

State aid: Commission approves €350 million in public funding to promote shift of freight transport from road to rail in Germany

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager** in charge of competition policy, said: *“Promoting the shift of freight transport from road to rail is one of many measures that Europe needs to take to help improve reduce our environmental footprint. The German aid scheme does exactly that – it supports this shift, ensures benefits are passed to customers and will contribute to meeting the EU’s environmental and transport objectives, without unduly distorting competition”.*

In August 2018, Germany notified to the Commission a scheme to provide public support for freight transport by rail. The scheme has an overall budget of €350 million and will run from 2018 to 2023.

Under the scheme, rail freight operators will be compensated for up to 45% of their track access charges, i.e. the charges that railway undertakings have to pay for the use of the rail network.

It is expected that the rail freight operators benefiting from the scheme will pass on the benefits of the aid to their customers, i.e., the freight shippers, through lower prices. Rail freight operators will be obliged to inform their customers of the fact that their track access charges have been significantly reduced.

The Commission found that the scheme is beneficial for the environment and for mobility as it supports rail transport, which is less polluting than road transport, while also decreasing road congestion. The Commission also found that the measure is proportionate and necessary to achieve the objective pursued, namely to support the modal shift from road to rail.

As a result, the Commission concluded that the measure complies with EU State aid rules, in particular the 2008 Commission [Guidelines on State aid for railway undertakings](#).

Background

The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.51956 in the [State Aid Register](#) on the Commission’s [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. The State Aid Weekly e-News lists new publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the EU Official Journal.

Rohingya-Krise: zusätzliche EU-Hilfe für Bangladesch

Roaming charges ended in the European Union on 15 June 2017. Europeans travelling within EU countries will 'Roam Like at Home' and pay domestic prices for roaming calls, SMS and data. ...

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'Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single plan. It will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity.' Robert Schuman 9 May 1950 On 25 March 2017, ...

In response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and deliberate destabilisation of a neighbouring sovereign country, the EU has imposed restrictive measures against the Russian Federation. ...

Enlargement is the process whereby countries join the EU. Since it was founded in 1957, the EU has grown from 6 member countries to 28. Any European country that respects the principles of liberty, ...

Aides d'État: la Commission autorise un financement public de 350 millions € destiné à promouvoir le transfert du transport de fret de la route vers le

rail en Allemagne

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Staatliche Beihilfen: Kommission genehmigt staatliche Beihilfen Deutschlands in Höhe von 350 Mio. EUR zur Förderung der Verlagerung des Güterverkehrs von der Straße auf die Schiene

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[Daily News 10 / 12 / 2018](#)

Commission presents its response to Antisemitism and a survey showing Antisemitism is on the rise in the EU

Today, the Commission responds to a new survey by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency which finds that 9 out of 10 European Jews feel Antisemitism has increased over the past five years. The results of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency's latest survey on Antisemitism are particularly worrying: 85% of European Jews consider Antisemitism to be the biggest social or political problem in their home country. Other figures, amongst others, show that Antisemitism is pervasive and is having an impact on the daily lives of European Jews throughout the EU. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"I'm deeply concerned about the growth of antisemitism as concluded by the report of the Fundamental Rights Agency. It is essential that we combat this scourge forcefully and collectively. The Jewish community must feel safe and at home in Europe. If we cannot achieve this, Europe ceases to be Europe."* Věra **Jourová**, European Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, added: *"70 years after the Holocaust, I am deeply saddened that 9 out of 10 Jews in Europe say that Antisemitism has increased over the past five years. The Jewish community should feel at home and safe in Europe, whether they are on the way to the synagogue or surfing online. The Commission is acting together with Member States to counter the rise of*

Antisemitism, to fight holocaust denial and to guarantee that Jews have the full support of the authorities to keep them safe.” The results of today’s survey confirm the importance of the work the European Commission has been doing, and is continuing to do, to counter Antisemitism. The Commission has appointed in 2015 a Coordinator on combating Antisemitism to liaise with Jewish communities and to strengthen cooperation with organisations working in that field. To tackle the increase of Antisemitism in the online sphere, the Commission launched in 2016 a [Code of Conduct](#) on illegal online hate speech. In June 2016, the European Commission also launched the [High Level Group on combating Racism, Xenophobia and other forms of Intolerance](#) to step up cooperation and coordination, to better prevent and combat hate crime and hate speech. The full [press release](#) is available online, as well as the results of the Fundamental Right’s Agency’s [survey](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.:+32 229 5865; Kasia Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

