

## Daily News 12 / 02 / 2018

### **Selon un rapport de la Commission, l'emploi et la situation sociale continuent de s'améliorer dans l'UE**

Soutenu par une forte croissance économique, l'emploi dans l'UE a augmenté plus fortement que prévu au cours du troisième trimestre de 2017 et s'accompagne toujours d'un chômage en baisse selon [le dernier rapport trimestriel sur l'évolution de l'emploi et de la situation sociale en Europe](#). La commissaire pour l'emploi, les affaires sociales, les compétences et la mobilité des travailleurs, M<sup>me</sup> Marianne **Thyssen**, a déclaré: *«La croissance est de retour en Europe. L'emploi dans l'UE atteint le plus haut niveau jamais enregistré, avec plus de 236 millions de personnes ayant un emploi. Quant au chômage, il est en diminution constante. Nous devons profiter au maximum de cette dynamique économique pour donner aux citoyens les droits nouveaux et plus efficaces que nous avons définis dans le socle européen des droits sociaux: des conditions de travail équitables, une égalité d'accès au marché du travail et une protection sociale décente. Il faut maintenant veiller à ce que tous les citoyens et les travailleurs puissent bénéficier de ces évolutions positives du marché du travail.»* Sur un an, l'emploi a augmenté de 1,7% dans l'UE, ce qui représente 4 millions de personnes, dont 2,7 dans la zone euro. Cette hausse est principalement alimentée par des emplois à temps plein et à durée indéterminée. Le taux d'emploi des 20-64 ans de l'UE a constamment augmenté ces trois dernières années pour s'établir à 72,3% au troisième trimestre 2017, soit le plus haut niveau jamais atteint. Toutefois, de grandes disparités subsistent entre les États membres. D'autres indicateurs du marché du travail figurant dans le rapport trimestriel, tel que la productivité du travail et la situation financière des ménages européens confirment aussi l'amélioration de l'économie européenne. Plus d'informations sont disponibles dans [ce communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

### **Border management: European Border and Coast Guard Agency strengthens operational cooperation with Albania**

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Fatmir Xhafaj, Minister of Interior of the Republic of Albania, initialled the draft status agreement for operational cooperation between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and Albania. Once in force, the agreement will allow the Agency to provide assistance in the field of external border management and will enable European Border and Coast Guard Agency teams to be swiftly deployed on Albanian territory in case of a sudden shift in migratory flows. Commissioner **Avramopoulos** said: *“I would like to thank the Albanian authorities for the fruitful negotiations and their commitment to reaching an agreement so quickly. Albania is a frontrunner in the region, and the agreement will serve as a role model for similar arrangements we are negotiating with other partners in the Western Balkans.*

*Closer cooperation between Albania and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will allow us to be quicker and more flexible in the way we respond to any potential migratory challenges. It is an important step forward and is in the best interests of both Albania and the European Union.*"Announced by President **Juncker** in his 2017 State of the Union address and [adopted](#) by the Commission last week, the strategy for 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans' highlighted the significant progress made by Albania on its European path and the European future of the region. Today's draft agreement is the first negotiation to be concluded between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the EU's partners in the Western Balkans. The agreement with Albania must now be endorsed by Member States and will be formally signed at a later date, once both sides complete the necessary legal procedures. A [press release](#) is available online and the press point by Commissioner **Avramopoulos** and the Albanian Minister of Interior **Fatmir Xhafaj** can be followed on [EBS](#). (For more information: *Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456 ; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 67 64; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 58602*)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the extension of the scope of Solunion Seguros' activities**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, a transaction under which Mapfre S.A. of Spain and Allianz Group of Germany, through its affiliate Euler Hermes Group SA of France, enlarge the scope of the activities of their full-function joint venture Solunion Seguros, Compañía Internacional de Seguros y Reaseguros of Spain into bonding insurance in Spain and some Latin American countries. Solunion Seguros is currently active in the provision of delcredere insurance in Spain and certain countries in Latin America. Delcredere insurance protects policy holders against the risk of their clients' insolvency. Mapfre is active in insurance and reinsurance activities worldwide. Allianz is active in the insurance, banking and asset management sectors worldwide and Euler Hermes is mainly active in the commercialisation of trade credit insurance, bonding, guarantees and collections worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns due to the minor horizontal overlaps or vertical relationships 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.8794](#). (For more information: *Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889*)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control over Kuehne + Nagel Drinkflow Logistics by Kuehne + Nagel**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Kuehne + Nagel Drinkflow Logistics Holdings Limited and its subsidiary, Kuehne + Nagel Drinkflow Logistics Limited

