

Daily News 14 / 03 / 2019

Third Brussels Conference “Supporting the future of Syria and the region” – Day 3

The Brussels III Conference “[Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region](#)” (#SyriaConf2019), co-chaired with the United Nations, ends today with the meeting of the Foreign Ministers at the Council during which the overall pledges will be made. Participants from around 80 countries and regional organisations are discussing all key aspects of the Syria crisis: political, humanitarian and regional development. A side event organised in the margins of the Ministerial meeting by several EU and non-EU Member States will tackle the issue of justice and sustainable peace in Syria. High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** [opened the ministerial meeting](#) and co-chaired the first plenary session with UN Special Envoy Geir Pedersen. Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** and Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** will both co-chair the plenary session with the UN in the afternoon. High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** announced this morning that the EU from its budget is pledging over €2 billion for 2019 alone. The European Union and its Member States, together, have so far invested already almost €17 billion for Syrian refugees and their host communities since the beginning of the war. Commissioner **Stylianides** will close the Conference with the UN and announce the Conference’s pledges at +/- 17:45 (live on [EbS](#)), reaffirming the political and financial support of the EU and international community to Syrian refugees and hosting communities. A final press release will be published [here](#) later today. The remarks of the High Representative/Vice-President and the Commissioners, as well as UN co-chairs, will be available on [EbS](#). The following interventions from yesterday’s Days of Dialogue are available online: Commissioner **Hahn** [opening remarks](#); Commissioner **Stylianides** remarks during the [panel on education](#); High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** remarks at [her joint press conference with UNSE Pedersen](#); and High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** [closing remarks](#). More information on the Conference is available on the dedicated [website](#) and more information on the “Days of Dialogue” is available [here](#) (focus on resilience and regional/development) and [here](#) (focus on humanitarian support). For further insight into the EU response to the Syrian crisis, our [factsheet](#) and infographics on the EU response to the Syrian crisis in [Jordan](#), [Lebanon](#), [Turkey](#) and [inside Syria](#) are also available online. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Matteo Arisci – Tel.: +32 229 80833; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Brexit Preparedness: European Commission welcomes swift adoption by European Parliament of several “no-deal” contingency measures

The Commission welcomes the swift adoption by the European Parliament of a

number of “no-deal” contingency measures. This will help ensure that the EU is fully ready for a “no-deal” scenario on 29 March. The proposals adopted include: ensuring for a limited period basic air, road and rail connectivity in a “no-deal” scenario, as well as allowing for continued reciprocal fishing access for EU and UK fisheries until the end of 2019 and for the provision of compensation to fishermen and operators in such a scenario. Other proposals adopted include the continuation of the PEACE programme on the island of Ireland until the end of 2020, as well as protecting the rights of Erasmus+ participants in the event of a “no-deal” scenario, and certain social security entitlements of those people who exercised their right to free movement before the UK’s withdrawal. Technical measures on ship inspections and the re-alignment North Sea – Mediterranean Core Network Corridor were also adopted. Further details of all contingency plans are available on [our website](#). The European Union has been preparing for a “no-deal” scenario since December 2017. To date, the Commission has tabled 19 legislative proposals. 17 proposals have been adopted or agreed by the Parliament and the Council. Formal adoption of all those files by the Council will take place shortly. Two proposals are still pending. As outlined in the [Commission’s Brexit Preparedness Communications](#), the EU’s contingency measures will not – and cannot – mitigate the overall impact of a “no-deal” scenario, nor do they in any way compensate for the lack of preparedness or replicate the full benefits of EU membership or the favourable terms of any transition period, as provided for in the Withdrawal Agreement. These proposals are temporary in nature, limited in scope and will be adopted unilaterally by the EU. They are not “mini-deals” and have not been negotiated with the UK. In addition to this legislative work, the Commission has also intensified its work on proactively informing the public about the importance of preparing for a “no-deal” Brexit. The Commission has published 88 preparedness notices, along with 3 detailed Brexit Preparedness Communications. The Commission also stepped up its “no-deal” outreach to EU businesses this week in the area of [customs and indirect taxation](#). The Commission continues to hold technical discussions with the EU27 Member States both on general issues of preparedness and contingency work and on specific sectorial, legal and administrative preparedness issues. The Commission’s Deputy Secretary-General, Céline Gauer, and a team of Commission officials, have been visiting all capitals of the 27 EU Member States to provide any necessary clarifications on the Commission’s preparedness and contingency action and to discuss national preparations and contingency plans. The visits so far have shown a high degree of preparation by Member States for all scenarios. All information related to the Commission’s ongoing contingency and preparedness work is available [here](#). *(For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 2 299 13 82; Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 2 299 86500)*

