

Daily News 05 / 02 / 2019

Security Union: Commission recommends negotiating international rules for obtaining electronic evidence [updated with correct links 05/02/2019 at 12:31]

Today, the European Commission recommends engaging in two international negotiations on cross-border rules to obtain electronic evidence. With the majority of criminal investigations requiring access to evidence based online and often outside the EU, there is an urgent need to equip police and judicial authorities with the quick and efficient tools fit for modern reality. Following up on the European Council Conclusions from [October 2018](#), the Commission is presenting two negotiating mandates, one for negotiations with the United States and one on the Second Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe “Budapest” Convention on Cybercrime. Both mandates, which need to be approved by the Council, include specific safeguards on data protection, privacy and procedural rights of individuals. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *“Crime and terrorism don’t stop at Europe’s borders. The evidence needed to investigate these crimes is even harder to pin down within borders and jurisdictions. For this reason, today we propose to step up our security cooperation with the United States and the Council of Europe, in order to ensure access to the critical electronic evidence needed for criminal investigations by European authorities.”* Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová** said: *“Criminals use fast, modern technologies to organise their crimes and cover up their evidence. Much of the data needed to track down these criminals is stored in the U.S. or by U.S. companies. It is time to work on a comprehensive EU-wide agreement with the United States to speed up the access of our law enforcement authorities to this evidence. Such an agreement will strengthen our security, while protecting the data privacy and procedural safeguards of our citizens.”* Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *“We cannot allow terrorists or criminals to find refuge online abusing modern technology. We need to close the legal loopholes and together, at the international level, continue to squeeze the space in which they operate.”* The [full press release](#) as well as Q&As on the [negotiating mandate with the U.S.](#) and the [Second Additional Protocol](#) are available online. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444; Melanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Venezuela crisis: EU mobilises additional humanitarian assistance

As many people continue to suffer from the severe socio-economic crisis in Venezuela, the Commission has allocated today additional humanitarian assistance of €5 million to help those most in need. This is in addition to the humanitarian assistance totalling €34 million for the crisis in 2018 alone. *“Helping the Venezuelan people in need is a priority for the European Union. We are stepping up our emergency aid to help the most vulnerable who lack access to food, medicines and basic services and have been forced to leave their homes. We will also continue to support Venezuelans and host*

*communities in neighbouring countries.” said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. To help facilitate humanitarian assistance to partners on the ground, the EU intends to open a humanitarian office in Caracas. The EU support includes the provision of emergency healthcare, access to safe water and sanitation as well as to education. It will further address the population’s protection, shelter, food and nutritional needs. Read the full press release [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

Juncker Plan supports innovative maker of car-parts in Spain

The Investment Plan for Europe, or Juncker Plan, is backing a €26 million European Investment Bank (EIB) loan to Spanish company Cikautxo, specialised in rubber and plastic components for the automotive sector. The financing will help the company develop lighter car parts for electric and hybrid cars and boost its research and development activities in fuel efficiency. The loan will also help the company increase its production capacity in its Spanish facilities, in the province of Biscay, as well as at its Czech, Romanian and Slovak sites. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *“Electric cars are crucial for the transition towards a more sustainable Europe. This €26 million EFSI-backed loan to Cikautxo to develop innovative products for electric and hybrid cars is helping to put the EU at the forefront of clean transport. Thanks to the support of the Investment Plan, hundreds of jobs will be created in Spain and regional development will be supported in Czechia, Romania and Slovakia.”* A press release is available [here](#). Spain is the fourth largest beneficiary of the Juncker Plan relative to GDP, with more than €8 billion of EFSI financing set to trigger over €46 billion of investments. As of end of 2018, the Juncker Plan already mobilised €375.5 billion of investment across Europe and supported 858,000 small and medium businesses. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Erasmus+: new status for Serbia opens up fresh opportunities for citizens and organisations

Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, and the Minister for Education, Science and Technological Development of Serbia, Mladen Šarčević, will today sign an agreement upgrading Serbia’s participation in the [Erasmus+](#) programme. The signing ceremony will take place in Brussels and will mark the move of Serbia from a Partner to a Programme Country under Erasmus+. Ahead of the signature, Commissioner **Navracsics** said: *“I am very pleased to welcome Serbia as a fully-fledged Erasmus+ Programme Country. This new status will allow Serbia to participate in more actions in the fields of higher education and youth, start its involvement in sport, vocational education and training as well as in actions for school and adult education staff.”* Serbia is already an active partner in the Erasmus+ programme: since 2014, almost 7,000 Serbian students and staff have experienced a learning period abroad, and around 4,300 Europeans have gone to Serbia to study or teach. By becoming an Erasmus+ Programme Country, Serbia participates in Erasmus+ on an equal footing with EU Member States, as is

already the case for Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Serbia started preparations to become a Programme Country in 2016. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

Security Union: Commission welcomes political agreement to close gaps between information systems

Today, the European Parliament and the Council reached political agreement on the [Commission's proposal](#) to close important security gaps by making EU information systems for security, migration and border management work together in a more intelligent and targeted way. A [political priority for 2018-2019](#), this interoperable framework will ensure that border guards and police officers have access to the right information when and where they need it to perform their duties. Welcoming the agreement, First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"Today we agreed to give law enforcement officials the right tools help them catch criminals and better protect Europeans. Law enforcement, border guard, and migration officials anywhere in the EU will be able to work directly and instantly with all the available information. Europeans expect to be kept safe in Europe, and today we increased our collective ability to do just that."* Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Today we deliver on a quintessential piece of our security infrastructure. In the future, all the dots between our different information systems will be interlinked. This is the European Union at its best: empowering and supporting our border guards and police officers with the right tools to do their job and protect European citizens."* Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** added: *"This is about responding to calls from those at the frontline, police and border guards. It is not about creating one big database or collecting more data, but using existing information in a smarter and more targeted way to help law enforcement do their job, all while fully respecting fundamental rights."* The [full press release](#) and two factsheets on [EU Information Systems](#) and [closing the information gap](#) are available online. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

