 Sahel countries. The EU will play a leading role in the Alliance for the Sahel launched in July 2017. This new initiative aims to coordinate and deliver aid quicker and more efficiently in the most fragile regions and is open to all the partners of the international community.

Background

The EU uses all its tools to support development efforts in the region, notably the [‘EU Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa’](#) under which **€843 million** has been committed so far. The EU is also a member and key supporter of the newly formed **Alliance for the Sahel**, set up recently to coordinate existing EU and Member States development assistance better and faster in the region.

In 2014, Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, and Niger set up the “G5 Sahel” group of countries to foster close cooperation in the region and tackle the major challenges that these countries face – from extreme poverty, terrorism or trafficking of human beings, which has potential spill-over effects outside the region. Since then, the EU has stepped up cooperation with this African-led initiative to build a strong partnership on many fronts: from political dialogue, to development and humanitarian support, to strengthening security and tackling irregular migration.

The EU is itself a key security player in the region, with its 3 active Common Security and Defence Policy missions: [EUCAP Sahel Niger](#), [EUCAP Sahel Mali](#), [EU training mission \(EUTM\) in Mali](#).

Useful Links

[Joint Communiqué by the European Union, the G5 Sahel, the African Union and the United Nations](#)

[Opening speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker](#)

[Remarks \(doorstep\) by High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini](#)

[Opening remarks by the 4 co-chairs of the Conference \(EbS\)](#)

[Factsheet ‘The EU’s partnership with the Sahel’](#)

[Factsheet \(O&A\) ‘The European Union’s partnership with the G5 Sahel countries’](#)

[Photos of the Conference](#)