Commission welcomes agreement on the cross-border mobility of companies

The European Parliament and the Member States reached today a provisional agreement on new rules to make it easier for companies to merge, divide or move within the Single Market, while providing for strong safeguards. These rules will allow companies to be more competitive and to easily expand across the EU. They include strong safeguards for employees, minority shareholders and creditors, and ensure that these cross-border operations cannot be

misused for fraudulent or abusive purposes. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová** added: *"Our EU Single Market offers a lot of opportunities for companies to move and grow. However, so far companies have not been able to make the most of them in practice. The new rules on cross-border mobility will provide clear procedures for companies, which will cut costs and save time. The entrepreneurs will have the choice of where to do business and how to grow or re-organise their businesses. At the same time, the new rules will put in place strong safeguards to protect employees' rights and, for the first time, to prevent operations done for fraudulent or abusive purposes."* The full statement can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tél.: +32 229 5865)

Capital Markets Union: agreement on more robust supervision of central counterparties

The Commission welcomes the political agreement reached yesterday by the European Parliament and EU Member States to ensure a more robust and effective supervision of central counterparties (CCPs) offering services to the EU. This will contribute to preserving the financial stability in the EU. EU CCPs, systemic market infrastructures in the financial system, are already well regulated and subject to stringent supervision, thanks to a raft of measures adopted in the wake of the financial crisis. The agreement upgrades the supervision of CCPs, established in EU and non-EU countries, offering or planning to offer services to EU clearing members and their clients, as well as to EU trading venues. The agreed rules build on the [proposal to revise the European Market Infrastructure Regulation \(EMIR\)](#) presented by the European Commission in 2017 as part of the [Capital Markets Union](#) project. These new arrangements are important to protect financial stability due to the growing role of CCPs as intermediaries in financial transactions. Moreover, with the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU, a significant volume of financial instruments denominated in the currencies of Member States will be cleared by CCPs in non-EU countries. A *press release is available [online](#)*. Moreover, on the occasion of this political agreement, Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis and U.S. Commodity Futures Trading Commission (CFTC) Chairman J. Christopher Giancarlo issued a statement regarding their commitment to ensuring the implementation of the G20 reforms are effective to achieve the goals of increased financial stability, resilience and transparency in the global transatlantic OTC derivatives market. The statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)

La Commission se félicite de l'accord visant à mieux protéger les indications géographiques

Le Parlement européen, le Conseil et la Commission sont parvenus à un accord politique sur les règles qui régissent le fonctionnement de l'UE en tant que membre de l'Acte de Genève, un nouveau traité multilatéral pour la protection des indications géographiques géré par l'Organisation Mondiale de la Propriété Intellectuelle. Phil **Hogan**, Commissaire à l'agriculture, a dit:

“Grâce à cet accord politique, les indications géographiques de l’UE peuvent bénéficier d’une protection renforcée au niveau multilatéral. Cela viendra compléter les accords bilatéraux qui protègent déjà les indications géographiques de l’UE dans le monde”. L’Acte de Genève modernise l’Accord de Lisbonne de 1958 sur la protection des appellations d’origine et leur enregistrement international et permet aux organisations internationales telles que l’Union européenne de s’affilier. L’Accord de Lisbonne, qui compte actuellement 28 membres, dont sept États membres de l’UE, offre un moyen de garantir la protection des appellations d’origine au moyen d’un enregistrement unique. En tant que membre de l’Acte de Genève, les indications géographiques de l’UE pourront bénéficier à l’avenir d’une protection de haut niveau dans les autres pays membres. Un communiqué de presse est [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

Single Market: Commission facilitates mobility of ski instructors across the EU

Today, the Commission adopted a new common training test for ski instructors (CTT) to facilitate the recognition of their professional qualifications. This forms part of the Commission’s constant efforts to exploit the full potential of the Single Market and deepen integration in areas like services and other key areas of our economy, as reaffirmed in our [November 2018 assessment of the Single Market](#). Commissioner Elżbieta Bieńkowska, responsible for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *“Ski instructors, as other professionals and service providers, should be able to benefit from the Single Market. The new test adopted today will help to improve the mobility of ski instructors within the Single Market and allow them to further contribute to this important sector of our tourist economy.”* Ski instructors currently already benefit from the principle of [mutual recognition of their qualifications](#). The new CTT will offer an additional instrument to facilitate their access to ski instruction activities in other Member States while ensuring they have the high level of skills and knowledge of safety and environmental issues needed. The new CTT is voluntary in nature and does not harmonise different national rules. It does not alter the responsibility of the Member State that receives professionals from other EU countries to check their qualifications or fitness to practice and, in cases of justified doubt, contacting the Member State that issued the diploma. The CTT is the first successful creation of a common training test, which has been introduced as a novel instrument by the revised Professional Qualifications Directive. The European Parliament and Council now have two months to scrutinise the Commission Delegated Regulation, after which the act will enter into force 20 days after its publication in the Official Journal of the EU. The Delegated Act is available [here](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229-56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)