Capital Markets Union: Agreement reached on measures to improve the EU's investment fund market [updated on 05/02/2019 at 12:31]

The Commission has welcomed the political agreement reached by the European Parliament and EU Member States today on new rules to make it easier, quicker and cheaper for EU asset managers to sell funds to a wider range of investors. In turn, investors across the EU will have access to a much larger choice of fund products at better value. Investment funds are an important tool to channel private savings into the economy and increase funding possibilities for companies. The EU investment funds market amounts to a total of €14.3 trillion. However, this market has not yet achieved its full potential. Commission Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"Today's agreement will cut red tape and improve clarity for fund managers who want to market their products across the EU. This will lead to more choice for investors, at lower costs – an important milestone for the Capital Markets Union."* Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for

Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"This step removes a stumbling block to cross-border investments in the EU, a significant step in completing the Capital Markets Union. Funding has to flow freely across the EU so it can best benefit companies to get them the financing they need to grow."* Today's agreement will remove some of the regulatory barriers for all kinds of investment funds such as making cross-border distribution more transparent, while removing overly complex and burdensome requirements and harmonising diverging national rules. A press release is [online](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Patrick McCullough – Tel.: +32 229 87183)

La Commission se félicite de l'accord conclu sur le tout premier plan de gestion de la pêche pluriannuel en Méditerranée occidentale

Ce matin, le Parlement européen et le Conseil sont parvenus à un accord politique provisoire fondé sur la [proposition](#) de la Commission relative à une gestion pluriannuelle des eaux de la Méditerranée occidentale. L'accord mettra la région sur la voie du rétablissement et du maintien des stocks de poissons démersaux à des niveaux durables, tout en assurant la viabilité sociale et économique des pêcheurs et des plus de 16 000 emplois qui dépendent de ces stocks. Ce plan pluriannuel concrétise l'engagement politique pris dans la [Déclaration MedFish4Ever](#) de sauver les stocks de poissons de la Méditerranée. La Commission européenne a [proposé en mars dernier](#) le tout premier plan pluriannuel de gestion durable des stocks de poissons de la Méditerranée occidentale, couvrant principalement des zones concernant la France, l'Italie et l'Espagne. Le commissaire chargé de l'environnement, des affaires maritimes et de la pêche, Karmenu **Vella**, a déclaré: *"Je suis heureux qu'un accord ait été trouvé sur notre proposition concernant la région de la Méditerranée occidentale, qui constitue un progrès décisif dans la concrétisation de l'engagement de l'UE en faveur de la reconstitution des stocks de poissons dans la Méditerranée et à prévenir la perte d'emplois dans les secteurs dépendant de la pêche. La mer Méditerranée est très surexploitée, comme nous le savons, et ce premier plan pluriannuel donne les assurances nécessaires pour améliorer la situation – une situation gagnant-gagnant pour nos pêcheurs et nos océans, qui fixe la barre pour de nouveaux progrès dans la région."* Le plan de gestion pluriannuel vise à ramener les stocks de poissons démersaux (c'est-à-dire les poissons qui vivent et se nourrissent au dans les fonds marins) à des niveaux garantissant leur viabilité sociale et économique. En raison de la pêche non durable, les captures de ces stocks ont considérablement diminué d'environ 23% depuis le début des années 2000. À ce taux, plus de 90% des stocks évalués seraient surexploités d'ici 2025, ce qui mettrait environ 1 500 navires à risque financier. La proposition adoptée, avec son approche à long terme, créerait plus de stabilité et plus de transparence dans la mesure où les États membres concernés adapteraient conjointement les objectifs de pêche actuels à des niveaux viables par l'intermédiaire du Conseil. Il garantit également une approche cohérente avec les autres plans pluriannuels de l'UE, notamment avec le plan pour la mer du Nord. Les principales mesures du plan comprennent un régime de l'effort de pêche de l'UE pour tous les chalutiers opérant dans la Méditerranée occidentale et une zone de fermeture de trois mois pour la protection des juvéniles. La pêche récréative jouera également un rôle plus

important. Enfin, les mesures de contrôle s'appliqueront pleinement afin de surveiller le régime de l'effort de pêche. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Keeping children safe in the digital world: Commission announces the creation of new expert group on child safety online

Today it is [Safer Internet Day 2019](#) and we are celebrating it along with the creation of a new Expert Group on Safer Internet for Children to help improve coordination and cooperation between EU Member States and propose concrete actions to keep children safe when using the internet. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: *“I am pleased to announce the creation of the expert group today, on Safer Internet Day 2019. On this day, we focus more than ever on ways to enhance safe, positive and inclusive use of digital technology, especially among children and young people. This year’s slogan, Together for a Better Internet, is a timely reminder that no country or organisation can act effectively on its own when it comes to internet safety. The coordination and cooperation between Member States is just as important in that regard as the valuable work it will do on proposing concrete actions.”* Commissioner **Gabriel** made the announcement during a visit to Child Focus, the Belgian safer internet centre, to mark Safer Internet Day 2019. She met with Bulgarian- and French-speaking school pupils in Brussels to discuss their experiences and awareness of how to stay safe when online. She then participated in a citizens’ dialogue with about 500 pupils of the European school. Commissioner Gabriel also used the occasion of Safer Internet Day to highlight the successful awareness-raising campaign [#SaferInternet4EU](#) which she launched on 5th February 2018 and reached around 15,500 schools and nearly 30 million EU citizens with hundreds of initiatives, events and tools to protect children from online threats. For more information about the new Expert Group on Safer Internet for Children see [here](#) and for more information on Safer Internet for the EU see this [Factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083 – Marietta Grammenou Tel.: +32 229 83583)