(together “K+N Drinksflow Logistics”) by Kuehne + Nagel Limited (“K+N”), all of the UK. K+N Drinksflow Logistics, which is currently jointly owned and controlled by K+N and Heineken UK Limited, is active in the provision of drinks distribution services in the UK. K+N is a member of the Kuehne + Nagel International AG Group and provides contract logistics services in the UK. Its business activities include storage, warehousing and distribution of food, beverages and general goods. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited impact brought about by the transaction on the market structure. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8540](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

#### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Orbital ATK by Northrop Grumman**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Orbital ATK, Inc. by the Northrop Grumman Corporation, both of the US. Orbital ATK is globally active in the manufacture of aerospace and defence systems, including launch vehicles, propulsion systems, satellites and components, tactical missiles, defence electronics, precision weapons, armament systems and ammunition. Northrop Grumman manufactures security systems, including autonomous systems, spacecraft systems, command, control and communications systems, as well as computers, ISR (intelligence surveillance and reconnaissance) systems worldwide, in addition to providing related services and logistics. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies are active on different product markets. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8688](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

#### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of sole control over Mátra by EPH**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Mátrai Erőmű Zrt. (“Mátra”) of Hungary by Energetický a průmyslový holding, a.s. (“EPH”) of the Czech Republic. Mátra owns and operates a 966 MW, mainly lignite-fired power plant in Visonta, Hungary. It also produces electricity from a biomass and solar plant. Furthermore, it owns and operates two open pit mines in Hungary. EPH is a utility company engaged in lignite extraction, electricity and heat production, distribution and supply, as well as gas transmission, distribution and storage. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited 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.8760](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

## **Vice-President Ansip in Zagreb to discuss Digital Single Market and digital transformation in Croatia**

Vice-President Andrus **Ansip** in charge of the [Digital Single Market](#) will be in Zagreb, Croatia tomorrow to participate in the conference “Digital Single Market – Challenges of Digital Transformation of Business Sector” and meet representatives of the government and business community active on digital developments. He will hold a [Citizens’ Dialogue](#) focused on the Digital Single Market. In the morning, the Vice-President will meet Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and State Secretary in charge of the Development of the Digital Society Bernard Gršić. They will notably discuss the need to develop high-speed infrastructures and e-government services in the country and in the EU. The Croatian Prime Minister will visit Brussels the day after. The Citizens’ Dialogue is expected to focus on the digital transformation in Croatia, the rollout of broadband networks, e-government, and the development of the new generation of supercomputers in Europe (Croatia joined the [EU’s cooperation](#) in November 2017). In the afternoon, Vice-President **Ansip** will visit together with President of Croatia Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović the Izidora Kršnjavoga school. He will then end the visit with meeting the Members of the Croatian Parliament from Committees on the European Affairs, Regional Development, Economy and on Information, Computerisation and the Media to discuss the digital upgrade of the Croatian economy, IT in schools, digital skills, and e-government projects. The Citizens’ Dialogue can be watched tomorrow at 11:00 live [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

## **Commissioner Hogan participates in a Citizens’ Dialogue on the future of food and farming in Seville, Spain**

Commissioner for Agriculture Phil **Hogan** is today in Seville, Spain where he took part in a [Citizens’ Dialogue on the future of food](#). It is the second time this year that the Commissioner engages with civil society in this kind of event, following his visit to the Netherlands last month. The meeting was an opportunity to exchange views on the reform of the EU Common Agricultural Policy and the future of EU farming, taking into account the specific conditions of the farming sector in South of Spain. Whilst in Seville, Commissioner **Hogan** also meets with Ms Isabel García Tejerina, the Minister of Agriculture, Fishery, Nutrition and Environment of Spain, as well as the President of the region of Andalucía, Susana Díaz, and delivers a speech at a [conference marking the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Spanish Young Farmers’ Association](#) (ASAJA). The Citizens’ Dialogue can be watched online [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel + 32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