Financial markets: Commission grants exceptions to the Chinese central bank for monetary policy and financial stability purposes

The European Commission has today adopted a [Delegated Regulation](#) providing for an exemption from pre- and post-trade transparency requirements under EU law to the benefit of the People's Bank of China in its performance of monetary, foreign exchange and financial stability policies. EU central banks already benefit from certain exemptions under the Markets in Financial Instruments Regulation (MiFIR) that help them perform more efficiently their statutory tasks in the pursuit of monetary, foreign exchange and financial stability policy. Such exemptions are necessary given their special public role of central banks. MiFIR also empowers the Commission to extend the scope of this exemption to non-EU central banks where the prerequisite conditions are fulfilled. Other non-EU central banks, 13 in total, already enjoy these exemptions. In August 2018, the People's Bank of China provided the data necessary to complete the assessment, which the Commission concluded appropriate for the purpose of this exemption. The Commission Delegated Regulation will be under scrutiny of the European Parliament and the Council for respectively 3 and 3 months, with a targeted entry into application on 18 October 2019. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)*

Africa-Europe Alliance: the Commission shares knowledge and good practices on road safety

The Africa Transport and Connectivity Task Force met today in Brussels to share perspectives on how to improve road safety, particularly in the African continent, and to strengthen the partnership between the European Union and the African Union in this strategic area. Both African and European participants will have the chance to evaluate the road safety situation in the African continent and share good practices and approaches that were effective in the European context. The recently established Task Force's objectives are to support pan-African connectivity, boost public and private investment in the African transport network and identify and assist with structural reforms in the transport sector. Overall, the initiative focusses on three key areas –air transport, connectivity and road safety – and is part of the new [‘Africa-Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs’](#) announced by President **Juncker** at his [State of the Union speech in 2018](#). Safer roads mean better connectivity and creating easier conditions for smart, safe and sustainable transport, facilitating economic activity as a whole. Therefore today's meeting marks a next step towards achieving the central objectives of the Africa-Europe Alliance to boost investment and creating jobs in Africa. Commissioner for Transport, Violeta **Bulc** said: *“Every life counts. Road crashes are one of the leading causes of death and serious injuries globally. No nation or continent is spared. I hope today's first round of discussions between African and European stakeholders will pave the way for engaging exchange of experiences, and best practices, so we can learn together and make progress towards safe roads for all. Each fatality, each serious injury has a life-changing impact on individuals, on families and also on economies of these countries. By joining forces, I am convinced we can deliver on Vision Zero globally, the long-term goal of moving close to zero fatalities and serious injuries”*. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, said: *“Improving Africa's road safety is a double-win: it would not only save lives, but also*

positively impact the continent's development through better connectivity and trade, as well as boost jobs and sustainable growth. This is precisely the kind of win-win our Africa-Europe Alliance is all about." (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917)

Les Européens veulent que l'accent soit mis sur l'amélioration de l'accès à internet à haut débit et aux compétences numériques, selon une nouvelle étude

La Commission a publié aujourd'hui [une nouvelle étude détaillée](#) sur l'accès aux technologies numériques et leur utilisation dans les écoles, qui démontre que les initiatives de la Commission visant à renforcer la connectivité et les compétences numériques répondent aux besoins réels de nombreux Européens et entreprises. Parmi les principales conclusions, moins d'un élève européen sur cinq fréquente une école disposant d'un accès internet haut débit supérieur à 100 Mbps. L'étude montre également que près de 79% des élèves du secondaire ne s'engagent jamais ou presque jamais dans le codage ou la programmation à l'école. Tibor **Navracsics**, commissaire chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, a commenté: « *L'intégration de la technologie dans l'enseignement et l'apprentissage nécessite des actions sur plusieurs fronts, notamment l'infrastructure, la formation des enseignants et le leadership des écoles. Avec le programme Erasmus+, nous aidons les écoles et les États membres à s'adapter au changement numérique et à aider les jeunes à comprendre et à utiliser la technologie de manière critique et créative.* » Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire chargée de l'économie et de la société numériques, a déclaré: « *Le fait que 79% des élèves du premier cycle du secondaire et que 76% des élèves du deuxième cycle du secondaire ne fassent jamais ou presque jamais de codage ou de programmation prouve la pertinence de nos initiatives pour aider à combler les lacunes existantes en compétences et en connectivité numériques. Ces deux défis sont au cœur de la stratégie du marché unique numérique et sont essentiels pour apporter des avantages concrets aux citoyens et aux entreprises* ». Cette enquête est la deuxième enquête sur les écoles: les TIC dans l'éducation, qui a sondé près de 85 000 chefs d'établissement, enseignants, élèves et parents dans les 28 États membres, en Norvège, en Islande et en Turquie entre novembre 2017 et mai 2018 dans le cadre du [plan d'action de la Commission en faveur de l'éducation numérique](#). Plus d'informations ainsi que le rapport complet sont disponibles [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tél.: +32 229 56184)

