

# International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2018: Statement by Commissioner Thyssen

Ahead of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, taking place every year on 3 December, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, said:

*“Last year, I said I wanted 2018 to be the year of delivery for the European Accessibility Act. I am very pleased that my wish came true, as a few weeks ago, the European Parliament and the Council came to a provisional agreement which should be finalised in the coming weeks.*

*The agreement will improve the lives of more than 80 million Europeans with disabilities. Soon, they will have at their disposal more accessible products and services, such as phones, computers, e-books and e-commerce. This will establish the European Union as the world’s largest market for accessible products and services and is a concrete realisation of the European Disability Strategy 2010-2020, which aims to create a barrier-free Europe for all European citizens.*

*Throughout 2018, we have achieved progress on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In addition to the agreement on the European Accessibility Act, all EU Member States are now parties to the Convention.*

*I am determined to continue working on our path towards a more inclusive society. One step at a time, we are making the European Pillar of Social Rights a reality, building a fairer and more social Europe for everyone.”*

## **Background**

More than 80 million people in the EU are affected by a disability to some degree. Accessibility of products and services is a precondition to their equal participation and active role in society. It also contributes to ensure smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In 2011, the EU ratified the [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(UNCRPD\)](#). The Convention addresses disability as a human rights issue – not from a medical or charity perspective. It covers civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and a wide range of policy fields: from justice to transport, employment to information technology, and so on. All EU Member States have signed and ratified the Convention.

At EU-level, action has been taken with the [proposal of the European Accessibility Act](#). Inclusion of people with disabilities in our society and economy is also a key principle of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#).

The [annual Conference on the European Day of Persons with Disabilities](#) will

take place on 3 and 4 December in Brussels and coincides also with the annual [Access City Award](#) recognising cities that have worked to become more accessible for their citizen.

### **For more information**

[Making key products and services accessible across the EU: Statement by Commissioner Thyssen following the provisional agreement between the EU institutions](#)

[Press release: Commission proposes to make products and services more accessible to persons with disabilities](#)

[European Day of Persons with Disabilities conference 2018](#)

[European Commission webpage on persons with disabilities](#)

[Access City Awards](#)

[News item on gender equality for women with disabilities from the European Institute for Gender Equality](#)

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## **Daily News 30 / 11 / 2018**

### **EU approves disbursement of €500 million in Macro-Financial Assistance to Ukraine**

The European Commission, on behalf of the EU, has today approved the disbursement of the first €500 million of the new [Macro-Financial Assistance \(MFA\) programme to Ukraine](#). With this disbursement, the total Macro-Financial Assistance extended to Ukraine by the EU since 2014 will reach €3.3 billion, the largest amount of such assistance directed at any non-EU country. Under the new MFA programme approved by the European Parliament and the Council in July 2018, up to €1 billion is available to Ukraine. The programme helps Ukraine cover its financing needs and supports the implementation of a wide-ranging structural reform agenda. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Commission Vice-President responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"The European Union has shown constant political and financial support to Ukraine. Today's European Commission decision on disbursement comes at a crucial moment when Ukraine and its people face a new aggression from Russia and need to see solidarity from international partners. Such aggressive behaviour is not acceptable in today's Europe."* Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner in charge

of Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, added: *“Ukraine has fulfilled the policy commitments agreed with the EU for the release of the first payment under the Macro-Financial Assistance programme. This is an important and encouraging signal that Ukraine continues to deliver on reforms despite the current security environment and the upcoming electoral cycle.”* A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Annika Breidthardt Tel.: +32 229 56153; Annikky Lamp Tel.: +32 229 56151; Enda McNamara Tel.: +32 229 64976)

### **The EU Budget for 2019: Commission makes a new proposal to achieve growth, solidarity and security in Europe and beyond**