## **Commissioner Bulc in Lithuania for high-level meetings and a citizens’ dialogue**

Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** is today and tomorrow in Vilnius to discuss the future of Europe and its transport policy. She will meet with Mr Rokas Masiulis, Minister of Transport and Communications, and they will together participate in a Citizens’ Dialogue held at the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. It will be livestreamed [here](#) as of 14:00 CET. Tomorrow,

Commissioner **Bulc** will meet with Mr Viktoras Pranckietis, Speaker of the Lithuanian Parliament (Seimas), and with members of the Seimas Parliamentary committee on European Affairs. Later in the day, she will meet with Mr Saulius Skvernelis, Prime Minister of Lithuania. *(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)*

### **Commissioner Navracsics launches European Year of Cultural Heritage in Spain**

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will be in Palencia tomorrow, [13 February](#), to launch the [European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018](#) in Spain. He will deliver a keynote speech alongside Spanish Minister of Education, Culture and Sport, Iñigo Méndez de Vigo. The Commissioner will underline the importance of this unique opportunity to strengthen awareness of Europe's cultural heritage and its positive contribution to Europe's identity, economy and social development. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy will also join the programme in Palencia and deliver a speech. The Year will see a series of initiatives and events, with some 100 European-level events and thousands of national and regional events taking place all over Europe. More information on the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#) and the [results of a Special Eurobarometer](#) on cultural heritage with national factsheets for each EU Member State are available online. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tél .: +32 229 56184)*

### **Commissaire Avramopoulos à Paris**

Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissaire européen pour la migration, les affaires intérieures et la citoyenneté, sera à Paris ce mardi, 13 février, où il rencontrera le Ministre de l'intérieur, Gérard Collomb ainsi que le Secrétaire général de l'Élysée Alexis Kohler pour discuter des questions relatives aux défis actuels de la migration et de la sécurité. Le Commissaire se rendra aussi au Sénat pour être entendu par les Commissions des affaires européennes et des affaires étrangères ainsi que par la Commission des lois. Il s'exprimera ensuite devant la Commission des affaires européennes de l'Assemblée nationale. A cette occasion, il aura aussi un entretien avec Marielle de Sarnez, la Présidente de la commission des affaires étrangères de l'Assemblée nationale. *(Pour plus d'informations: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 80423)*

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

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## **[Border management: European Border and Coast Guard Agency strengthens](#)**

# operational cooperation with Albania

Once in force, the agreement will allow the Agency to provide assistance in the field of external border management and will enable European Border and Coast Guard Agency teams to be swiftly deployed on Albanian territory in case of a sudden shift in migratory flows.

Commissioner **Avramopoulos** said: *"I would like to thank the Albanian authorities for the fruitful negotiations and their commitment to reaching an agreement so quickly. Albania is a frontrunner in the region, and the agreement will serve as a role model for similar arrangements we are negotiating with other partners in the Western Balkans. Closer cooperation between Albania and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will allow us to be quicker and more flexible in the way we respond to any potential migratory challenges. It is an important step forward and is in the best interests of both Albania and the European Union."*

Minister of Interior **Xhafaj** said: *"This is an important agreement which will help us receive qualified assistance with regard to border management. It will also allow Albania to benefit from the projects the European Union will deliver during the implementation of this agreement. This is a good opportunity for us to expand cross-border cooperation, and cooperation with EU countries. I also take this opportunity to thank the Albanian negotiating team for their professionalism in negotiating and concluding this agreement. We will immediately pursue the required procedures to start the implementation of the agreement."*

Announced by President Juncker in his 2017 State of the Union address and [adopted](#) by the Commission last week, the strategy for 'A credible enlargement perspective for and enhanced EU engagement with the Western Balkans' highlighted the significant progress made by Albania on its European path and the European future of the region. Today's draft agreement is the first negotiation to be concluded between the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the EU's partners in the Western Balkans.

Strengthened operational cooperation between priority third countries and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will contribute to better management of irregular migration, further enhance security at the EU's external borders and strengthen the Agency's ability to act in the EU's immediate neighbourhood. The status agreement with Albania is yet another step towards the full operationalisation of the Agency.

