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COLLEGE MEETING: European Semester Autumn Package: Bolstering inclusive and sustainable growth

Vice-President **Dombrovskis**, Commissioner **Thyssen** and Commissioner **Moscovici** presented today the European Semester Autumn Package that represents the beginning of the 2019 [European Semester](#) cycle of economic and social policy coordination. The Commission has set out the EU's economic and social priorities for 2019, presented [Opinions on Draft Budgetary Plans](#) and confirmed the existence of particularly serious non-compliance with the Stability and Growth Pact in the case of Italy. Greece has been integrated into the European Semester for the first time. The 2019 European Semester cycle of economic and social policy coordination begins against a backdrop of sustained but less dynamic growth in a climate of high uncertainty. A lot has been achieved since 2014 but more must be done to support inclusive and sustainable growth and job creation while enhancing the resilience of Member States' economies. At EU level, this demands taking the decisions required to further strengthen the Economic and Monetary Union. At national level, there is a pressing need to use the current growth momentum to build up fiscal buffers and reduce debt. Investment and structural reforms need to focus even more on boosting productivity and growth potential. These actions will provide the conditions for sustained macro-financial stability and serve EU's long-term competitiveness. This will, in turn, create the conditions for more and better jobs, greater social fairness and better living standards for Europeans. Today's package is based on the [Autumn 2018 Economic Forecast](#) and builds on the priorities set out in [President Juncker's 2018 State of the Union](#) address. The [press release](#) and [memo](#) are available online. (For more information: Christian Spahr Tel.: +32 229 50055; Christian Wigand Tel.: +32 229 62253; Annikky Lamp Tel.: +32 229 56151; Enda McNamara Tel.: +32 229 64976)

COLLEGE MEETING: The Commission makes its in-house governance clearer, simpler and more transparent

Today, the College adopted a set of targeted measures to make its in-house governance clearer, simpler and more transparent. This is an important step in ensuring the Commission is better equipped to tackle the challenges of today and tomorrow and also follows up on recommendations from the European Court of Auditors and the Commission's Internal Audit Service. Under the reform, the Commission clarifies and formalises the mandate of the Corporate Management Board – an in-house structure which provides coordination, oversight, advice and strategic orientations on corporate management issues. Moreover, the IT governance landscape within the Commission will be simplified, as set out in the [Commission's Digital Strategy](#). The strategy sets a vision for the Commission to become a digitally transformed, user-focused and data-driven administration by 2022. Today's measures also include strengthening the corporate risk management and its process. An update of the

Charter of the Audit Progress Committee also tasks it with monitoring the Commission's follow up to the European Court of Auditors' observations on the EU consolidated accounts. The Commission has also today revised the administrative arrangements on co-operation and timely exchange of information between the European Commission and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). The new in-house measures adopted by the College today have immediate effect. The texts of the five documents are available [online](#) and more information on the European Commission's Digital Strategy can be found [here](#). (For more information: *Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444*)

Commission welcomes agreement on foreign investment screening framework

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached yesterday afternoon a political agreement on an EU framework for screening of foreign direct investment. The package agreed will ensure that the EU and its Member States are equipped to protect their essential interests while maintaining one of the most open investment regimes in the world. President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"Europe must always defend its strategic interests and that is precisely what this new framework will help us to do. This is what I mean when I say that we are not naïve free traders."* Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** said: *"This is an important milestone in the process we initiated only a year ago to protect critical technology and infrastructure in Europe. In an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, we need means to protect our collective security while keeping Europe open for business. I count on the European Parliament and Member States to swiftly approve the investment screening mechanisms agreed today."* The new European framework for screening of foreign direct investment creates a cooperation mechanism where Member States and the Commission will be able to exchange information and raise specific concerns; allows the Commission to issue opinions in cases concerning several Member States, or a project of interest to the whole EU; encourages sharing experience, best practices and information regarding investment trends. The new framework will not affect the Member States' ability to maintain their existing review mechanisms. The two co-legislators have now to give the final greenlight to the proposal so that it can enter into force. For more information, see full [press release](#). (For more information: *Daniel Rosario – Tel.:+32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.:+32 229 51383*)

Juncker Plan: Austrian small and medium businesses get access to fresh funding to innovate

On the occasion of the "[Innovative Enterprise Vienna 2018](#)" conference, organised by the Austrian Presidency of the Council, the European Investment Bank Group and the Austrian promotional bank Austria Wirtschaftsservice (aws) have agreed to extend an existing guarantee by up to €48 million, bringing it to up to €96 million, in order to support an additional 150 innovative small and medium businesses in the country. This agreement is backed both by the