Mergers: Commission clears the creation of a joint venture by Stena Rederi and Hyundai Glovis

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture by Stena Rederi of Sweden, part of the Stena Sphere, and Glovis Europe of Germany, controlled by Hyundai Glovis of South Korea. The joint venture will mainly operate short-sea transport services on Pure Car and Truck Carrier (PCTC) vessels in Europe. Stena Rederi supports the shipping activities of its parent company Stena by providing shipbuilding, crewing and technical services. Glovis Europe provides logistics services for finished vehicles and parts, and supports the global deep-sea activities of its parent company Hyundai Glovis, an integrated global logistics and distribution company. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of the limited activities of the joint venture and the absence of horizontal overlap or vertical relationship between its activities and those of its parent companies in 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.9223](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of the Transmission Operator for the Race Bank offshore windfarm by DTC and IRCP

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Diamond Transmission Partners RB (Holding) Limited (“Diamond Transmission Partners”) by Diamond Transmission Corporation Limited (“DTC”) and by Infrared Capital Partners Limited (“IRCP”), all of the UK. Diamond Transmission Partners is the holding company of the Offshore Transmission Owner for the Race Bank offshore windfarm, active in the transmission of electricity from this windfarm to the UK’s onshore National Electricity Transmission System. Diamond Transmission Partners is currently solely controlled by DTC. DTC is a holding company with activities in the electricity transmission sector. IRCP is an infrastructure investment management company active in financial advice and managing investments on behalf of investment funds. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the companies’ activities do not overlap. 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.9141](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Daiwater by Allianz, DIF and InfraRed Capital Partners

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over Daiwater Investment Limited (“Daiwater”) of the UK by Allianz SE (“Allianz”) of Germany, DIF Tamblin Limited (“DIF”) of England and Wales, and InfraRed Capital Partners (Holdco) Limited (“InfraRed”) of the UK. Daiwater is the holding company of Affinity Water Limited (“AWL”) and Affinity for Business (Retail) Limited (“AfB”). The principal activities of these entities relate to the provision of water supply and, in the case of AfB only, sewage systems as well. Allianz is a global financial services group active in insurance and asset management. DIF is an independent fund management company. InfraRed is an investment manager focused on infrastructure and real estate. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of the lack of overlaps between the companies’ activities. 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.9230](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: Le volume des ventes du commerce de détail en baisse de 1,6% dans la zone euro, baisse de 1,4% dans l’UE28

En décembre 2018 par rapport à novembre 2018, le volume des ventes du commerce de détail corrigé des variations saisonnières a diminué de 1,6% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 1,4% dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En novembre 2018, le commerce de détail avait augmenté de 0,8% dans la zone euro et de 1,0% dans l'UE28. En décembre 2018 par rapport à décembre 2017, l'indice corrigé des effets de calendrier des ventes de détail a augmenté de 0,8% dans la zone euro et de 1,2% dans l'UE28. Par rapport à 2017, le volume moyen des ventes de détail a progressé en 2018 de 1,4% dans la zone euro et de 2,0% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél. +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein-Gesbold – Tél.: +32 229 55040)

Eurostat: La santé des enfants dans l'UE en 2017

Au sein de l'Union européenne (UE), en 2017, plus de 95% des enfants présentaient un état de santé général considéré comme bon ou très bon. Ce pourcentage ne change que légèrement avec l'âge: de 96,5% pour les enfants de moins de cinq ans, il passe à 95,9% pour les enfants de cinq à neuf ans et à 95,2% pour les enfants de dix à quinze ans. Le pourcentage d'enfants dont l'état de santé général était considéré comme mauvais ou très mauvais était inférieur à 1% pour tous les groupes d'âge. Au cours de cette même année, moins de 5% des enfants dans l'UE étaient considérés comme ayant des limitations d'activité en raison de problèmes de santé: 3,7% présentaient des limitations d'activité modérées et 1,2% des limitations importantes. La proportion augmente avec l'âge pour chacune des deux catégories de limitations. En effet, parmi les enfants âgés de moins de cinq ans, 2,2% présentaient des limitations d'activité modérées et 0,6% d'importantes limitations d'activité, ces taux s'établissant respectivement à 4,1% et 1,2% pour les enfants âgés de cinq à neuf ans, et à 4,4% et 1,6% pour les enfants âgés de 10 à 15 ans. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Anca Paduraru – Tél.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624)

STATEMENTS

'The future of Europe's industry': President Juncker opens the 2019 EU Industry Days

President **Juncker** opened the 3rd annual edition of the EU Industry Days this morning with a keynote speech, in which he said: *"This is about preparing us for the future. Our economy is transforming before our eyes and the world around us is changing faster than ever. And if Europe is to succeed, it cannot afford to fight that transformation. Rather, it must be the first to adapt to it, the first to shape it. And I believe our industry can lead the way."* Looking back on the history of European competition rules, President **Juncker** recalled: *"In nearly 30 years since the first European merger rules came into place, we have approved more than 6,000 deals – and blocked less than 30. We believe in competition – as long as it is fair for all. We will never play politics or play favourites when it comes to ensuring a level*