Commissioner Stylianides visits EU-funded humanitarian projects in Jordan

Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** is on an official mission to Jordan to visit EU aid projects supporting refugees and meet with government officials and humanitarian partners on the ground. The Commissioner visited the Azraq Refugee Camp, where the EU is funding a camp hospital providing primary health care, reproductive health, mental health, psychosocial support, and protection services. He also visited schools which benefit from and EU funded Education in Emergencies projects helping children with disabilities. Commissioner **Stylianides** said: *“The EU remains committed to supporting Jordan which hosts hundreds of thousands of refugees. We are funding education in emergencies projects so that no child is left behind. This is my personal commitment. Syrian refugees should have the same quality of education as any other child. I am grateful to Jordan and its people for their generosity in welcoming Syrian refugees. During my visit I will also meet with the authorities to strengthen our cooperation on civil protection response.”* The Commissioner also visited Jordan’s National Center for Security and Crisis Management to discuss civil protection with the national authorities, in particular ways to improve regional emergency preparedness and response mechanisms. The EU has provided more than €344 million in humanitarian assistance for refugees in Jordan since 2012. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Rohingya crisis: additional EU aid reaches Bangladesh

The European Commission has released an additional €5 million to provide life-saving food assistance to Rohingya communities stranded in Bangladesh. This comes on top of the €40 million in humanitarian aid announced in May in response to the crisis. *“Today’s additional funding is another clear sign that the EU remains committed to stand by the side of the Rohingya for as*

long as it takes. Food assistance is an absolute necessity, and we will continue to support both Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh throughout this crisis,” said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Cox’s Bazar District of Bangladesh rely entirely on humanitarian aid for their survival. The additional EU funding will provide urgently needed food assistance to refugees, while ensuring access to food throughout the camps, makeshift settlements and host communities. 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 in Croatia: fresh financing for innovative small and medium businesses and for electric car company Rimac Automobili

The European Investment Bank Group (EIB) signed a guarantee agreement with Croatian Bank Privredna Banka Zagreb (PBZ) to provide better access to finance to innovative Croatian small and medium businesses and mid-caps. The agreement is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe – or [Juncker Plan](#) – as well as by the InnovFin SME Guarantee Facility, funded by Europe’s research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020. In addition, the EIB also signed a €30 million EFSI-backed loan with Croatian electric car company Rimac Automobili. The company will use the financing to scale-up its production, boost its R&D activities and hire new staff in this branch, and plan its expansion in Europe and Asia. Press releases are available [here](#). Furthermore, the EIB is lending €300 million to Croatia under a “*Structural Programme Loan (SPL)*“, a loan programme covering the national co-financing part in EU-funded Cohesion Policy projects in the fields of infrastructure, environment and research and development. In November 2018, the Juncker Plan had already mobilised €360 billion of additional investments in the EU, including over €1 billion in Croatia, with 850.000 small and medium businesses set to benefit from improved access to finance. (For more information: Annika Breidhardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

European Solidarity Corps: 2019 call for project proposals launched today

Today, the European Commission published a [new call for proposals](#) under the [European Solidarity Corps](#). More than €96 million is being made available to support solidarity activities for young people in 2019. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: “*Since its creation almost exactly two years ago, the Solidarity Corps has grown to become the EU’s flagship initiative creating opportunities for young people to support communities and individuals in need. With this call, the EU is continuing to respond to the more than 90,000 young people who have already declared themselves ready to engage in the activities of the Corps. By participating in this initiative, young people lend a helping hand where it is needed, while gaining invaluable experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.*” Projects eligible for funding from the Solidarity Corps range from volunteering projects and partnerships to traineeships and jobs, in areas such as protecting European cultural heritage, fostering the