The Commission is currently negotiating similar agreements with Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and hopes for a swift conclusion to both sets of negotiations. The agreement with Albania must now be endorsed by Member States and will be formally signed at a later date, once both sides complete the necessary legal procedures. Once the Agreement has entered into force, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency will be able to carry out operational activities and deploy teams in the regions of Albania that border the EU, in agreement with both the Albanian authorities and the authorities

of those EU Member States bordering the area of operations.

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## [Commission report: Employment and social situation in the EU continues to improve](#)

Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, commented: *“Growth is back in Europe. Employment in the EU reached the highest level ever recorded with more than 236 million people in jobs. And unemployment is steadily declining. We should make the most of this positive economic momentum and deliver on new and more effective rights for citizens that we laid down in the European Pillar of Social Rights: fair working conditions, equal access to the labour market and decent social protection. Now is the time to make sure all citizens and workers can benefit from these positive evolutions on the labour market.”*

Compared to a year before, EU employment rose by 1.7%. This corresponds to an additional 4 million people employed, of which 2.7 million in the euro area. Permanent jobs and full-time employment were the main contributors to this expansion. Between the third quarter of 2016 and 2017, the number of employees with permanent contracts grew by 2.8 million. This increase is three times higher than the rise in temporary contracts (900.000). The number of full-time workers surged by about 3 million, up to 181 million, while part-time workers increased by about 300.000 up to 42.7 million.

The EU employment rate of 20-64 years olds has increased consistently over the past three years, standing at 72.3% in the third quarter of 2017, the highest rate ever reached. Nonetheless, large disparities among Member States remain. National employment rates ranged from 58% in Greece to 82% in Sweden. The report also shows that unemployment in the EU is approaching pre-crisis levels at a steady pace. Unemployment has receded by around 8.6 million people since its peak recorded in April 2013 and remained below 18 million people in December 2017, the lowest level since November 2008.

Further figures on the labour market in the Quarterly Review also confirm the improved health of the EU economy:

- **Labour productivity in the EU improved by 0.8%** compared to the third quarter of 2016. By far the strongest increase was recorded in Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Romania (3% or more year-on-year).
- **The financial situation of EU households continued to improve at a growth rate of around 1.5% year-on-year, mainly driven by an increase in income from work.** Nearly all Member States continued to see growth in household income in the year to the first half of 2017. Nonetheless in the several countries, namely Croatia, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain

as well as in the Netherlands, gross disposable household income was still below the level of 2008.

- **Labour demand and labour shortages continued to increase.** The overall job vacancy rate[1] in the EU has reached 2% in the third quarter of 2017. The job vacancy rate was higher in services than in industry and construction. Labour shortages[2] increased, and hiring[3] activity recovered (up 3.7% in a year to the second quarter of 2017). The separation rates[4] declined well below pre-crisis levels, while the job finding rate[5] has accelerated its recovery over the last quarters and approached its pre-crisis rate.

## Background

The Quarterly Review on Employment and Social Developments in Europe provides an overview of recent social and labour market developments in the EU. It looks at short-term changes in GDP and employment trends.

On 17 November 2017, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission proclaimed the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which sets out 20 key principles and rights to support fair and well-functioning labour markets and welfare systems. The Commission is already doing its part to translate the Pillar into concrete actions, for example with our [initiative on work life balance](#), the [proposal](#) for a Directive on transparent and predictable working conditions in the European Union, or the upcoming Social Fairness Package.

A key instrument to steer the process of economic and social convergence every year is the European Semester. Starting with the 2017/18 cycle, the principles and priorities of the Pillar have been mainstreamed in all the main Semester documents. In particular, the [draft Joint Employment Report](#) includes the new Social Scoreboard to monitor performances in key areas covered by the Pillar, such as the share of early school leavers, the youth unemployment rate or the impact of social transfers on poverty reduction.

## For More Information

[Quarterly Review on Employment and Social Developments in Europe – February 2018](#)

[Website on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

[Employment and social analysis by DG EMPL](#)

[1] The job vacancy rate is a percentage of vacant posts compared with the total number of vacant and occupied posts.

[2] The labour shortage indicator is a share of firms pointing to labour shortage as a factor limiting production.

[3] The hiring indicator is a share of workers who started the job with an employer within the past 3 months.