*playing field.” In his address, President **Juncker** also spoke about the EU’s approach to trade: “We are not naïve free traders. We will not trade for the sake of it or compromise on our principles for a quick deal. I cannot accept that those who work hard to make ends meet suffer at the hands of those who dump, de-regulate or distort the market. This is why we have shown our teeth by raising tariffs on cheap steel coming from China or taken a no tolerance approach on the forced transfer of technology. It is why we have modernised our trade defence instruments and have just recently agreed new rules on screening foreign investment in areas that may affect security or public order.” The EU Industry Days are taking place in Brussel from 5-6 February 2019 and are the Commission’s annual flagship conference on industrial policy, which bring together key industry representatives, public authorities and civil society to discuss the future of EU industry against the backdrop of the Commission’s 2017 Renewed Industrial Policy Strategy. The full speech has been published [here](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456)*

Joint Statement on the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

Ahead of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation on 6 February 2019, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the Commission **Federica Mogherini**, Commissioner European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations **Johannes Hahn**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development **Neven Mimica** and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality **Věra Jourová** reaffirmed the European Union’s strong commitment to eradicate worldwide Female Genital Mutilation in the following statement: “Every girl and woman has the right to live a life free of violence and pain. And yet, more than 200 million women and girls across the world have been forced to undergo the painful and traumatic practice of Female Genital Mutilation, including 500,000 living in Europe. Millions more girls are at risk of being cut: 68 million girls in 25 countries by 2030. Female Genital Mutilation is a severe violation of human rights and of women’s physical integrity. It is a practice that amounts to torture and a degrading treatment that cannot be justified. Neither on the basis of custom, nor tradition, culture or religion. It is a crime in all European Union Member States. We have recently seen the first convictions of persons that conducted female genital mutilation and we expect to see anyone committing these crimes in the European Union or organising them in a third country to be brought to justice. Eventhough many challenges remain, this an important first step towards justice for the victims. The European Union is at the forefront of global efforts to end Female Genital Mutilation by 2030. We have supported partner countries in criminalising this harmful practice, and we are committed to do even more. The EU and the UN have launched the global Spotlight Initiative, with the aim to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls, including female genital mutilation, child marriages and other harmful practices against women. To promote sustainable social change, the EU will fund projects to combat gender-based violence at grassroots level. To end this practice, we will work hand-in-hand with actors at all levels: authorities, community leaders, parents, parliaments, the judiciary,

civil society, youth and the media, and other relevant stakeholders. We remain committed to do everything in our power to eliminate this criminal practice.” The [joint statement](#) and a [MEMO](#) are available online. (For more information: Carlos Martín Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: + 32 229-65322; Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253)

Joint Statement by First Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioner Jourová on the agreement on the digitalisation of company law

The European Parliament and the Member States reached today a provisional agreement on new rules allowing companies to be able to register, set up new branches or file documents to the business register online. Going digital will make the process of setting up a business more efficient and cost effective. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová** welcome this agreement: *“The digitalisation of company law will help entrepreneurs create and run companies more easily, especially when they want to operate in different EU countries. By using digital tools, companies will save time and money when they launch a new business or branch and update information available on business registers. Strong safeguards and the exchange of information between Member States will prevent fraud. It is now essential that discussions with the Parliament and Council progress quickly on the other part of our Company Law package – the proposal on company mobility – so that it can be adopted before the European elections. It will provide for clear procedures for companies who want to move and grow in the Single Market, with strong safeguards to protect employees and prevent abuses, including for tax purposes.”* There are currently only 17 Member States that provide a fully online procedure for registering companies. Under the new rules, companies will be able to create businesses and branches online with all necessary checks and protections in all Member States. It will be possible to file company information fully online, which will cut costs and administrative burden. More information from business registers will be available for free to stakeholders, especially on those who represent companies, which will contribute to bringing more trust in business transactions. Based on the new cross-border information exchange system Member States may block a director disqualified in one Member State from registering a company or becoming a director in another Member State. The amendment to [the Directive relating to certain aspects of company law](#) was part of [the company law package](#) proposed as part of the Commission’s [Single Market Strategy](#) and proposed by the European Commission in April 2018. All information on the [Company Law package](#) and the [statement](#) are available online. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: + 32 229 58659)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Dombrovskis and Commissioner Thyssen attend conference on EU social dialogue

Tomorrow, 6 February, 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 conference “Promoting and Reinforcing the EU Social Dialogue” taking place in Brussels. At the conference, EU social partners will present and sign their work programme for 2019 – 2021. The signing ceremony will be followed by an intervention of Vice-President **Dombrovskis**, which will be published here. Ahead of the conference, the Vice-President stated: *“It has been almost four years since we launched the New Start for Social Dialogue. It came at what was still a challenging time for the EU, economically and socially. We recognised the need for a New Start, to increase the role of social partners in the design and implementation of our ambitious reform agenda. The Commission has delivered on its commitments under the New Start. We worked closely with you on national level reforms, especially through the European Semester, where you have been involved in all key milestones of the process.”* Then, a high-level roundtable discussion on the future of EU social dialogue will take place in presence of Commissioner **Thyssen**, who declared ahead of the event: *“Social dialogue is at the heart of the European Pillar of Social Rights and of this Commission. We need upward convergence in the quality of industrial relations in the EU. Good progress was made since the launch of the New Start for Social Dialogue. But the discussion about the future of work is also a discussion about the future of social dialogue, in particular when it comes to reaching out to non-standard forms of employment. So we must continue our efforts to support improvements to the institutional setting for social dialogue and the capacities of social partners in the Member States.”* Participants in the discussion include Mr Marius-Constantin Budai, the Minister for Labour and Social Justice of Romania, Mr Luca Visentini, Secretary-General of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Mr Markus Beyrer, Director-General of BusinessEurope, Ms Valeria Ronzitti, Secretary-General of the European Centre of Employers and Enterprises (CEEP) and Véronique Willems, Secretary-General of SMEunited. The full programme of the conference can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commission organises high-level conference on the role of science in 21st century policy-making