social inclusion of people with fewer opportunities and tackling environmental and climate challenges. Groups of young people registered in the [European Solidarity Corps Portal](#), as well as public and private bodies established in EU Member States which have received the relevant [quality label](#), may [apply for funding](#). Deadlines for submission of projects fall between 5 February and 1 October 2019 depending on the type of activity. Today's call follows the [first one launched in August 2018](#). The evaluation of these applications is now reaching its final stages. Grants will be awarded before the end of the year, and the first activities are set to start at the beginning of 2019. More information on European Solidarity Corps activities can be found in this [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Report on EU-Egypt relations: Investing in socio-economic development and inclusive growth

The EU and [Egypt](#) undertook closer cooperation according to the conclusions drawn by the [report](#) released today on the partnership between the EU and Egypt for the period from June 2017 to May 2018. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *“Egypt, its stability and development are key to the European Union, its Member States and the entire region. That is why we signed our partnership priorities last year and reinforced our already strong engagement with and for the Egyptian people. We are determined to continue our work, together, to address all the challenges we have to face, for the sake of our citizens.”* Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** added: *“In the last year we stepped up our action to support Egypt reforming its economy, working for a sustainable and inclusive growth. For the EU it is imperative that the young generation, women and the most vulnerable members of the society are included in this process. The EU will continue to support Egypt tackling socio-economic challenges and will keep working together for the stability and prosperity of the region.”* The report highlights that the implementation of the priority areas defined in the EU-Egypt [Partnership Priorities](#) is well on track, with notable challenges remaining in particular in the field of the rule of law, human rights, fundamental freedoms and space for civil society. The full [press release](#) and the [report](#) are available online. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Lauranne Devillé – Tel.: +32 229 80833; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

New scoreboard shows that participation of women in the EU digital economy still lags behind [updated on 10/12/2018 at 12.57]

Today the European Commission is launching an annual scoreboard to monitor [women's participation in the digital economy](#), on the occasion of the birthday of Ada Lovelace, considered as the world's first computer programmer. The [Women in Digital scoreboard](#) is one of the actions to assess women's inclusion in digital jobs, careers and entrepreneurship initiated by Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society. The Scoreboard assesses EU countries' performance in the areas of internet use and internet user skills, as well as specialist skills and employment, based on 13 indicators. The

first edition of the Scoreboard shows that women's participation in the digital field is lagging behind in several areas. Only 1 in 6 ICT (Information and Communication Technology) specialists and only 1 in 3 STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) graduate is a woman. Astonishingly women in the ICT sector earn almost 20% less than men. On this occasion, Commissioner **Gabriel** said: *"Women account for 52% of the European population but only around 17% of women work in ICT- related jobs. We must fully unlock women's potential in bringing a boost to the digital economy. Governments, companies, educators and civil society need to take decisive actions to change this trend. All together, we can promote women's talents and make sure we encourage them to STEM study fields early on. Today, we have an extraordinary tool, the Women in Digital European Scoreboard that shows where exactly countries must improve women's situation. It is time to deliver for young girls, women, all our citizens and businesses. Our Digital Europe will be inclusive, competitive & dynamic with their valuable contribution."* The new Scoreboard also shows that Finland, Sweden, Luxembourg and Denmark registered the highest scores on the [Women in Digital](#) scoreboard while Bulgaria, Romania, Greece and Italy registered the lowest. For more information read our [press release](#) and [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou- Tel.: +32 229 83583)

Plant health: Commission and Member States present list which paves the way for more plant safety across the EU

Today, Member States backed the Commission's proposal for a set of measures that enhance the level of plant protection in the EU. At a Committee meeting in Brussels, experts from all EU countries approved a high-risk plants list, which includes 39 high-risk plants (35 plants for planting, 1 fruit, 1 vegetable and 1 wood). The purpose of the list is to ensure that their introduction in the EU will be provisionally prohibited until a full risk assessment is completed. The list also enlarges the current scope of regulated plant material that needs to be accompanied by a specific phytosanitary certificate when imported. This will take effect from 14 December onwards. The certification requirement doesn't apply to bananas, pineapples, coconuts, durians and dates as they do not represent a risk for the European agricultural production. In addition, the Member States approved a decision that will require a detailed view on the information and risk assessment procedures to be followed on the high risk material before getting possible access to the EU market. On top of that, an update of the current import requirements in particular for fruits was agreed. Finally, with a view to further boost phytosanitary safety across the continent, a harmonised minimum level for import inspections of newly regulated plant material will be introduced, from December 2019 onwards. Welcoming the vote, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, Commissioner in charge of Health and Food Safety, said : *"A swift implementation of the Plant Health Regulation is of the utmost importance since it will not only reinforce our domestic fight against pests which can have major impact on the economy, but also strengthen the controls at the EU's border. To make it work, I call on Member States to step up the*

reinforcement and the preparation of the necessary resources, notably in terms of personnel, to deal with this fight.” As a next step, the Commission will adopt the different regulatory actions which set the legal basis for all the measures, in the course of January 2019. For more information see [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

State aid: Commission approves €350 million per year in public funding to promote shift of freight transport from road to rail in Germany [updated on 10/12/2018 at 16:30]

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules a German aid scheme to promote the shift of freight traffic from road to rail. Under the scheme, which has an overall budget of €350 million per year and will run from 2018 to 2023, rail freight operators will be compensated for up to 45% of their track access charges, i.e. the charges that railway undertakings have to pay for the use of the rail network. It is expected that the rail freight operators benefiting from the scheme will pass on the benefits of the aid to their customers, i.e., the freight shippers, through lower prices. Rail freight operators will be obliged to inform their customers of the fact that their track access charges have been significantly reduced. The Commission found that the scheme is beneficial for the environment and for mobility as it supports rail transport, which is less polluting than road transport, while also decreasing road congestion. The Commission also found that the measure is proportionate and necessary to achieve the objective pursued, namely to support the modal shift from road to rail. As a result, the Commission concluded that the measure complies with EU State aid rules, in particular the 2008 Commission [Guidelines on State aid for railway undertakings](#). Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager** in charge of competition policy, said: *“Promoting the shift of freight transport from road to rail is one of many measures that Europe needs to take to help improve reduce our environmental footprint. The German aid scheme does exactly that – it supports this shift, ensures benefits are passed to customers and will contribute to meeting the EU’s environmental and transport objectives, without unduly distorting competition”*. A full press release is available in [EN](#), [DE](#) and [FR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Competition: EU and India reinforce cooperation on competition policy at the first EU-India Competition Week in New Delhi

Officials and experts from the EU and India will meet in New Delhi from 10 to 13 December to deepen the partnership, advance cooperation and exchange practical experiences on case handling and enforcement in competition policy. The importance of strengthening cooperation and partnership between the EU and India was highlighted in the [Joint Communication: Elements for an EU strategy on India](#) adopted on 20 November 2018. The technical discussions on competition policy will touch upon a wide range of topics, including leniency applications, cooperation in merger control and the assessment of rebates schemes. This first EU-India Competition Week builds on the [Memorandum of](#)

[Understanding](#) on cooperation in the field of competition law signed between the Directorate General for Competition and the Competition Commission of India on 21 November 2013. The EU-India Competition Week is part of the [Competition Cooperation project](#), a 5-year EU-funded programme offering technical cooperation to competition authorities in Asia. The objective is to exchange experiences and strengthen convergence in competition policy to the benefit of citizens and businesses in both the EU and Asia. More information about the European Commission's bilateral dialogue with India in the field of competition policy is available on the Commission's [website](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Aides d'État: la Commission approuve un financement public français pour un parc éolien en mer dans une zone au large de Dunkerque

La Commission européenne a autorisé, en vertu des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État, en particulier sur la base de ses [lignes directrices de 2014 concernant les aides d'État à la protection de l'environnement et à l'énergie](#) (LDEE), l'aide que la France envisage d'octroyer pour un parc éolien en mer d'une puissance de 400 à 600 mégawatts, dans une zone au large de Dunkerque. Cette mesure s'inscrit dans le cadre de la transition énergétique française, et les autorités françaises comptent en faire un projet pilote pour les futurs parcs éoliens en mer. L'aide prendra la forme d'un complément de rémunération octroyé à l'issue d'un appel d'offres concurrentiel, basé sur des critères transparents, objectifs et non discriminatoires, et spécifique à l'éolien en mer. L'aide contribuera aux objectifs français et européens de production d'énergie à partir de sources renouvelables, conformément aux [objectifs environnementaux](#) de l'UE, tandis que les éventuelles distorsions de concurrence engendrées par le soutien de l'État seront réduites au minimum. Plus d'informations sont disponibles sur le site web de la Direction Générale de la [Concurrence](#) de la Commission dans le [registre](#) des aides d'Etat, sous le numéro SA.51061. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Slovenian tonnage tax scheme

The European Commission has authorised, under EU State aid rules, the prolongation of the Slovenian tonnage tax regime, originally approved in 2009, for an additional 10 years. The Commission assessed the prolongation of the scheme under its [Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport](#) and concluded that it is in line with EU State aid rules. With the prolongation of the tonnage tax scheme, Slovenia wants to provide better conditions for the development of maritime transport. In order to obtain the Commission's approval for the prolongation, Slovenia committed to change its tonnage tax law to include a legal distinction between core, ancillary and ineligible revenues of shipping companies, and to abolish a difference in dividends taxation between companies benefitting from tonnage taxation and other companies. These changes will be implemented in Slovenian law by the end of

2019. However, the prolonged tonnage tax scheme as approved today, including the commitments, will apply to tax periods starting as from 1 January 2019. It is estimated that the financial impact of the scheme will remain EUR 3.52 million per year. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.48949. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Armstrong's ceilings business outside the Americas by Knauf, subject to conditions

The European Commission has conditionally approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Armstrong World Industries' ceilings business outside the Americas ("Armstrong") by Knauf. Both companies are active in the production and supply of modular suspended ceilings in Europe. The Commission was concerned that the proposed acquisition would significantly reduce the level of competition and lead to increased prices for commercial and public customers in the markets: (a) for mineral fibre tiles for modular suspended ceilings in Austria, Lithuania, Spain and the UK and (b) for grids for modular suspended ceilings in Austria, Spain and the UK. To address these concerns, Knauf offered the following commitments: (a) the divestment of Armstrong's plants for the production of mineral fibre tiles and grids located in Team Valley, UK; (b) the transfer of Armstrong's sales teams and customer base in each of the countries where the Commission raised preliminary concerns and in additional countries to ensure the viability and competitiveness of the divestment business. These commitments eliminate the Commission's concerns in relation to the proposed acquisition. The Commission therefore concluded that the proposed transaction, as modified by the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns in Austria, Spain, Lithuania or the UK. The decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the creation of a joint venture between Santander and Hyundai

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture between Santander Consumer Bank AG ("SCB"), a solely controlled subsidiary of Banco Santander S.A. ("Santander") of Spain, and Hyundai Capital Services Inc. ("HCS"), a solely controlled subsidiary of Hyundai Motor Company ("HCM") of South Korea. The joint venture, based in Germany, will offer automotive financing services related to Hyundai and Kia-branded motor vehicles in Europe, as well as related services, such as insurance. Santander is active in retail banking, asset management, corporate and investment banking, treasury and insurance in Europe, the United States of America, Latin America and Asia. SCB delivers a full range of consumer finance services in Germany. HCM is a manufacturer of motor vehicles, who also offers financial services through its subsidiary HCS. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns

given the minor horizontal and vertical relationships 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.9166](#). (*For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526*)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Danske Commodities by Equinor Refining Norway

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Danske Commodities A/S of Denmark by Equinor Refining Norway AS of Norway. Danske Commodities is an independent trading house, specialising in physical and financial trading of electricity and gas. Equinor Refining Norway is part of the Equinor Group, whose business activities consist principally of worldwide exploration, production, transportation, refining and marketing of petroleum and petroleum-derived products, gas and other forms of energy. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the companies' moderate combined market positions in the business activities where their activities overlap, as well as their moderate individual market positions where their activities are vertically linked. 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.9067](#). (*For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526*)

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