European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Juncker Plan](#) and Horizon 2020, the EU programme for Research and Innovation. Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos **Moedas**, said: *"I welcome this new agreement supported by the Juncker Plan and Horizon 2020. It means fresh financing for Austrian innovative small and medium businesses – which is precisely what they need to launch new products, hire new staff and expand beyond their local markets."* By November 2018, the Investment Plan had already mobilised €360 billion of investment across Europe, including over €4 billion in Austria, and supported 850,000 small and medium businesses. A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Commission welcomes agreements on safeguarding competition in aviation and on a modernised road toll system

Yesterday, the European Parliament and Council reached two provisional political agreements on legislative proposals from the Commission, in two crucial areas of European mobility. An agreement was reached on new EU rules to safeguard competition in aviation. This regulation will ensure that Europe remains a leader in international aviation, well connected to fast-growing markets. This is a concrete sign of a Europe that protects and that will take action whenever other non-EU carriers will benefit from practices that will put Europe's interest and connectivity at risk. With its ['Aviation Strategy for Europe'](#) from December 2015, the Commission underlined the importance of this proposal and has now delivered. A second agreement was reached on the 'European Electronic Toll Service', a system that will make all the different electronic road toll systems interoperable across Europe. This will allow, once implemented, people to drive from Tallinn to Lisbon without the hassle of having to deal with different road toll systems. This will also simplify administration and reduce fraud. In addition to providing a better service to European users by making it possible to pay tolls in the whole EU with one contract and one on-board device, the system reduces the costs and allows for an easy collection of tolls. Furthermore, the European Electronic Toll Service will enable the application of the 'user pays' and 'polluter pays' principles and thus contribute to the Commission's [Climate objectives](#). Violeta **Bulc**, Commissioner for Transport, said: *"I am proud to see that yesterday we achieved concrete results in two key areas that will enhance Europe's leadership in mobility. The agreement on safeguarding competition in aviation ensures that aviation can continue to drive mobility, growth and job creation in the EU. While with the 'European Electronic Toll Service' the [First Mobility Package](#) is starting to bear fruit and the Commission paves the way for modern European electronic tolling rules, contributing to a seamless travel experience for our road users."* (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 1 39 17)

EU Nature Action Plan: revised guidance on managing protected Natura 2000 areas

As part of the [EU Action Plan for Nature, People and the Economy](#) the European Commission has published an updated guidance for Member States' authorities,

stakeholders and EU citizens on how to conserve and manage Natura 2000 network of protected areas. Karmenu **Vella**, EU Commissioner for Environment, Fisheries and Maritime Affairs, said: *"With today's updated guidance document we're helping to ensure that EU nature laws deliver for nature, people and the economy. The sound management of the Natura 2000 sites is essential for the maintenance and enhancement of our European biodiversity, ecosystems and the services they provide on which some 4.4 million jobs in the EU are directly dependent. I trust that this document will be of great use for the management of Natura 2000 sites, helping to better reconcile nature protection with different economic activities for the broader benefit of society."* [Natura 2000](#) established under the EU's [Birds Directive](#) and [Habitats Directive](#) is a EU-wide network of over 27 500 terrestrial and marine sites covering more than 18 % of land area and is the centrepiece of the EU's nature and biodiversity policy. While national and regional authorities are primarily responsible for the implementation of EU nature legislation, today's guidance provides added clarity to help Member States to improve application of provisions around permitting procedures (Article 6 of the Habitats Directive). Through clear and accessible explanations, the Commission anticipates to reduce administrative burdens, streamline procedures across Member States, and enhance overall implementation on the ground for the benefit of nature, people and the economy. More information is available in the [news item](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Shire by Takeda, subject to conditions

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Shire by Takeda Pharmaceutical Company. The Commission's investigation focused on treatments for inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), and, in particular, on biologic treatments for the disease, where Shire's and Takeda's activities overlap. Takeda already offers a biologic treatment for IBD, called Entyvio, which belongs to a class of biologic treatments called "anti-integrins". Shire is currently developing a biologic treatment belonging to the same class of biologics. The Commission was concerned that the takeover, as originally notified, would lead to a loss of innovation and a reduction in potential future competition. To address the Commission's competition concerns, Takeda offered to divest Shire's pipeline product that is expected to compete with Entyvio, including the rights to its development, manufacturing and marketing, to a purchaser that would have an incentive to develop the drug. The commitments thus fully remove the overlap between Takeda's and Shire's activities on the market where the Commission had identified competition concerns. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction, as modified by the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns. The decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, responsible for competition policy, said: *"There are many diseases with only a limited number of effective and safe treatments. Inflammatory bowel disease is one such case. It is a lifelong condition with devastating effects on people's lives.*