Tomorrow, Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Youth, Culture and Sport, responsible for the [Joint Research Centre](#), will speak at a conference on the importance of science in today’s policy-making process. Over two days, this event will bring together senior policy-makers and leading scientists to foster dialogue about the role of science in tackling emerging challenges such as the rise of fake news or engaging citizens in political decision-making. Ahead of the event, Commissioner **Navracsics** said: *“This year Europeans will cast their votes on how they want our Union to develop. Their choice will be influenced by their values, perceptions, fears and hopes relating to the major societal challenges facing us. ‘Science meets Parliaments’ will showcase the latest insights on these issues and invites participants to discuss how scientists and policy-makers can work together*

more effectively for the benefit of citizens.” Commissioner **Navracsics**, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Vice-President of the European Parliament, and Jerzy Buzek, Chair of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament will speak at the opening session. This will be followed by a keynote speech by Yascha Mounk, a leading expert on the challenges facing liberal democracy and the rise of populism. Participants also have the opportunity to visit an exhibition showcasing how science contributes to sound and successful public policies. Also during the event, an EU pilot project to bring science and policy closer to citizens called [“Science meets Parliaments/Science meets Regions”](#) will be launched. As part of this project, 26 events will take place across Europe through 2019, exploring how scientists, citizens and policy-makers can work together for local solutions to issues such as water management, preserving coastal economies or the impact of migration. The conference will take place in the European Parliament’s Yehudi Menuhin Space and is open to journalists, who can register [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

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

ESMA consults on liquidity stress test guidance for investment funds

ESMA’s draft guidelines for fund managers aim to promote convergence in the way national competent authorities (NCAs) supervise funds liquidity stress testing across the European Union (EU). The consultation sets out 14 principle-based criteria for managers’ liquidity stress tests to follow when executing liquidity stress tests on their funds.

Managers of investment funds in the EU need to regularly test the resilience of their funds for different types of market risks, including for liquidity risk – the risk that assets cannot be sold quickly enough to meet investors’ redemption requests.

Draft Guidelines on Liquidity Stress Testing

The draft principles require stress tests to:

- be tailored towards the individual fund;
- reflect the most applicable risks to a fund;
- be sufficiently extreme or unfavourable (yet plausible);
- sufficiently model how a manager is likely to act in times of stressed market conditions; and
- be embedded into the fund’s overall risk management framework.

One Guideline will also apply to depositaries, outlining how they should

fulfil their obligations regarding liquidity stress tests.

ESMA is seeking stakeholders' views on the guidance fund managers should follow, which include:

- the design of liquidity stress testing scenarios;
- the liquidity stress test policy, including internal use of liquidity stress test results;
- considerations for the asset and liability sides of investment fund balance sheets; and
- the timing and frequency for individual funds to conduct the liquidity stress tests.

The ESMA Guidelines follow recommendations by the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) published in April 2018 on how to address liquidity and leverage risk in investment funds. The ESRB mandate asked for the principles to be based on the stress testing requirements set out in the Alternative Investment Fund Directive (AIFMD) and how market participants carry out stress testing.

Next Steps

The consultation is open for feedback until 1 April 2019. ESMA will consider the feedback it receives to this consultation in early Q2 2019 and expects to publish a final report by the summer of 2019. Responses to this consultation will therefore help ESMA in finalising the guidelines for publication.

[Iran: Council adopts conclusions](#)

[Virginie Battu](#)

Press officer

+32 2 281 53 16

+32 470 18 24 05

1. Recalling the November 2016 Council conclusions, the European Union expresses its resolute commitment to and continued support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The JCPOA is a key element of the global nuclear non-proliferation architecture and an achievement of multilateral diplomacy, endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council through its resolution 2231.

2. The European Union welcomes Iran's continued full and effective implementation of its nuclear-related commitments, as confirmed by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) in thirteen consecutive reports, including in its latest quarterly report, issued on 12 November 2018. The

European Union reiterates the need for Iran to continue to implement all of its commitments, and to continue to cooperate fully and in a timely manner with the IAEA. The European Union welcomes and fully supports the work undertaken by the IAEA in monitoring Iran's implementation of the JCPOA. The EU welcomes Iran's commitment never to seek, develop or acquire any nuclear weapons. It acknowledges the provisional application by Iran of the Additional Protocol to its Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement, encouraging its ratification.

3. The European Union recognises that the lifting of sanctions constitutes an essential part of the JCPOA and deeply regrets the re-imposition of sanctions by the United States, following the latter's withdrawal from the JCPOA. The European Union underlines the efforts undertaken to preserve economic and wider benefits for Iran as foreseen by the JCPOA. These are being intensified through the initiative by France, Germany and the United Kingdom, to operationalise the Special Purpose Vehicle, which has now been registered as a private entity, with a view to providing a positive impact on trade and economic relations with Iran, but most importantly on the lives of Iranian people. The Special Purpose Vehicle will support European economic operators engaged in legitimate trade with Iran, in accordance with EU law and with UN Security Council resolution 2231.

As recalled in the joint statement of the HR/VP with foreign ministers and finance ministers of France, Germany and United Kingdom of 2 November 2018, the resolve to complete this work is unwavering. The European Union recalls that updates to the EU's "Blocking Statute" and the European Investment Bank's external lending mandate to make Iran eligible entered into force on 7 August 2018.