In the context of the negotiations between the European Parliament and the Council on the draft budget for 2019, the European Commission has today put forward a second proposal. It foresees a budget of €165 billion in commitments, and €148 billion in payments, which reflects the discussions that took place between Council and Parliament during the November 2018 conciliation period. With this new proposal, the Commission seeks to bridge the respective positions of the European Parliament and the Council so that the EU will be able to continue investing in growth and jobs, research and innovation, students and young people – the priorities of the Juncker Commission – also in 2019. Commenting on the proposal, Günther H. **Oettinger**, in charge of Budget and Human Resources, said: *“It is in the interest of all Europeans that the EU institutions quickly reach a deal on a budget for 2019. I therefore urge the European Parliament and the Council to make compromises so that the EU continues to provide the much needed funding to researchers, students, businesses, farmers and the socially deprived.”* The proposal is based on the understanding that the United Kingdom will continue to contribute to and participate in the implementation of EU budgets until the end of 2020 as if it were a Member State. Detailed information about the proposal is available [here](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Andreana Stankova – Tel.: +32 229 57857)

### **Les programmes spatiaux de l’UE peuvent sauver des vies: démonstration d’une opération de recherche et de sauvetage**

Le 4 décembre prochain, l’agence de systèmes de navigation par satellite globaux (GSA), le Centre national d’études spatiales (CNES) et la Marine nationale française effectueront la démonstration d’une opération de recherche et de sauvetage de pêcheurs dont le bateau serait perdu au large des côtes françaises. Le service de recherche et de sauvetage (SAR) de Galileo et le service d’urgence de Copernicus sont utilisés pour mener l’opération. Les journalistes intéressés peuvent encore [s’inscrire par email](#) pour réserver une des quelques places encore disponibles sur le bateau. Cet exercice vise à démontrer comment les opérations de recherche et sauvetage (SAR) localisent et permettent d’aider les personnes en détresse équipées d’une balise de secours. De telles balises fonctionnent grâce aux services spatiaux de l’UE: les signaux de navigation par satellite de Galileo et les services de la surveillance et de la cartographie maritimes de [Copernicus](#). La commissaire pour le marché intérieur, l’industrie,

l'entrepreneuriat et les PME, Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, participera à cette démonstration de sauvetage, organisée à l'occasion de la [Semaine Européenne de l'Espace](#) à Marseille. La commissaire **Bieńkowska** prononcera également un discours lors de la session plénière du programme spatial de l'UE et s'entretiendra avec des start-ups qui emploient les technologies spatiales européennes. Enfin, dans la soirée, la cérémonie de remise des prix "[Galileo](#) et [Copernicus](#) Masters" aura lieu. Des projets en compétition seront récompensés pour l'utilisation des services Galileo et Copernicus dans le développement des solutions commerciales innovantes. Des prix individuels de plus de 10 000 d'euros, pour un total de plus de 600 000 d'euros, sont en jeu et démontrent que soutenir l'entrepreneuriat spatial et l'utilisation des services spatiaux est et restera une priorité pour la Commission. Plus de 1 000 personnes participeront à la semaine européenne de l'espace, au titre du développement durable et environnement, de la mobilité ou de la défense. (Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tél.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tél.: +32 229 55040).

### **Commission welcomes progress made in adopting new rules for safer and modern cars**

The Commission welcomes the [general approach](#) reached by the Council on the most ambitious legislation yet for the safety of vehicles on our roads. In May this year, as part of the [3<sup>rd</sup> Mobility Package](#), the Commission proposed that cars, trucks and buses be equipped with new and advanced safety features, such as emergency braking, intelligent speed assistance and enhanced pedestrian and cyclist protection (see full list [here](#)). Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for the Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: "I welcome the determination of the Council to agree on these new rules already now. The General Safety Regulation is crucial to improve road safety. Every year, roughly 25,000 people die on roads in the EU, which is unacceptable. These new advanced safety features are also the enablers of automated mobility, promising EU industry leadership in this important new area. We now call on the European Parliament to give priority to work on this file in order to reach a rapid agreement. There is no time to lose." While road fatalities have more than halved since 2001, 25,300 people still lost their lives on EU roads [in 2017](#) and another 135,000 were seriously injured. The Commission is therefore taking measures with strong EU added-value to contribute to safe roads and to a Europe that protects. Once the new Regulation is adopted, the new safety measures will become mandatory within 3 years. As part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mobility Package, the Commission will also help Member States to systematically identify dangerous road sections and to better target investment. Overall this could save thousands of lives thereby contributing to the EU's long-term goal of moving close to zero fatalities and serious injuries by 2050 ("Vision Zero"). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel .: +32 229 56182; Victoria Von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