Therefore, it is essential that companies continue developing promising new products to treat it. We can today approve the merger between Shire and Takeda, but only subject to the divestment of the product that Shire is developing to treat the disease and which could have been lost through the merger. This will preserve innovation in this market and, importantly, increase the choice of treatments for patients.” The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Commission’s Structural Reform Support Programme is delivering on its objectives

The first annual monitoring report on the implementation of the Structural Reform Support Programme was released today. In 2017, 159 requests from 16 Member States were selected for funding under the programme. The 2017 annual monitoring report shows that the programme can significantly contribute to the efforts of the Member States’ authorities to identify and overcome structural weaknesses in the design and implementation of reforms. Valdis Dombrovskis, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: “The Annual Growth Survey, adopted by the College today, underlines that growth-enhancing reforms remain a key priority for the EU. Through the Structural Reform Support Programme, the Commission supports Member States’ reform initiatives while enabling them to share best practices and learn from each other’s experience.” The [Structural Reform Support Programme](#) entered into force in May 2017 and has a budget of €222.8 million until 2020. The programme is available to all EU Member States upon their request and provides tailor-made expertise on the practical aspects of reforms. The first monitoring report of the programme is available [here](#). The programme is managed by the [Structural Reform Support Service](#) which supports Member States in the preparation, design and implementation of growth-enhancing reforms. Since 2015, the service has engaged, through the Structural Reform Support Programme or other sources, in almost 500 technical support projects in 25 EU Member States. An overview of the 3 years of the Structural Reform Support Service is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Jourová on official visit to Lithuania

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra Jourová will be in Vilnius tomorrow and Friday, where she will meet Dalia Grybauskaitė, the President of Lithuania, Elvinas Jankevičius, the Minister of Justice, and Linas Linkevičius, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. On Thursday, the Commissioner will also deliver a speech on the future of Europe in the plenary debate at the national Parliament (Seimas). She will discuss a similar topic with the Leaders’ Club Conference. She will have a joint press conference with the Minister of Justice after their meeting. On Friday, Commissioner Jourová will participate in the [Heads of Justice and Home Affairs \(JHA\) Agencies meeting](#) and in view of the upcoming International day

against violence against women on 25/11, she will give a press conference at the [European Institute for Gender Equality \(EIGE\)](#) focused on combating violence against women across the EU and Lithuania. The Commissioner will participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue at the Vilnius University](#), on the future of Europe, European Public Prosecutor, data protection, new deal for consumers, threat to elections, equality, and rule of law ([live](#) at 11:30). During her visit, the Commissioner will have meeting with civil society, including Lithuanian NGOs working with the justice, human rights, and equality fields. A press point will follow her meeting with Elvinas Jankevičius, the Minister of Justice at 12:00 on Thursday. The press conference on violence against women at the EIGE will be [live streamed](#) at 10:40 on Friday. (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Melanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Commissioner Avramopoulos in Bucharest, Romania

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will be in Bucharest, Romania tomorrow, where he will meet Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă, Interior Minister Carmen Dan and Minister Delegate for European Affairs George Ciamba to discuss priorities in the field of migration and home affairs in view of Romania's upcoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union. Commissioner **Avramopoulos** will also meet with Senate Speaker Călin Popescu Tăriceanu and Chamber of Deputies Speaker Liviu Dragnea. He will also exchange views with the joint European Affairs and Foreign Affairs Committees from the Senate and Chamber of Deputies as well as with the Joint Special Committee of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate for the coordination of parliamentary activities necessary for the preparation of the Council Presidency. Joint press statements with Interior Minister Dan and Prime Minister Dăncilă are scheduled tomorrow at 9.00h and 10.15h CET+1 respectively and will be available on [EBS](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 80423)

Commissioner Andriukaitis at the 4th Conference on European Reference Networks

On 21-22 November the fourth Conference on European Reference Networks (ERNs) takes place in Brussels. The European Reference Networks are virtual networks involving healthcare providers across Europe with the aim to facilitate discussion on complex or rare diseases and conditions that require highly specialised treatment. The conference brings together more than 400 participants, such as the representatives of EU and national institutions, healthcare providers, medical professionals, and patients' representatives to discuss the results achieved so far and the challenges ahead. Ahead of the conference Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, said: *"The European Reference Network system is already a success story: just over 18 months after its launch more than 250 patients have been diagnosed and have received a treatment thanks to their work. The Networks are starting to deliver concrete benefits but it needs yet to confront the challenges ahead, in particular the sustainability and integration into the national healthcare systems that can only be addressed through close cooperation*

between all players. We also need to continue to bridge the gap between research and clinical care and bring research results closer to the patients. The potential of ERNs for the future is immense in this respect. I am confident that the dedication and expertise of these Networks will lead to a sustainable, cross-border ecosystem of clinical and research activities in Europe.” The conference will be webstreamed [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

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