4. The European Union emphasizes its support for the development of EU-Iran relations in areas of common interest as outlined in the Joint Statement agreed by the HRVP and the Iranian Foreign Minister in April 2016, which underpins its sectoral engagement in bilateral cooperation. This includes areas such as political dialogue, human rights, economic cooperation, trade and investment, agriculture, transport, energy and climate change, civil nuclear cooperation, environment, civil protection, science, research and innovation, education, including through university exchanges, culture, drugs, migration, regional and humanitarian.

5. The Council welcomes the progress on the necessary reforms and urges Iran to adopt and implement the necessary legislation pursuant to its commitments under the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Action Plan. The EU and its Member States are ready to continue cooperation with Iran in these areas, including by providing technical assistance for the implementation of the FATF Action Plan.

6. The Council expresses concern at the growing tensions in the region and Iran's role in this context, including the provision of military, financial and political support to non-state actors in countries such as Syria and Lebanon.

7. The Council has serious concerns regarding Iran's military involvement and continuous presence of Iranian forces in Syria. The European Union calls upon

Iran to fully support the UN-led process on Syria in line with UN Security Council resolution 2254, and urges Iran to use its leverage with the Syrian regime to this end. It urges Iran as one of the Astana guarantors, together with Russia and Turkey, to ensure cessation of hostilities and unhindered, safe and sustainable humanitarian access throughout all of Syria, and particularly in Idlib.

8. Regarding Yemen, the European Union calls upon all parties in the region, including Iran, to support the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 2451 and to constructively work towards a lasting political solution to the conflict under UN leadership. The EU notes with concern the conclusions of the UN Panel of Experts on Yemen report, which found non-compliance with the arms embargo established by paragraph 14 of UNSC Resolution 2216. The European Union remains committed to continuing the existing EU-led political regional dialogue with Iran, with the aim of continuing to produce tangible results and fostering an improved regional environment. It recognises the results of the efforts which have been undertaken in the context of the current EU-led dialogue on regional issues. The EU welcomes, in this regard, Iran's public support for the UN talks in Sweden, which led to the Stockholm Agreement.

9. The Council is also gravely concerned by Iran's ballistic missile activity and calls upon Iran to refrain from these activities, in particular ballistic missile launches that are inconsistent with UN Security Council resolution 2231. Iran continues to undertake efforts to increase the range and precision of its missiles, together with increasing the number of tests and operational launches. These activities deepen mistrust and contribute to regional instability. The Council calls on Iran to take all the necessary measures to fully respect all relevant UN Security Council resolutions related to the transfer of missiles and relevant material and technology to state and non state actors in the region. In a broader context, the Council also recalls its longstanding serious concern at the regional military build-up.

10. The Council is deeply concerned by the hostile activities that Iran has conducted on the territory of several Member States and, in this context, decided to list two individuals and one entity. The European Union will continue to demonstrate unity and solidarity in this area and urges Iran to put an immediate end to such unacceptable behaviour.

11. The Council remains seriously concerned about the human rights situation in Iran. Iran continues to frequently apply the death penalty. While the Council acknowledges that the amendments made to the Anti-Narcotics Law, passed in October 2017, have so far led to a significant drop in drug-related executions, it stresses that the EU opposes the use of the death penalty in all circumstances and in every country. The EU underlines that the execution of juvenile offenders is in violation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to both of which Iran is a party.

In line with EU commitments to ensure equal rights of women and girls and persons belonging to minorities, including ethnic and religious minorities, the Council calls upon Iran to implement the relevant international treaties to which it is a party and to fully respect human rights and fundamental

freedoms.

12. The Council underlines that existing tensions and distrust in the region should not be further exacerbated and calls upon Iran and all regional actors to play a constructive role in this regard and avoid unhelpful rhetoric. The Council supports a balanced, comprehensive approach with Iran, including dialogue, with a view to addressing all issues of concern, critical when there are divergences and cooperative when there is mutual interest.

[Download as pdf](#)

[EU company law adapted to the digital era](#)

Press contacts

[Leonidas Karamountzos](#)

Press officer

+32 2 281 85 46

+32 476 53 11 80

The EU has decided to revise its company law rules so that they remain fit for purpose in the digital age. The aim is to achieve greater efficiency, transparency and legal certainty through the use of digital tools. The Romanian presidency of the Council today reached a **provisional** agreement with European Parliament's representatives on a draft directive that will facilitate and promote the use of online solutions in a company's contacts with public authorities throughout its lifecycle.

The new rules ensure that:

- companies are able to register limited liability companies, set up new branches and file documents for companies and their branches, to the business register fully online;
- national model templates and information on national requirements are made available online and in a language broadly understood by the majority of cross-border users;
- rules on fees for online formalities are transparent and applied in a non-discriminatory manner;
- fees charged for the online registration of companies do not exceed the overall costs incurred by the member state concerned;
- the 'once-only' principle, whereby a company would only need to submit the same information to public authorities once;
- documents submitted by companies are stored and exchanged by national

- registers in machine-readable and searchable formats;
- more information about companies is made available to all interested parties free of charge in the business registers.

At the same time, the directive sets out the necessary safeguards against fraud and abuse in online procedures, including control of the identity and legal capacity of persons setting up the company and the possibility of requiring physical presence before a competent authority. It maintains the involvement of notaries or lawyers in company law procedures as long as these procedures can be completed fully online. It also foresees an exchange of information between member states on disqualified directors in order to prevent fraudulent behaviour.

The directive does not harmonise substantive requirements for setting up companies or doing business across the EU.

