

EU trade agreements: delivering new opportunities in time of global economic uncertainties

Despite the difficult global economic climate, European companies have continued to make good use of the opportunities created by the European Union's trade network – the largest in the world. In 2018 this network covered 31% of Europe's trade exchanges, a figure that is set to rise significantly (to almost 40%) as more trade agreements enter into force, according to the European Commission's [annual report on the implementation of trade agreements](#) released today. Overall, international trade accounts for 35% of the EU's gross domestic product (GDP). In 2018 EU exports to and imports from trade agreement partners showed positive developments, with a continued growth of 2% and 4.6% respectively, with a strong performance of EU agri-food exports. Commenting on the report, Commissioner for Trade Cecilia Malmström said *"Trade agreements create opportunities for European businesses to grow and hire more people. Today's report shows that overall trade is up, and more of our global trade is covered by preferential deals than ever before. Our food and drink exports in particular are flourishing thanks to lower tariffs and legal protection abroad for artisanal EU products like Champagne and Feta. The report also provides evidence of how our focus on trade and sustainable development is bearing fruit. Furthermore, we have taken a number of unprecedented steps to enforce the commitments made by our trade partners in the last year, including notably on workers' rights. There is still work to be done, of course. But by opening up this data to the wider public we hope to launch a wider discussion about how to make sure trade agreements benefit as many citizens as possible."* A full [press release](#), [factsheet](#) and [Commission Staff Working Document](#) are available online. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel. : +32 229 56185 ; Kinga Malinowska – Tel. : +32 229 51383)

State aid: Commission approves €380 million German rescue aid to Condor

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, Germany's plans to grant a temporary €380 million loan to charter airline Condor. On 25 September 2019, Germany notified the Commission of its intention to grant, via the German public development bank KfW, a €380 million rescue loan to Condor. The airline faces an acute liquidity shortage following the entry into liquidation of its parent company, the Thomas Cook Group. Furthermore, Condor had to write off significant claims against other Thomas Cook Group companies, which Condor will no longer be able to collect. The Commission's [Guidelines on rescue and restructuring aid](#) allow Member States to support companies in difficulties, provided, in particular, that the public support measures are limited in time and scope and contribute to an objective of common interest. In the present case, Commission found that the measure will help ensure the orderly continuation of flight services, in the interest of air passengers. At the same time, the strict conditions attached to the loan and its duration limited to six months will reduce the distortion of competition potentially triggered by the State support to a minimum. The

Commission therefore concluded that the measure is compatible with EU State aid rules. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission opens investigation into proposed public support for Samsung plant in Hungary

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether Hungary's plans to grant €108 million of public support to Samsung SDI for investing in the expansion of its battery cell production facility in Göd (Hungary) is in line with EU rules on regional State aid. Samsung SDI is investing around €1.2 billion to expand the production capacity of lithium-ion cells and battery packs for electric vehicles in its existing plant located in Göd. In 2018, Hungary notified the Commission of its plans to grant €108 million of public support for the project. The Commission has doubts at this stage that the planned aid support complies with all relevant criteria of the Commission's [2014 Regional State Aid Guidelines](#). In particular: (i) the Commission has doubts whether the measure has an "incentive effect". It will investigate whether the decision by Samsung SDI to invest in Hungary was directly triggered by the Hungarian public support or whether the investment would have been carried out in Göd, even absent the public support; (ii) the Commission also has doubts in relation to the public support's contribution to regional development and on its appropriateness and proportionality; and (iii) it cannot exclude at this stage that the public support may lead to the relocation of jobs from other EU Member States to Hungary. The Commission will now investigate further to determine whether or not the initial concerns are confirmed. The opening of an in-depth investigation provides Hungary and interested third parties with an opportunity to comment on the measure. It does not prejudice in any way the outcome of the investigation. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Public investment is important to foster economic growth in disadvantaged regions in Europe. But public support should only be given if it's necessary to trigger private investment in the disadvantaged region concerned. Otherwise, it only gives the beneficiary an unfair advantage over its competitors, at the expense of taxpayers. The Commission will carefully investigate whether Hungary's planned support is really necessary for Samsung SDI to invest in Göd, is kept to the minimum necessary and does not distort competition or harm cohesion in the EU."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [HU](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

