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Protecting Europeans: European Council of 22-23 June focuses on security and borders, defence, trade and economic development

At the meeting of the European Council of 22-23 June, EU leaders welcomed the encouraging return to economic growth to all 28 Member States, underlined the importance of the Union's comprehensive strategy on migration and committed to stepping up work on defence and security. Speaking of the Commission's concrete proposals on defence, President **Juncker** said at yesterday's press conference: *"The proposal to create a Defence Fund is necessary – because in Europe we have 178 types of weapon systems, whereas the U.S. have 30. [...] there is room for improvement and that is exactly what we decided today."* Today, EU Heads of State or Government also discussed how to unlock the potential of the Single Market, as well as trade and industry, while ensuring that the benefits reach all parts of society. Speaking at today's press conference, President **Juncker** underlined the improving economic situation in Europe: *"We have good news. Unemployment is going down, employment is improving, growth is picking up, [...] The fiscal deficit is decreasing: in 2011, we had 24 countries in the Excessive Deficit Procedure, we are left now with four countries. This is a tremendous achievement [...]"*

President **Juncker** also called on Member States to step up their contributions to the EU-Africa Trust Fund and reiterated that trade needs to be free, but fair. President **Juncker's** remarks will be available online and a recording of both press conferences ([yesterday](#) and [today](#)) are available on [EbS](#). Today, the Commission published first key findings of the [Standard Eurobarometer Survey](#). These show that today, almost half of Europeans believe the economic situation is good in their country (while it was only 20% back in 2009) and that optimism is on the rise regarding the Future of the Union (56% say they are optimistic which is +6 percentage points up in the last 6 months). (*For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382, Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456*)

Commission to invest 2.7 billion Euro in transport sector

Today the European Commission is proposing to invest €2.7 billion in 152 key transport projects that support competitive, clean and connected mobility in Europe. In doing so, the Commission is delivering on its [Investment Plan for Europe](#) and on Europe's connectivity including the recent ["Europe on the Move"](#) agenda. [Selected projects](#) will contribute to modernising rail lines, removing bottlenecks and improving cross-border connections, installing alternative fuel supply points, as well as implementing innovative traffic management solutions. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: *"The demand for investment in transport infrastructure is huge. This new wave of investment focuses on clean, innovative and digital projects to modernise Europe's transport network. Today we are one step closer to a true Transport Union, serving the needs of citizens, stimulating the economy and creating jobs [...]"* This investment is made under the [Connecting Europe Facility](#), the EU's financial mechanism supporting infrastructure networks, and will unlock €4.7 billion of public and private co-financing. Under the Connecting Europe

Facility, €23.2 billion is available from the EU's 2014-2020 budget to co-fund [trans-European transport network](#) (TEN-T) projects in the EU Member States. A [full press release](#) in all languages, a [Q&A](#) and [factsheets for each country](#) are available online. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Juncker Plan: EUR 110 million to upgrade research and development facilities in Spain

The [Juncker Plan](#) has backed a EUR 110 million [European Investment Bank](#) (EIB) loan agreement with [Sener](#), a Spanish engineering company. The loan will facilitate major upgrades to Sener's research and development facilities in Bilbao and Madrid. This will allow the company to continue to develop innovative engineering solutions across a broad range of sectors, including the design of satellite, navigation and space propulsion systems. This agreement was made possible by the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). The EFSI is the central pillar of the European Commission's Investment Plan for Europe, the so-called "Juncker Plan". European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Developing new technology in the space industry requires a commitment to sustained investment. The Commission's Space Strategy underlines the importance of promoting more private investment in this sector to ensure that Europe will remain a leading player in this evolving, competitive market. Today's agreement demonstrates that the European Fund for Strategic Investments can play an important role in supporting this effort."* As of June 2017, the Juncker Plan is now expected to trigger over EUR 28 billion in investments in Spain and EUR 209 billion across Europe. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

EU scales up its assistance against cholera outbreak in Yemen

The European Commission is scaling up its response to an unprecedented cholera outbreak in Yemen with an additional €5 million, bringing total EU support for efforts to tackle the disease to €8.8 million. *"The cholera outbreak in Yemen continues to spread dramatically during the last weeks and warrants urgent action. The European Union is stepping up support to allow humanitarian partners to rapidly increase their capacity to treat people and save lives in Yemen. Crucially, humanitarian organisations must be allowed full access to do their life-saving job. While we do all we can to help those in need, only a political solution will bring this catastrophe to an end,"* said Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management. The EU aid will support the United Nations cholera response plan which includes health treatment of cholera cases and preventive measures providing safe water and improved sanitation in high priority areas. Overall Commission humanitarian funding for Yemen in 2017 stands at €121.7 million. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Rapport sur l'état des relations EU-Liban: renforcement de notre partenariat

Durant les deux dernières années, l'Union européenne et le Liban ont approfondi leur partenariat. Compte tenu des défis croissants auxquels le pays est confronté, notamment dus à la crise syrienne, l'UE a augmenté son soutien envers le Liban et a renforcé ses liens diplomatiques et la coopération dans les domaines tels que la sécurité, la bonne gouvernance et le commerce. Telles sont les conclusions du rapport conjoint publié aujourd'hui par le Service européen pour l'action extérieure et la Commission européenne sur le partenariat entre l'UE et le Liban pour la période de mars 2015 à avril 2017. Ce rapport s'inscrit dans la perspective du 8^{ème} Conseil d'association UE-Liban qui se tiendra le 18 juillet 2017 à Bruxelles. La Haute Représentante pour les affaires étrangères et la politique de sécurité/ Vice-Présidente de la Commission européenne Federica **Mogherini** a déclaré: *«L'Union européenne et le Liban entretiennent des relations solides de longue date, fondées sur des travaux conjoints et une coopération étroite dans un large éventail de domaines. Nous œuvrons de concert en matière de sécurité, de contre-terrorisme et de crises régionales mais également de croissance et de création d'emplois, qui sont des questions essentielles pour les Libanais. [...]»* Le Commissaire pour la Politique européenne de Voisinage et les négociations d'élargissement Johannes **Hahn** a ajouté: *«L'Union européenne soutient le Liban dans de nombreux domaines, aussi bien la sécurité que l'éducation ou la santé. Les fonds de l'UE, ainsi que les relations UE/Liban de manière plus générale, ont contribué au développement du pays, à améliorer ses infrastructures, à créer des opportunités pour le secteur privé et à soutenir des initiatives importantes au niveau local. [...]»* Le rapport est disponible [ici](#) et un communiqué de presse complet [ici](#). De plus amples informations sur les relations UE-Liban [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Catherine Ray – Tel.: +32 229 69921; Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

€50 million for social enterprises in Italy

The [European Investment Fund \(EIF\)](#) and Banca Popolare Etica (BPE) have signed the first Social Entrepreneurship guarantee agreement in Italy under the [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#). This new guarantee agreement allows Banca Popolare Etica to provide a total of €50 million to 330 social entrepreneurs over the next 5 years, to both Spanish and Italian businesses. Social enterprises including those employing people with disabilities, people who have been long-term unemployed, migrants and asylum seekers, will be able to benefit from loans at a reduced interest rate, with reduced collateral requirements, under the EU supported programme. Banca Popolare Etica will focus on a vast range of social enterprise sectors, targeting innovative socially oriented start-ups, social agri-businesses and companies active using energy efficiency and renewable energy technology. Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, said: *“With this new agreement, supported by EU funds, Banca Popolare Etica will be able to offer loans on preferential terms to over 330 social enterprises in Italy and will open up its lending activity towards social enterprises in Spain. By providing them a greater and easier access to finance, we contribute to the development of social enterprises in key areas for social inclusion, such as social agro-businesses and businesses contributing to the integration of migrants and refugees. We remain fully*

committed in combating social exclusion and improving working conditions in Europe.” The European Investment Bank (EIB) Vice President, Ambroise Fayolle and the President of Banca Etica, Ugo Biggeri signed the agreement during the European Microfinance Network’s 14th Annual Conference in Venice, which focussed this year on the power of financial education for vulnerable populations and which brought together over 300 micro and social finance providers and representatives from guarantee-granting institutions. *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)*

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of the Croatian bank resolution scheme

The European Commission has authorised under EU state aid rules the prolongation of the bank resolution scheme in Croatia. The scheme was initially [approved in October 2016](#). The measure will continue to be available for small banks with total assets below €1.5 billion, only if they are found to be in distress by the competent national authorities. The objective of the scheme is to facilitate the work of the Croatian resolution authorities, should a concrete case and need arise for it. The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme to be in line with the [state aid rules on banking](#) applicable since 2013. The non-confidential version of the decision will be available under the case number SA.48287 in the [State Aid Register](#) on the [DG Competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

7ème Forum sur la Cohésion: cap sur l’après 2020

Lundi et mardi aura lieu à Bruxelles le [7^{ème} Forum sur la Cohésion](#). Ce rendez-vous majeur, organisé tous les trois ans, réunira près de 700 acteurs de la politique de Cohésion, représentants des institutions européennes, des Etats membres, partenaires économiques et sociaux, universitaires et autorités régionales et locales. Tous se rencontreront pour débattre de la politique de Cohésion après 2020, alors que la préparation du futur cadre budgétaire est en cours, avec un document de réflexion de la Commission sur le futur des finances de l’UE prévu d’ici à la fin du mois. Le président de la Commission européenne, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, le président du Parlement européen, Antonio Tajani, et le Premier ministre maltais, Joseph Muscat, prendront chacun la parole pendant ces deux jours durant lesquels seront organisés de nombreux ateliers et conférences sur, notamment, la simplification des règles, les investissements de l’UE dans l’innovation, dans la réduction des disparités géographiques ou le soutien aux réformes structurelles. Le Vice-président de la Commission chargé de l’emploi, de la croissance, de l’investissement et de la compétitivité, Jyrki **Katainen** ouvrira ce Forum, qui sera clôturé par la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu**, et au cours duquel

interviendront les Commissaires Günther H. **Oettinger**, Phil **Hogan**, Marianne **Thyssen**, Karmenu **Vella** et Pierre **Moscovici**. La Commissaire **Crețu** a déclaré: *“Le Forum sur la Cohésion constitue une étape cruciale dans la préparation du cadre budgétaire post-2020. Il nous permettra de tester nos idées auprès des acteurs qui appliquent la politique de Cohésion sur le terrain. Et cela sera surtout l’occasion d’écouter leurs propositions pour façonner une politique de Cohésion qui sache répondre aux défis de la mondialisation et construire des économies robustes et résistantes. Je m’attends à deux jours de riches échanges, qui viendront nourrir notre réflexion.”* Le programme complet du Forum est disponible [ici](#). Toutes les sessions sont diffusées en direct [ici](#) et ouvertes à la presse. Un point presse avec la Commissaire **Crețu**, le Président du Comité des Régions Markku Markkula et la présidente du comité sur le Développement régional (REGI) du Parlement européen, Iskra Mihaylova, aura lieu lundi à midi, en salle Jenkins du bâtiment Charlemagne. (*Informations et inscriptions: Johannes Bahrke – Tél.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169*)

Johannes Hahn visits the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will travel to Skopje on Monday 26 June to discuss the government’s reform plans and to reiterate the EU’s support as the country carries out the necessary reforms for it to become a Member of the European Union. The Commissioner will meet Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, the new government and country’s political leaders. Ahead of the visit, Commissioner **Hahn** said: *“The country has finally overcome, with the continuous support of the European Union, its political crisis through well administered elections and the formation of a new government. Now the new government, together with the opposition, needs to focus on implementing Urgent Reform Priorities and the Pržino agreement in order to bring the country back on its EU integration path. Reforms must be done to improve the lives of the people, to work for stability, prosperity and justice. That is why I tasked a [group of independent senior rule of law experts, led by Reinhard Priebe](#), to help and advise the new government on systemic rule of law issues”. Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)*

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners’ Weekly Activities

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