**European Cinema Night: 34 EU cities offer free screenings of European films**

The first edition of the European Cinema Night will take place on 3-7 December 2018 across the EU, and is expected to reach more than 7200 people. Commissioner Mariya **Gabriel**, in charge of Digital Economy and Society, said: “Cinema is an essential part of our rich and diverse European culture and is contributing to reinforce bonds between people feeling the same passion and emotion on a movie. The European cinema nights are an occasion to show this diversity and to illustrate the importance of supporting a rich, free and diverse film production.” Commissioner Tibor **Navracsics**, in charge of Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, added: “European films are part of our cultural heritage which we have been celebrating all year with the objective of making it accessible to everyone. In this spirit, the European cinema nights will show citizens how European policy is linked to their lives, to the emotions they feel at cinemas, and how by attending a local event they can be part of an experience shared across Europe.” The European Cinema Night was launched as part of the [Creative Europe MEDIA programme](#), which has supported the European audiovisual sector for the past 27 years. Over the course of one week, some 50 free screenings will take place across the EU. More information is available in a [press release](#), [factsheet](#) and [an interactive map with all the screenings and participating cinemas](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

## **La Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique protégée de Bulgarie**

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d’inscription du “Карнобатскагроздоваракия” / “ГроздоваракияотКарнобат” (“Karnobatska grozdova rakya” / “Grozdova rakya ot Karnobat”) dans le [registre des indications géographiques protégées](#) (IGP). La “Karnobatska grozdova rakya” appelée aussi “Grozdova rakya ot Karnobat” est une eau-de-vie avec un degré d’alcool d’au moins 40%. Elle est de couleur jaune pâle suite à la maturation dans les barils de chêne ou à l’ajout de caramel. Cette eau-de-vie a un goût prononcé de raisins mûrs avec entre autres des nuances de pomme et de figue. Elle est fabriquée dans plusieurs municipalités située dans l’est de la Bulgarie. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre plus de 245 spiritueux déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [e-spirit drinks](#). Pour plus d’informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

## **Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into proposed acquisition of VDM by Aperam in nickel alloy industry**

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess the proposed acquisition of VDM by Aperam under the EU Merger Regulation. Aperam and VDM are the two leading nickel alloy producers in Europe, and the transaction may strengthen VDM’s already strong position in flat nickel alloy products specifically. At this stage, the Commission is concerned that, following the transaction, customers would face reduced choice of suppliers, as well as higher prices, for nickel alloy plates and sheets, and for strips.

The Commission will also investigate further whether the transaction could have an effect on the supply and prices of long nickel alloy products, namely nickel alloy wire and wire rod. The Commission will now carry out an in-depth investigation into the effects of this transaction to determine whether its preliminary competition concerns are confirmed. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Nickel alloys are a crucial input for industrial products in a wide range of sectors, including cars and trucks, oil and gas and electronic and electrical equipment. The proposed transaction would bring together the two leading European suppliers. This is why the Commission will carefully assess whether Aperam’s plans to buy VDM would affect competition in the markets for nickel alloys and would lead to less choice or higher prices for European manufacturers, and ultimately, for consumers.”* 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 approves acquisition of Fibria by Suzano, subject to conditions**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Fibria by Suzano, both active in the production and supply of wood pulp from eucalyptus trees. Suzano and Fibria, both from Brazil, are the two largest global suppliers of bleached eucalyptus kraft pulp (“BEKP”), an input to the paper, tissue and packaging industry. The Commission investigated concerns that the proposed acquisition would significantly reduce the level of competition in the market for the manufacture and supply of wood pulp, in particular BEKP. The merged entity would combine the two largest producers worldwide, three to four times larger than the next competitor. Furthermore, Fibria had an offtake agreement since 2016 with Klabin S.A, another major Brazilian producer of BEKP. On the basis of this agreement, Fibria acted as an exclusive sales agent for all sales of BEKP produced by Klabin outside of South America. To address the Commission’s competition concerns, Suzano offered the following commitments: (a) the termination of the offtake agreement in place between Fibria and Klabin; and (b) the transfer of all assets and personnel necessary to allow Klabin to independently sell BEKP in the European Economic Area (EEA). 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 the EEA. The decision is conditional upon full compliance with the commitments. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [PT](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears creation of joint venture by Mondi Štětí, Holzindustrie Maresch and ECO-INVESTMENT**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture by Mondi Štětí of Czechia, Holzindustrie Maresch of Austria, and ECO-INVESTMENT also of Czechia. The joint venture will be

active in the construction and operation of a sawmill in Czechia. Mondi Štětí supplies corrugated base paper and market pulp and manufactures high quality kraft paper. Holzindustrie Maresch manufactures wood products and specialises in the manufacture of sawn wood. ECO-INVESTMENT holds investments in the paper, packaging, meat processing, energy and real estate industries. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the limited 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.9087](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission sends Supplementary Statement of Objections to Canon for possible early implementation of acquisition**

The European Commission has sent a Supplementary Statement of Objections to Canon Inc. This is a procedural step in the Commission's ongoing investigation looking into whether Canon implemented its acquisition of Toshiba Medical Systems Corporation before notification to and approval by the Commission, in breach of the EU Merger Regulation. The Commission sent a [Statement of Objections to Canon](#) in July 2017 detailing its preliminary view that Canon used a so-called "warehousing" two-step transaction structure involving an interim buyer, which essentially allowed it to implement its acquisition of Toshiba Medical Systems prior to obtaining the relevant merger approvals from the Commission. The Supplementary Statement of Objections complements this preliminary view. The sending of a Supplementary Statement of Objections does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. More information is available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8179](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Eurostat: Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro en baisse à 2,0% (Estimation rapide – novembre 2018)**

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro est estimé à 2,0% en novembre 2018, contre 2,2% en octobre selon une estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. S'agissant des principales composantes de l'inflation de la zone euro, l'énergie devrait connaître le taux annuel le plus élevé en novembre (9,1%, comparé à 10,7% en octobre), suivie de l'alimentation, alcool & tabac (2,0%, comparé à 2,2% en octobre), des services (1,3%, comparé à 1,5% en octobre) et des biens industriels non énergétiques (0,4%, stable comparé à octobre). Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: + 32229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tél.: + 32 229 64976)

### **Eurostat: Le taux de chômage à 8,1% dans la zone euro**

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 8,1% en octobre 2018, stable par rapport à septembre 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 8,8% d'octobre 2017. Cela

demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis novembre 2008. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 6,7% en octobre 2018, stable par rapport à septembre 2018 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 7,4% d'octobre 2017. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis le début de la série mensuelle sur le chômage en janvier 2000. Ces chiffres sont publiés par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: + 32229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tél.: + 32 229 64976)

## STATEMENTS

### **Déclaration du vice-président Ansip et des commissaires Bieńkowska, Jourová et Gabriel sur les nouvelles règles de l'UE permettant aux citoyens de faire des achats en ligne sans frontières**

Le 3 décembre 2018, le [nouveau règlement](#), proposé par la Commission européenne en mai 2016, pour mettre fin au géoblocage en ligne injustifié, entrera en vigueur. Les Européens n'auront pas à s'inquiéter de ce qu'un site web les bloque ou les réachemine simplement parce qu'eux-mêmes, ou leur carte de crédit, proviennent d'un autre pays. Où qu'ils se trouvent dans l'UE, ils pourront accéder aux biens et services qui les intéressent en ligne. À cette occasion, le vice-président du marché unique numérique Andrus **Ansip**, la commissaire chargée du marché intérieur, de l'industrie, de l'entrepreneuriat et des PME Elbieta **Bieńkowska**, la commissaire chargée de la justice, des consommateurs et de l'égalité des genres Věra **Jourová**, et la commissaire chargée de la société et de l'économie numériques Mariya **Gabriel** ont déclaré: *"Parallèlement à la fin des frais d'itinérance, aux nouvelles règles européennes en matière de protection des données personnelles et à la possibilité pour les citoyens de voyager avec leurs abonnements en ligne, la fin du géoblocage injustifié est une autre initiative essentielle qui fait du marché unique numérique une réalité pour tous. Les nouvelles règles permettront aux consommateurs de disposer d'un plus grand choix de produits à des prix compétitifs et, par conséquent, de meilleures offres. En même temps, les entreprises verront leur clientèle s'étendre au-delà des frontières et bénéficieront de coûts administratifs et de transaction moindres. Le règlement fait également partie d'un effort plus vaste de l'UE visant à stimuler le commerce électronique dans le marché unique, incluant des mesures visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ligne, à assurer une livraison transfrontalière de colis plus abordable et à simplifier les règles de TVA pour faciliter l'achat et la vente de biens en ligne."* La déclaration commune complète est disponible [ici](#). Vous pouvez également trouver en ligne une [fiche technique](#) sur les moyens de tirer le meilleur parti du commerce électronique en Europe en tant que consommateur et un [petit guide](#) sur les règles de géoblocage pour les vendeurs en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tél. : +32 229 67083; Marietta Grammenou- Tél. : +32 229 83583; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184).

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#### **Statement by Commissioner Andriukaitis on World AIDS Day**

Tomorrow, 1 December, is the World AIDS day. It is an opportunity for people around the world to join forces in the fight against HIV, to show support for those living with the virus, and to commemorate those who have died from an AIDS-related illness. Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "On this day, I think about all the people who live with HIV/AIDS and suffer from related complications. Despite our efforts, I am disheartened to see that HIV still damages the lives of many people around us. It is also still a source of discrimination and stigmatisation. I, with my fellow Commissioners, took a commitment to tackling HIV/AIDS from different policy angles – including funding, research, prevention, education and linkage to treatment. More than 46 million euros have been invested under the EU Health Programme since 2003. But we have to do more. The EU Member States have committed to ending the AIDS epidemic by 2030 and the Commission is ready to support this goal. As Commissioner for Health, I am determined to work with a broad range of actors, and I am fully committed to supporting the actions of Member States and neighbouring countries to eliminate these epidemics." More information [here](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **UN climate conference in Katowice: EU aims for adoption of rules to implement the Paris Agreement**

This year's UN climate conference in Katowice 3-14 December will be a key moment for the implementation of the Paris Agreement. Three years after the

Paris Agreement was adopted, the EU hopes that all Parties in Katowice will show the commitment and determination necessary to secure an ambitious and comprehensive work programme that covers all key areas including transparency, finance, mitigation and adaptation. This will enable and encourage climate action at all levels and demonstrate global commitment. The EU will be represented at the COP24 climate negotiations by the chief climate negotiator Miguel **Arias Cañete** and Elisabeth Köstinger, Minister for Sustainability and Tourism of Austria, which currently holds the EU Council Presidency. COP24 will bring together Heads of State and Government in a Leaders' Segment where the Commission will be represented by Maroš **Šefčovič**, Vice-President for the Energy Union. He will also participate at the Global Climate Action Agenda focused on non-state actors' commitments. Commissioner for transport, Violeta **Bulc** will open the event '[Urban Mobility Solutions to Tackle Climate Change](#)' at Transport Day 2018. Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs will attend an event "The global reach of Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service." The Commission this week presented a [long-term strategic vision](#) for the modernisation of the European industry and economy aiming to make the EU climate neutral by 2050. The Commission will present the strategy to our global partners at COP24, and looks forward to kick-starting an EU-wide debate on its long-term strategy and submit it to the UNFCCC by 2020. Further information about the events in Katowice on [COP24 webpage](#). (For more information Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel: +32 229-56186, Lynn Rietdorf – Tel: +32 229-74959)

### **Commissioner Hahn visiting Kosovo on 3 December**

Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes **Hahn** will be in [Kosovo](#) on 3 December. The main focus of his visit will be the recent decision by the government of Kosovo to impose tariffs on goods from Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. He will reiterate the EU position calling for a revocation of this decision and underline the need to focus on improving good neighbourly relations and regional cooperation, principles that Kosovo and all the Western Balkans partners have committed to. The Commissioner will meet President Thaçi, Speaker of the Assembly Veseli, members of the government including Prime Minister Haradinaj, as well as members of the opposition. Photos and videos of the visit will be available on [EBS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 6488)

[CALENDAR](#) – Commissioner's weekly activities

## [Digital Single Market: New EU rules allow Europeans to shop online without borders](#)

On 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2018 the new regulation proposed by the European Commission in May 2016 to end unjustified geoblocking online will enter into force. Europeans will not have to worry about a website blocking or re-routing them just because they, or their credit card, come from a different country. Wherever they are in the EU, they will be able to access goods and services online.

On this occasion, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip**, Commissioner in charge of Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová**, and Commissioner in charge of the Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** said:

*“In 2015, 63% of the websites did not let shoppers buy from another EU country. As a result, nearly two-thirds of consumers who wanted to shop online abroad were prevented from doing so. On 3<sup>rd</sup> of December we are putting an end to this practice. We want a Europe without barriers, and this also means removing barriers to online shopping.*

*Together with the end of roaming charges, the new rules on data protection and the possibility for citizens to travel with their online content, the end of unjustified geoblocking is another essential initiative that makes the Digital Single Market a reality for all, delivering concrete benefits to citizens and businesses.*

*The new rules will enable consumers to have a wider choice of products at competitive prices and consequently better deals. At the same time businesses will see their customer base expand across borders and enjoy lower transaction and administrative costs. The Regulation is also part of a wider EU effort to boost e-commerce in the Single Market, which includes measures to better protect consumers online, ensure more affordable cross-border parcel delivery and simplify VAT rules to make it easier to buy and sell goods online.*

*We now call on all Member States to ensure an effective implementation of these rules and do all that is in their power so that effective enforcement of the Regulation takes place as of Day One. We also call for an agreement on*

*harmonised rules for the sale of digital goods and services and online purchases. All these elements are crucial for creating a well-functioning and competitive Digital Single Market."*

## **Next steps**

Member States are in charge of the enforcement of the Regulation and need to put in place the necessary structures to ensure a smooth start to its application. In particular, Member States must designate bodies entrusted with its enforcement and bodies which will provide practical assistance to consumers. In addition, Member States must set out effective, proportionate and dissuasive measures applicable to infringements of the Regulation. The Commission will conduct a first review of the Geo-blocking Regulation by March 2020. This assessment will cover the possible extension of the non-discrimination principle in accessing goods and services to non-audiovisual electronically supplied services whose main feature is copyright protected content, such as e-books, music, games and software. The Commission will also carefully analyse whether in other sectors, such as services in the field of transport and audio-visual services, any remaining unjustified restrictions based on nationality, place of residence or place of establishment should be eliminated.

## **Background**

Consumers and businesses – especially SMEs – show an increasing interest in shopping and selling across the EU. Online sales of products are growing by 22% per year. However, frequently traders refused to sell to customers from another EU Member State or to offer equally advantageous prices in comparison with local clients.

The [Regulation \(EU\) 2018/302 \("Geo-blocking Regulation"\)](#) which enters into force on 3 December aims to provide consumers and businesses within the EU's internal market with more opportunities. In particular, it addresses the problem of some customers not being able to buy goods and services from traders located in a different Member State, even at the same conditions as locals, only because of their nationality, place of residence or place of establishment. In 2015, a Commission survey found that only 37% of websites actually allowed cross-border customers to reach the final step before completing the purchase by entering payment details.

The Geoblocking Regulation is part of [a wider set of measures aimed at boosting e-commerce](#) in the Single Market, such as the revised [Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation](#), the [new rules on cross border parcel delivery services](#), the [new rules for digital contracts](#), and the [new VAT rules for electronic commerce](#).

## **For more information**

[Factsheet on how you can make the most out of eCommerce in the EU as a consumer](#)

[Short guide](#) on the geoblocking rules for online sellers

[Questions and answers](#) on geo-blocking with information for national

authorities enforcing the new rules and practical assistance to consumers  
[Political agreement](#) to end unjustified geoblocking  
[Political agreement](#) to make cross-border parcel delivery more affordable  
[Political agreement](#) on simpler and more efficient VAT rules for online companies

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## [EU approves disbursement of €500 million in Macro-Financial Assistance to Ukraine](#)

With this disbursement, the total Macro-Financial Assistance extended to Ukraine by the EU since 2014 will reach €3.3 billion, the largest amount of such assistance directed at any non-EU country.

**Valdis Dombrovskis**, Commission Vice-President responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *“The European Union has shown constant political and financial support to Ukraine. Today’s European Commission decision on disbursement comes at a crucial moment when Ukraine and its people face a new aggression from Russia and need to see solidarity from international partners. Such aggressive behaviour is not acceptable in today’s Europe.”*

**Pierre Moscovici**, Commissioner in charge of Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, added: *“Ukraine has fulfilled the policy commitments agreed with the EU for the release of the first payment under the Macro-Financial Assistance programme. This is an important and encouraging signal that Ukraine continues to deliver on reforms despite the current security environment and the upcoming electoral cycle.”*

Under the new MFA programme approved by the European Parliament and the Council in July 2018, up to €1 billion is available to Ukraine. The programme helps Ukraine cover its financing needs and supports the implementation of a wide-ranging structural reform agenda. The MFA funds are available in the form of low-interest long-term loans, conditional on the implementation of specific policy measures agreed in the Memorandum of Understanding.

Ukraine has fulfilled the policy commitments agreed with the EU for the release of the first payment under the programme. These included important measures to step up the fight against corruption, improve transparency of company registers, enhance the predictability of the tax environment and strengthen the governance of state-owned enterprises. Ukraine has also agreed with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on a new Stand-by Arrangement, which will replace its previous programme under the IMF’s Extended Fund Facility, thus continuing the country’s engagement with the IMF. The

parliamentary adoption on 23 November of a budget for 2019, which IMF considers satisfactory, has been an important step towards the endorsement of the new programme by the IMF Executive Board, expected in December.

The EU will continue working with the Ukrainian authorities on its reform agenda, including in those areas related to the next disbursement of the MFA programme. These include further measures in the fight against corruption, such as progress in making the High Anti-Corruption Court of Ukraine operational, public financial management, the continuation of reforms of the energy and banking sectors and reforms in the area of social policy. The Commission will continue to follow developments closely and monitor implementation.

## **Background**

Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) is part of the EU's wider engagement with neighbouring countries and is intended as an exceptional EU crisis response instrument. It is available to the EU's neighbouring countries experiencing balance-of-payments problems. It is complementary to assistance provided by the IMF. MFA loans are financed through EU borrowing on capital markets. The funds are then on-lent with similar financial terms to the beneficiary countries. MFA grants come from the EU budget.

In March 2018, in response to Ukraine's request, the Commission proposed a new MFA programme for up to €1 billion. This proposal was adopted by the European Parliament and the Council in July 2018. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Ukraine and the European Commission, on behalf of the EU, in September 2018 and subsequently ratified by the Parliament of Ukraine.

Ukraine has so far benefitted from a total of €2.8 billion worth of EU MFA loans since 2014. This includes €1.6 billion disbursed in 2014-2015 as part of two earlier MFA operations and €1.2 billion in 2015-2017 as part of a third operation. In addition to MFA, the EU supports Ukraine through several other instruments, including humanitarian aid, budget support, technical assistance and blending facilities to support investment. Overall, the EU and European Financial Institutions have mobilised over €12 billion in loans and 1 billion in grants since 2014 to help Ukraine stabilise its economy, carry out comprehensive reforms and improve the livelihoods of its citizens.

## **Further Information**

[EU macro-financial assistance operations to Ukraine](#)

[EU macro-financial assistance and economic analysis of EU Neighbourhood countries](#)

[EU-Ukraine relations](#)

[EU Delegation to Ukraine website](#)

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## Ending the HIV epidemic: where does Europe stand?

The global targets set out by UNAIDS for 2020 are to diagnose 90% of all HIV-positive people, provide antiretroviral therapy for 90% of those diagnosed, and achieve viral suppression for 90% of those treated (known as 90-90-90 targets). In 2018, 52 of 55 countries completed the survey indicating the progress towards these targets in Europe and Central Asia.

### **Between “substantial progress” and “concerning”**

Is Europe on track to end AIDS by 2020? Following analysis of the data provided by the 52 countries in 2018, the progress towards the 90-90-90 targets stands at 86%-91%-92% in the EU/EEA. This means that overall, countries in the EU/EEA are on track to reach the targets by 2020. Looking at the whole Region, however, a striking drop in the second stage of the continuum is apparent: across Europe and Central Asia, the figures show a significant gap in the amount of people who are diagnosed with HIV but not receiving treatment: 80%-64%-86%. The article provides results on the targets for each of the reporting countries.

The authors acknowledge “substantial progress” towards the 90-90-90 targets across Europe and Central Asia. However, among the estimated 2.1 million people living with HIV in Europe and Central Asia “only two out of five are estimated to be virally suppressed in 2018”. Furthermore, “the substantial drop-off between the percentages diagnosed and treated in the East sub-region is concerning since it enables preventable deaths, serious illness and onward transmission.”

The results give new insights into necessary steps in the regional or national HIV responses. As almost two-thirds of the 1.2 million people across the region with transmissible virus are diagnosed but only half of those are on treatment, “the biggest public health impact could be achieved through rapid and sustained scale up of treatment”, according to the authors. This is particularly true for countries in the east of the region where the outcome was 76%-46%-78%.

Policies that diversify and enhance the offer of HIV tests could help address the problem of late diagnosis across Europe, as outlined in the new ECDC guidance on HIV, hepatitis B and C testing. This would include testing for indicator conditions, during screenings for other sexually transmitted infections, in community-based settings, as self/home-testing and for partner notification.

The authors highlight that the 90-90-90 targets remain a “powerful tool to

assess progress towards HIV elimination and drive standards in care” for people living with HIV. But these targets do not provide a comprehensive picture of the public health response to HIV. “Each ‘last 10 percent’ includes people especially marginalised from healthcare services.”

## **What are the 90-90-90 targets?**

The so-called continuum of HIV care is a framework which allows countries to monitor the effectiveness of key areas in the response to the HIV epidemic along several stages, from diagnosis towards viral suppression. The overall aim is to that people living with HIV are diagnosed (early) and receive antiretroviral treatment (ART) which leads to viral suppression, i.e. the virus is no longer detectable in the blood. Such an undetectable viral load also means that HIV positive people on effective treatment do not transmit the virus.

Based on the findings of the ECDC Dublin Declaration report on the continuum in 2015, ECDC now monitors a four-stage continuum that is directly relevant in the European region. Stage 1 looks at the estimated number of all people living with HIV (PLHIV); stage 2 at the number of all PLHIV who have been diagnosed; stage 3 at the number on PLHIV who have been diagnosed and who are on ART; and stage 4 comprises the number of PLHIV on ART who are virally suppressed. In 2018, 34 of 55 countries provided data on all four continuum stages.