Mergers: Commission clears joint acquisition of United Pacific by Phillips 66 and Fortress Investment Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over CF United LLC ("United Pacific") by Phillips 66, and Fortress Investment Group LLC ("Fortress"), all of the US, ultimately controlled by SoftBank Group Corp. ("Softbank") of Japan. United Pacific is the independent owner and operator of fuel stations and convenience stores in the West Coast of the US, selling motor fuel and daily consumer goods. Prior to the transaction, United Pacific was solely

controlled by Fortress. Phillips 66 is a multinational energy company with a portfolio of integrated midstream, chemicals, refining and marketing businesses, which processes, transports, stores and markets fuels and products globally. Fortress is an alternative investment and asset management firm, which manages capital for a diverse group of investors including pension funds, endowments and foundations, and financial institutions. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concern, as the jointly controlled entity has no actual or foreseen activities within the European Economic Area. 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.9453](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Mimica in Rome to reiterate EU commitment to support the fight against hunger worldwide

Commissioner Neven **Mimica** is at the Food and Agriculture Organisation's headquarters in Rome today for a series of events around ending hunger worldwide. He will speak at the plenary opening of the 46th Session of the Committee on World Food Security, which is devoted the latest [State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World](#) Report. Commissioner **Mimica** will sign a €9 million contribution to support nature-friendly agricultural practices in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, as part of the EU's broader support promoting environmental sustainability in the ACP regions. The new contribution will support ACP countries' efforts to bring about sustainable changes in agricultural policies and practices to conserve and sustainably use biodiversity and natural resources. These will contribute to tackling land degradation and desertification, and bolster food security and resilience to climate change. Commissioner **Mimica** will furthermore participate in an event of the [Global Network against Food Crises](#), which the EU has been supporting since its very launch in 2016. At this occasion, the Commissioner is announcing an EU contribution of €20 million to strengthen the Global Network's work, which is a [follow-up to the €77 million announced at the UN General Assembly last year](#). This new package will support countries most at risk of a food crisis through dedicated technical assistance. It will further strengthen the Global Network's collection and analysis of relevant data, through real time updates and information on all countries and hotspots at risk of food crises. The Commissioner will also announce an EU contribution of €5 million to the African Risk Capacity, to support its innovative insurance products focusing on countries with weaker institutional governance, low economic capacity and prone to extreme weather events. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela –Tel.: +32 229 6532; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +322992256)

La Commission organise une conférence sur les services de micro-mobilité

La commissaire chargée des transports, Violeta **Bulc**, participe aujourd'hui à la conférence « [La micro-mobilité: le prochain enjeu?](#) » à Ljubljana, en Sloénie. De nouveaux concepts de mobilité tels que les vélos et les scooters électriques pourraient avoir le potentiel de réduire les embouteillages et améliorer la qualité de l'air dans les villes, par exemple en remplaçant les trajets en voiture. L'utilisation de ces véhicules doit néanmoins être sûre et durable. Se concentrant sur les derniers développements en matière de micro-mobilité partagée, la commissaire **Bulc** a déclaré: « *La micro-mobilité – scooters électriques, vélos, monoroues et autres dispositifs – est l'un des prochains grands sujets dans le domaine des solutions multimodales de mobilité intégrée. Correctement abordée, la micro-mobilité peut jouer un rôle significatif pour concrétiser la Vision zéro: zéro pollution et émissions, zéro décès et blessures graves, zéro embouteillages aux niveaux européen, national et local. Notre conférence à Ljubljana est consacrée à ce sujet. Différentes parties prenantes sont rassemblées pour identifier les questions urgentes et proposer des pistes de solutions sur lesquelles la nouvelle Commission pourra s'appuyer.* » Lors de la conférence, la commissaire **Bulc** visitera également une exposition publique sur les services de micro-mobilité. (Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tél.: +32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tél.: +32 229 13917)

Copyright: dialogue between platforms and rights holders starts tomorrow

The first meeting of the stakeholder dialogue on the application of Article 17 of the [Directive on Copyright in the Digital Single Market](#) on the use of protected content by online content-sharing service providers will take place tomorrow in Brussels. The stakeholders will discuss best practices on how content-sharing platforms and service providers should cooperate with rights holders. This dialogue is foreseen under the new directive and will help to prepare the guidance on the application of Article 17. The European Commission has invited stakeholder organisations to attend, based on the criteria listed in [the call of expression of interest for participating the stakeholder dialogue](#). The agenda is available [here](#). Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** will open the session at 09:45 CEST. Her speech as well as the discussions can be followed live via [webstream](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

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