Next steps

The provisionally agreed text will now have to be approved by the relevant bodies of the two institutions. It will then be formally adopted after the usual legal/linguistic scrutiny.

Background

According to figures provided by the Commission, there are around 24 million companies in the EU, out of which approximately 80% are limited liability companies. Around 98-99% of limited liability companies are small and medium-sized enterprises, which would be most directly impacted by these improvements.

The proposed directive complements the existing rules on EU company law as codified in directive (EU) 2017/1132. It is one of the two proposals tabled by the Commission in April 2018 for the modernisation of EU company law. It is also an important pillar for the recently adopted Single Digital Gateway regulation, which facilitates interactions between citizens, businesses and competent authorities by providing access to online solutions.

[Download as pdf](#)

[Speech by Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis on the occasion of the World Cancer Day](#)

Axiotime kyrie Proedre,

Kirie Ipourge,

Kiries kai kirioi,

Chéromai idiétera pou vriskomai stin Athina simera mazi sas, prokeiménou na sizitisoume ta thémata igias pou prokiptoun apo to kápnisma.

To kápnisma katastréfei tis zoés mas, ti zoi ton paidión mas kai ton eggonón mas, eno eписis ripéni to perivállon. To kápnisma mas skotóni sigá sigá.*[\[i\]](#)

In 2016, scientists discovered evidence of cancer in a 1.7-million-year-old bone belonging to a human relative in South Africa.

It seems that cancer is as old as time itself. In fact, it has accompanied us through the ages.

Around 2600 BC, an Egyptian physician wrote about a “bulging mass in the breast” that was resistant to treatment. It is believed to be one of the first documented cases of breast cancer.

More than 2000 years later, Hippocrates argued that cancer was caused by an imbalance of fluids in the body. He used “carcinosis”, the Greek word for crab, to describe a growth of cancerous cells.

In the Second Century, Galen began calling benign tumours “oncos”, from the Greek term for swelling. The Greek physician also wrote about the importance of early detection and the potential for surgical cures.

And in the seventeenth century, an English surgeon described an occupational cancer in chimney sweeps caused by chimney soot.

Cancer is clearly part of our history.

Unfortunately, it is very much part of our present too – there are few among us who have not been touched in some way by this disease.

According to the recent State of Health in the EU report, cancer is Europe’s second leading cause of death – it claimed more than 1.3 million lives last year.

Almost 4 million new cases are expected this year in the EU alone.

World Cancer Day is a crucial part of our response to this disease. It empowers citizens and amplifies their collective voice. And I am delighted to be part of that effort.

So, I want to thank the Hellenic Cancer Society and President Pavlopoulos and Minister Xanthos for hosting this event. And thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today.

We have made a lot of progress in cancer research and treatment in recent years.

But cancer is fought on several fronts – and not just in the research lab or

the hospital. It is tackled in schools, doctors' surgeries and workplaces.

Crucially, both the public and private sector need to be involved, including a wide range of government departments.

This is no longer just the responsibility of the health sector.

The more we understand about the causes of cancer, the more we realise that we need to get ahead of this disease. And that means tackling cancer at its source and talking about obesity, alcohol abuse and healthy diets.

But today, I want to focus on tobacco consumption – which continues to be the single largest avoidable health risk.

The numbers are stark:

- Tobacco is the most significant cause of premature death in the European Union.
- Half of all smokers die prematurely, on average 14 years earlier.
- And tobacco is responsible for a staggering number of deaths every year – nearly 700,000.

We should think not only about those who smoke but also about those who are affected by the environment full of smoke. Here I speak about passive or secondary smoking.

Exposure to passive smoking is still a problem in many European countries; Greece is one of them. According to Eurobarometer, Greece has an exposure rate in eating establishment of 78%, the worst in the EU and 87% exposure rate in drinking establishments, such as bars.

While the majority of these premature deaths are due to lung cancer, we must not forget that tobacco is also a major risk factor in many other forms of cancer, as well as other major diseases such as cardiovascular diseases.

Every one of these avoidable deaths is unacceptable to me – which is why I'm especially worried by the current trends in the EU:

1. The smoking rate in the EU has stayed at 26 percent since 2014.
2. I know that Greece has made great efforts and come a long way, but Greece still has the highest cigarette smoking rates in the EU, at 37 percent.
3. Amongst young people, the rate of smoking has increased EU-wide from 25 percent in 2014 to 29 percent in 2017.
4. At the same time, the mortality rate from lung cancer increased by almost 20% in the EU over the past decade.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As the European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, as a doctor, as a father and grandfather, I am determined to protect citizens, particularly

children, adolescents and young people.

Allow me to take a few moments to discuss exactly what the EU is doing to promote tobacco control.

The Tobacco Products Directive became fully applicable in the EU in 2016 and is a key piece of legislation in this area.

One of its core aims is to make tobacco products less attractive to young people.

For example, picture and text warnings now cover 65 percent of the front and back of cigarette packs.

Some EU countries are going even further – France, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Hungary are implementing plain packaging measures and others are moving in this direction too.

As well as larger health warnings, key provisions include bans on promotional and misleading elements on tobacco products, stronger regulation on ingredients and the introduction of the new tracking and tracing system.

The Tobacco Products Directive is also the first comprehensive legislation regulating e-cigarettes.

This is important, because I am concerned by the numbers of young people taking up vaping and various new tobacco products.

I want to assure you that we will monitor these products carefully and regulate them appropriately.

Almost three-years since the Tobacco Products Directive has come into force, the implementation is now in full swing in the Member States. The Commission continues to track its application and I encourage you all to do your utmost to ensure that it is implemented and enforced correctly.