[4] The separation rate is a share of employed who left the employer in a given period.

[5] The finding rate is a share of unemployed who find the job in a given period.

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## Speech: Kenya's democracy is at a crossroad: Article signed off by Heads of Missions

Kenya is special. As diplomats living here, we see and admire daily the determination and creativity of the Kenyan people; the energy and innovation of Kenyan business; and the inspiring democratic journey that Kenya has made since independence. These and Kenya's many other achievements have made it a hub for the region and indeed for the continent and the world.

Like all democratic countries, including our own, Kenya's democracy is not perfect. But it can and should remain a source of strength, and an inspiration to all of us.

That is why, as friends, we are deeply concerned by recent political developments in Kenya. Both the government and the opposition have taken steps that have undermined Kenya's institutions, and driven wedges among its citizens.

A father of multi-party democracy has made unsubstantiated claims about elections and unilaterally sworn himself as "President", in deliberate disregard of the Constitution for which he so proudly fought.

The government, which should be the guarantor of liberty and freedom of expression for all under the law, has shut down television stations, seized the passports of opposition leaders, refused to obey court orders, and deported a prominent opposition lawyer. These events follow two elections that left many Kenyans dead and many more livelihoods disrupted.

For friends of Kenya, alarm bells are ringing.

The ambitions of politicians are fundamentally weakening institutions, and breaking the bonds of shared citizenship, which Kenyans have built up patiently over decades.

We are concerned not because we presume to dictate how Kenyans should regulate their country's affairs – we don't. But as fellow democracies, we know our freedoms and rights were hard won, and how carefully we must cherish, strengthen and protect them if our nations are to thrive and prosper.

For democracy to work, leaders must govern justly on behalf of all citizens.

When citizens disagree with the decisions leaders make, they dissent peacefully. Opposition provides a check on governmental power. A free media and civil society keep the public informed and facilitate dialogue, and that dialogue improves the policies and programs that leaders deliver to their citizens.

Institutions and Constitutions are not abstract things of interest only to lawyers. They are the only way to ensure that everyone can get justice regardless of gender, religion, wealth or personal connections; can build a better future for their family; and can have their voice heard in the decisions that affect their lives.

Today, Kenya stands at a fork in the road along its democratic journey. Its leaders need to take the right path for Kenya to succeed.

We strongly urge the government to comply fully with court orders and follow legal process in appealing or contesting them. Freedom of expression, freedom of the media, and all civil rights need to be protected. When individuals are arrested, their rights should be respected and due process followed. Citizens have the responsibility to protest non-violently, and security services should avoid unnecessary or excessive use of force. Whatever the conduct of others, the government has a special duty to protect democratic institutions and adhere to the Constitution and the rule of law at all times.

Meanwhile, the opposition must accept the decision of the Supreme Court to uphold the election of October 26. Uhuru Kenyatta and William Ruto are the legitimate President and Deputy President of Kenya. The opposition needs to accept this as the basis for the dialogue that it and many Kenyans want. Stoking and threatening violence are not acceptable, nor are extra-Constitutional measures to seize power.

As partners, we will do all we can to help; but only Kenyans can resolve the country's problems. We again call for an immediate, sustained, open, and transparent National Conversation involving all Kenyans, to build national cohesion, address long-standing issues, and resolve the deep-seated divisions that the electoral process has exacerbated.

We are investing in Kenya and have great hope for the future. But Kenyans must summon now all their strength and resolve, reaffirm the Constitution, and put the country back on the path to democracy, prosperity, and security.

This op-ed was signed off by:

Nic Hailey  
High Commissioner for the United Kingdom

Robert F. Godec  
Ambassador of the United States

Jutta Fresch  
Ambassador of Germany

Alison Chartres

High Commissioner for Australia

Sara Hradecky  
High Commissioner for Canada

Mette Knudsen  
Ambassador of Denmark

Anna Jardfelt  
Ambassador of Sweden

Victor Conrad Rønneberg  
Ambassador of Norway

Frans Makken  
Ambassador of the Netherlands

Tarja Fernández  
Ambassador of Finland

Kim Ramoneda  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i, France

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## **Labour's backing for a job-destroying Brexit deal is unforgivable**

At last we are allowed to know how bad the UK government think Brexit is actually going to be.

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Author: