

EU launches new humanitarian programme for the integration & accommodation of refugees in Greece

The European Commission has today announced a new wave of emergency support projects to help refugees in Greece worth €209 million. This includes the launch of the flagship 'Emergency Support To Integration & Accommodation' (ESTIA) programme to help refugees and their families rent urban accommodation and provide them with cash assistance. This marks a change from previous humanitarian projects which mainly provided support for accommodation in camps and the provision of direct supplies. Speaking in Athens today at the launch of the programme, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides**, said: *"Today we are opening a new chapter in the lives of refugees in Greece. Our new funding is a game changer on how we deliver aid to improve people's lives. The aim of these new projects is to get refugees out of the camps and into everyday accommodation and help them have more secure and normal lives. Together with our humanitarian partners and the national authorities, we are committed to helping the most vulnerable refugees and fulfilling our humanitarian duty in the move towards a more cost-effective response."* Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** added: *"Europe means solidarity and this is what today's decision is about. The Commission has been standing side by side with Greece from day one and together we have come a long way. The projects launched today are one part of our wider support to the country but also to those in need of our protection. Around 1.3 billion euros of EU funds are at the disposal of Greece for the management of the migration crisis."* A [press release](#) is available in all EU languages, [photos](#) as well as a [factsheet](#) on EU financial support to Greece to manage the refugee crisis. A press conference took place this morning in Athens and is available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229 65322; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Special EU support in case of natural disasters enters into force today

As of today, Member States affected by a natural disaster will be able to activate [a special EU financial mechanism](#) and fund reconstruction operations with an exceptional EU co-financing rate of 95% under a [Cohesion policy](#) programme, instead of the programme's normal co-financing rate. Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"This special EU support is a tangible sign of EU solidarity; it is Europe reaching out to help its Member States in dark moments. This mechanism can be activated anywhere in the EU, as of day one, to supplement EU Solidarity Fund assistance."* The Commission [proposed this amendment](#) to the Cohesion policy Regulation in the wake of the earthquakes which struck four regions in Central Italy in 2016. President **Juncker** had announced that the EU would stand by Italy and its citizens, and help fully reconstruct the areas damaged, including the Basilica of San Benedetto in Norcia. But any Member State affected by a natural disaster can now activate this form of EU support. Without changing the volume of national

[European Regional Development Fund](#) envelopes, it means that a disaster-stricken region whose Cohesion Policy programme foresees a 50% co-financing rate, like most French and German regions for example, could get almost double funding from the EU to finance reconstruction works. Programmes with an 85% EU co-financing rate, like in the Portuguese region of Madeira, could get an exceptional top-up that would spare public resources in difficult times. Member States struck by earthquakes, floods, severe droughts and forest fires can activate this special EU support from day 1 of a disaster, and for disasters that have occurred since the beginning of the current programming period, i.e. 1 January 2014. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Juncker Plan: EUR 29 million to upgrade medical facilities in Treviso, Italy

The [Juncker Plan](#) has backed a EUR 29 million European Investment Bank (EIB) loan agreement to finance new healthcare facilities at the Ca' Foncello Hospital in Treviso, Italy. The loan agreement will finance the refurbishment of some existing buildings and the construction of new facilities. This will include an enhanced medical centre with almost 1,000 beds and new research and logistical centres. 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: *"The construction of modern, state of the art medical facilities and hospitals requires significant investment. The European Fund for Strategic Investments is playing an important and growing role in facilitating investments in the social sector. This agreement proves that the Investment Plan can deliver a social dividend, directly benefiting the citizens of Treviso, whilst also providing a boost for jobs and growth across Europe."* This transaction is the latest example of the EFSI's support for the development of social infrastructure. As of July 2017, social infrastructure projects have been backed by EUR 1.6 billion in EFSI financing. The EFSI also supports microfinance, social enterprises and social impact investment under its SME Window. Italy is amongst the Juncker Plan's top beneficiaries. The EFSI is now expected to trigger over EUR 33 billion in investments in Italy and EUR 225 billion across Europe. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Seafarers: New measures to improve working conditions

The European Commission is proposing that an agreement between social partners to improve the working conditions of seafarers on board of EU-flagged vessels, be enshrined in EU law. The proposal will ensure that seafarers are better protected against abandonment in foreign ports in the future, and will strengthen their rights to compensation in the event of death or long-term disability due to an occupational injury, illness or hazard. Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, said: *"Maritime transport remains crucial for Europe's economic development. Today's proposal will strengthen seafarers' protection and underpin fair competition in the maritime sector. Improved*

working conditions will also make the shipping sector more attractive for young Europeans. This proposal is an excellent example of how social partners support the Commission in keeping EU law fit for purpose.” More information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Aides d’État: La Commission demande à la Belgique et à la France de mettre fin aux exemptions fiscales pour les ports

La Commission européenne a demandé à la Belgique et à la France d’abolir les exemptions de l’impôt sur les sociétés accordées à leurs ports, de manière à aligner leurs régimes fiscaux sur les règles de l’UE en matière d’aides d’État. Les bénéfices des opérateurs portuaires doivent être taxés selon les lois nationales normales relatives à l’impôt sur les sociétés afin d’éviter des distorsions de la concurrence. En **Belgique**, toute une série de ports maritimes et fluviaux ne sont pas assujettis, selon le droit belge, au régime général d’imposition des sociétés. La plupart des ports **français**, notamment les 11 «grands ports maritimes», le «port autonome de Paris» et les ports exploités par des chambres de commerce et d’industrie, sont totalement exonérés, selon le droit français, de l’impôt sur les sociétés. La Commission considère que les exemptions de l’impôt sur les sociétés accordées aux ports belges et français leur procurent un avantage concurrentiel, en violation avec les règles de l’UE sur les aides d’État. Les deux décisions de la Commission indiquent clairement que si les opérateurs portuaires tirent des bénéfices d’activités économiques, celles-ci doivent être taxées selon les lois fiscales nationales normales pour éviter les distorsions de concurrence. La Commission a également demandé des informations aux États membres et continue d’évaluer le fonctionnement et la taxation de leurs ports pour assurer des conditions de concurrence loyales dans le secteur portuaire de l’UE. Mme Margrethe **Vestager**, commissaire chargée de la politique de concurrence, a déclaré à ce propos: *«Les ports sont des infrastructures essentielles pour la croissance économique et le développement régional. Récemment, la Commission a introduit de nouvelles règles pour épargner aux États membres du temps et des difficultés lorsqu’ils investissent dans des ports et aéroports, tout en préservant la concurrence. Dans le même temps, les décisions de la Commission concernant la Belgique et la France – comme précédemment celle concernant les Pays-Bas – montrent clairement que les exemptions injustifiées de l’impôt sur les sociétés pour les ports distordent les conditions de concurrence équitables et loyales. Ces exemptions doivent disparaître.»* Le communiqué de presse est disponible en ligne en [EN](#), [DE](#), [FR](#), [NL](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission conditionally clears both FMC’s acquisition of parts of DuPont’s crop protection business and DuPont’s acquisition of FMC’s Health and Nutrition business

Today’s decisions follow the Commission’s clearance, subject to conditions, of the Dow/DuPont merger in [March 2017](#). DuPont committed to divest major parts of its global crop protection business, including its global research and development organisation, which FMC will now acquires. As part of the deal to acquire these parts of DuPont’s crop protection business, FMC is

selling its Health and Nutrition business to DuPont. The clearance of FMC's acquisition of parts of DuPont's crop protection business is conditional on the divestment of FMC's sulfonylurea and florasulam businesses in the European Economic Area (EEA). The clearance of DuPont's acquisition of FMC's Health & Nutrition business is conditional on the divestment of DuPont's global alginates business. In view of the remedies proposed in each of these transactions, the Commission concluded that, as modified, the proposed transactions would not significantly impede effective competition in the EEA. Both decisions are conditional upon full compliance with the respective commitments. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [DE](#), and [FR](#).
(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of First Rent A Car by Volvo

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of First Rent A Car (FRAC) by Volvo Car Corporation, both of Sweden. FRAC is active in short term car rental activities (including car sharing activities) in Sweden, Norway and Denmark, as well as fleet management services and retail distribution of passenger cars in Sweden. Volvo is active in the design, development, manufacturing, marketing, and wholesale distribution of passenger cars and, through Volvofinans, in the provision of automotive financial services, fleet management services, credit card services and dealer financing. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the limited overlaps in Sweden, Norway and Denmark and the number of strong players that would remain in these markets. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8309](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Hayward Industries by CCMP Capital and MSD Aqua

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of Hayward Industries Inc. by CCMP Capital LP and MSD Aqua Partners LLC, all three of the US. Hayward Industries is a manufacturer and supplier of swimming pool equipment. CCMP Capital is a global private equity firm and MSD Aqua Partners is an investment entity within the MSD group of companies. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, as the companies are not active in the same product and geographic market or in a product market which is upstream or downstream from those markets. 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.8557](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le Commissaire Moscovici est auditionné par la commission des Affaires

européennes de l'Assemblée nationale française

En ce début de législature, la commission des Affaires européennes de l'Assemblée nationale française a auditionné pour la première fois Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissaire aux affaires économiques et financières, à la fiscalité et aux douanes. Cette rencontre a permis au Commissaire d'échanger avec les députés sur le contexte européen de l'action du gouvernement et d'appeler l'Assemblée nationale à jouer un rôle moteur dans la construction d'une Union européenne plus politique et plus démocratique. *(Pour plus d'informations: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: + 32 229 56153; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)*

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