I must also say that the growing popularity of new tobacco products among young people especially worries me. We cannot deny the reality. We cannot go on pretending that e-cigarettes are for smoking cessation when we see so many young people starting to smoke them.

That is why I am very happy that the 8th Conference of the Parties to the World Health Organisation's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was a milestone for tobacco control work: at the initiative of the EU, it adopted a decision to acknowledge that novel and emerging tobacco products fall under the remit of the Convention and should be comprehensively regulated.

In addition, as part of the Tobacco Products Directive, the EU is currently rolling out the first regional track and trace system for tobacco products. To ensure functionality of the system by 20 May 2019, it is now crucial that Member States deliver on their obligation to appoint an ID issuer.

Despite all the important progress made, I am still frustrated at how easy it

is for young people to obtain tobacco products.

I am also disturbed by how much they are exposed to tobacco marketing and images projected in film and social media.

Illicit trade multiplies these dangers. For example, illicit sale makes it easier to buy tobacco products that are often cheaper and less likely to carry health warnings.

The track and trace system, which is being rolled out this year, was designed to minimise these risks.

Initially starting with cigarettes and roll-your-own tobacco, the cross-border track and trace system is due to be functional this May.

I am determined to curb illicit tobacco trade and I urge each Member State to do their part. I am looking forward to seeing the system up and running on time in all Member States.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Together, we are much greater than the sum of our parts. This is certainly true when it comes to issues like tobacco.

The Joint Action on Tobacco Control, which we launched here in Athens one year ago, is an excellent example of the potential for collaboration.

And I want to take this opportunity to thank President Pavlopoulos and Minister Xanthos, who were present that day, for their continued support.

Coordinated by the Hellenic Cancer Society, this three-year collaborative action brings together dozens of partners from 31 countries, including 25 Member States.

As you can see, this is a pan-European initiative.

So, what exactly does the Joint Action contain?

Well, core work packages include the assessment of data on tobacco products and e-cigarettes; laboratory collaboration and evaluation of priority additives.

With a budget of EUR 2.5 million, 80 percent of which is financed by the EU Health Programme, this will deliver tangible benefits to citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There are more than 7 million tobacco associated deaths around the world each year. Clearly, a global approach is needed.

This is the very reason for which the EU and its Member States are strong supporters of the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco

Control (FCTC).

It is the first global public health treaty and something that the EU is proud to have helped shape.

While the FCTC includes traditional public health work, it also addresses broader tobacco control issues, such as alternatives to tobacco farming, illicit trade and taxation. The treaty also clarifies how policy-makers are to engage with the industry.

Public health policies shall be free from – I quote – ‘commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry’.

In 2013 Greece signed a Protocol to eliminate illicit trade in tobacco products. The signing is not enough, please ratify the Protocol as soon as possible!

The FCTC has a long-term vision, touching on major global ambitions such as the Sustainable Development Goals, which include environmental protection, climate change and human rights.

Let me turn your attention to the Sustainable Development Goals, which recognise the current smoking epidemic and underline the importance of reducing tobacco consumption in order to reach the goal of “good health and well-being for all”.

Promisingly, the 2018 edition of the report monitoring progress in Sustainable Development in the EU shows that smoking prevalence has reduced considerably in the past ten years: from 32% in 2007 to 26% in 2017. However, it highlights again that there are large disparities between different Member States. The reasons for this are complex but an important component is differences in the strength of tobacco control policies.

So, although we are definitely moving in the right direction with tobacco consumption in the SDGs, the movement is slow and we still have far to go. Strengthening tobacco control policies is integral to this.

Crucially, the treaty applies to all of government, not just health ministers, and I am pleased to see partnerships across different government sectors.

Our recent action against cigarette butts is evidence of this collaborative approach.

Cigarette butts litter our streets and are often listed as the number one item in marine litter surveys. Last year, the European Commission proposed legislation as part of the European Strategy for Plastics.

The draft legislation foresees a range of activities for plastics and specifically for cigarette butts.

It involves Member States setting up extended producer responsibility schemes, so that cigarette producers will have to pay for the clean-up of

littered cigarettes butts and for awareness-raising campaigns.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I can clearly remember seeing lung cancers and other tobacco-associated cancers in my early days as a surgeon. I remember many of the patients and their families and the trauma they faced.

Too much precious time is stolen from us by this terrible disease.

But I want to finish by looking forwards, not back.

Twenty percent of respondents to the last Eurobarometer study said that people were smoking tobacco products inside when they last visited a bar.

This figure is much higher in some Member States. I am saddened to learn that citizens are using Facebook groups to identify bars in Greece where there is no indoor smoking.

So, in the immediate future, we must do more to enforce our existing smoke-free laws.

I also believe it is important to include e-cigarettes and novel tobacco products under smoke-free legislation. So, I encourage governments to be ambitious in drafting and enforcing new smoke-free laws.

At the same time, I will continue to work with my fellow Commissioners to address wider tobacco-related issues.

Cancer is certainly part of our history. And it is sadly part of our present too. It is relentless, but so are we.

So, let us do everything in our power to eliminate it from our future.

Sas epharistó thermá, kai pistévo óti enónontas tis prospáthies mas, tha xeperásoume to kakó pou légetai kápnisma.[\[ii\]](#)

[\[i\]](#) Dear President Pavlopoulos, Minister Xanthos, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am delighted to be here today in Athens together with you and to discuss tobacco control issues. Tobacco destroys our, our children's and grandchildren's' lives, it also pollutes our environment. Tobacco kills us slowly.

[\[ii\]](#) Let me thank you, I believe that by joining our efforts we will overcome this evil, which is called tobacco.