Eurostat: 580 800 primo-demandeurs d'asile enregistrés en 2018, en baisse de 11% par rapport à 2017

En 2018, 580 800 primo-demandeurs d'asile ont introduit une demande de protection internationale dans les États membres de l'Union européenne (UE), un chiffre en baisse de 11% par rapport à 2017 (654 600) et qui représente moins de la moitié du pic de 2015, lorsque 1 265 600 primo-demandeurs d'asile étaient enregistrés. Le nombre de primo-demandeurs d'asile en 2018 est comparable au niveau enregistré en 2014, avant les pics de 2015 et 2016. Les Syriens (80 900 primo-demandeurs d'asile), les Afghans (41 000) et les Irakiens (39 600) étaient toujours les trois principales nationalités des personnes ayant sollicité une protection internationale auprès des États

membres de l'UE en 2018, représentant ensemble près de 30% du nombre total de primo-demandeurs d'asile. Ces données sur les demandes d'asile dans l'UE sont publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Mina Andreeva – Tél.: +32 229-91382; Markus Lammert – Tél.: +32 229 80423)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Thyssen attend Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

Tomorrow, 15 March, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will attend the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting (EPSCO). Discussions on the 2019 European Semester will be a focal point of the meeting. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the annual growth survey and the joint employment report, and the Commission will present the [2019 country reports, published on 27 February](#). Ministers will also discuss the proposal for the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for the period 2021-2027, with the aim of reaching a partial general approach. Participants will also hold a policy debate on the social dimension of Europe post-2020. A complete overview of the Juncker Commission's initiatives in this field since 2014 can be found [here](#). Over lunch, participants will discuss developing adult skills. In addition, the Commission and the Council Presidency will inform the Council about the preparations of the Tripartite Social Summit, taking place on 20 March 2019. Finally, Ministers will be informed about progress made on several legislative files, including the [European Labour Authority](#), [transparent and predictable working conditions](#), [work-life balance for working parents and carers](#), the [rules on social security coordination](#), the [protection of workers against cancer-causing chemicals](#) and the [European Accessibility Act](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis visiting Stockholm

Commissioner Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, in charge of Health and Food Safety, will be visiting Stockholm tomorrow, Friday 15 March. The Commissioner will start his day by meeting Ms Lena Hallengren, the Minister for Health and Social Affairs of Sweden. Following this at 9:00 CET, Commissioner **Andriukaitis** along with Dr Andrea Ammon, Director of European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control ([ECDC](#)) will be holding a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) at the European House entitled "Everything you always wanted to know on EU Health and Food Safety". Topics addressed will include the future food consumption, health promotion and disease prevention, and the policies the EU have put in place to address related public health challenges – notably antimicrobial resistance and vaccine-preventable disease. Later on that morning, at 11.30 CET, the Commissioner will visit the [European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) (ECDC). Ahead of his visit, Commissioner **Andriukaitis** said: "I

look forward to my visit to Stockholm and the site of the ECDC, an important centre working to strengthen Europe's defences against infectious diseases, at a time when we are seeing a most unfortunate resurgence of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles. It is vital that we work together to overcome the obstacles facing adherence to vaccine programmes and correctly inform our citizens, as is our public health duty that preventable deaths no longer occur." (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

Citizens' Dialogue with Commissioner King in Slovenia

Tomorrow, Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** will be in Ljubljana, Slovenia to take part in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) hosted by the University of Ljubljana's Faculty of Social Sciences, under the title "Are we safe in Europe?" The event will begin at 9:30 CET and will be livestreamed on [Facebook](#). Commissioner **King** will then meet the Slovenian Minister of the Interior Boštjan Poklukar. Together, they will discuss the ongoing implementation of EU security legislation, including new information systems for borders and security for which Slovenia has recently received additional EU funding. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

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