[State aid: Commission approves extension of Danish tonnage tax scheme to new types of vessels]

At the same time, Denmark will amend its existing scheme to ensure that it applies only to genuine maritime shipping activities by limiting revenues from non-core activities to an acceptable level.

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager** in charge of competition policy, said: *"Denmark's revised tonnage tax scheme will help the shipping industry remain competitive on the global market. It will preserve jobs and promote high environmental standards in the maritime transport sector. The scheme complies with the Commission's State aid guidelines and contains new safeguards to ensure equal treatment of European shipping companies and avoid distortions of competition."*

Under tonnage tax schemes, maritime transport companies pay taxes on the basis of the ship tonnage (i.e. the size of the shipping fleet) rather than on the basis of their actual taxable profits. Such schemes can be approved by the Commission under EU State aid rules.

In May 2016, Denmark notified to the Commission its plans to extend its existing tonnage tax scheme to cover guard vessels, vessels servicing off-shore installations and vessels for raising, repairing and dismantling windmills as well as pipeline- and cable-laying vessels, ice management vessels and accommodation vessels.

The Commission decided today that those types of vessels are involved in maritime activities that are subject to the same legal requirements and competitive conditions as maritime transport. The Commission therefore approved the extension of the scheme to these vessels under EU State aid rules (the Commission's 2004 Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport).

The decision also confirms that Denmark will amend certain aspects of its existing tonnage tax scheme to align it with the Commission's current interpretation of the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport. In this respect, in the past years, the Commission has been requesting Member States to revise their tonnage tax schemes to ensure equal treatment amongst European shipping companies and to keep pace with the evolution of the shipping sector whilst avoiding undue distortions of competition globally. In particular, Denmark will amend its tonnage tax rules as regards:

- **ancillary services** that are closely connected to shipping activities. These services will be subject to tonnage taxation only if they account for less than 50% of a ship's total tonnage-taxed income, and

- **revenues from bare boat charter out activities** (the leasing of ships without crew). The services will be subject to tonnage taxation provided that the beneficiary self-operates at least 50% of the tonnage tax fleet and that the vessel is not leased out for a period longer than three years.

The Commission assessed the amended Danish tonnage tax scheme under its Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport and concluded that it is in line with EU State aid rules

Background

To address the risk of flagging out and relocation of shipping companies to low-tax countries outside of the EU, the Commission's 2004 Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport allow Member States to adopt measures that improve the fiscal climate for shipping companies. In this respect, the aim of the Guidelines is to encourage shipping companies to register their vessels in Europe and thus commit to Europe's high social, environmental and safety standards. The most prominent of such measures is tonnage tax, whereby shipping companies can apply to be taxed based on a notional profit or the tonnage they operate, instead of being taxed under the normal corporate tax system. Only companies that are active in maritime transport (defined as the transport of goods and persons by sea) are eligible for measures under the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport. In addition, under the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport, beneficiaries are required to increase and at least maintain a certain share of their fleet under an EEA flag.

Since 2004, the Commission's decision-making practice under the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transporthas further clarified the eligible transport activities and compatibility conditions to ensure that the main objectives of the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transportare met. The Commission ensures in particular that there is no spill-over of the favourable tax treatment of shipping companies into other sectors unrelated to maritime transport, that there is no discrimination against other EEA State registries, and that the aid does not exceed the ceiling set out in the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport.

The Commission's most recent decisions concern the Swedish tonnage tax scheme (Case SA.43642), a German scheme for the reduction of social contributions for seafarers (Case SA.45258), the Lithuanian tonnage tax scheme (Case SA.45764), the Belgian tonnage tax scheme (SA.41330), the Maltese (SA.33829) and Portuguese (SA.48929) tonnage tax schemes and a Danish scheme for the reduction of income tax for seafarers (SA.46852).

The non-confidential version of the decision will be published under the case number SA.45300 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.

[155/2018 : 11 October 2018 – Information]

[Download PDF]

[Sustainable Development Goals: High level multi-stakeholder platform presents input to the Commission Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030']

The Platform members adopted a joint contribution to the Commission’s Reflection Paper ‘Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030’, which will be presented soon as part of the [Future of Europe debate] launched by President Juncker. The Platform’s contribution will help the Commission in the ongoing preparation of the Reflection Paper and its future work in this field.

Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, who chairs the Platform, said: “*It is so encouraging to see such a broad group of stakeholders coming together and agreeing on the way forward on implementing the SDGs – from Birdlife Europe to BusinessEurope we have managed to get everybody on the same page. This is a minor miracle, and is good news for people and for the planet.*“

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, added: “*This is Europe at its best: building consensus among various stakeholders, on the single most important topic for our future: sustainability. I am grateful for this crucial contribution, from which we should all learn.*“

The Platform suggests, among other things, that the EU develop an overarching Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy to guide all EU policies and programmes. They suggest strengthening policy coherence for development, for example by aligning the European Semester process, EU public finances and financial regulations, and the EU’s long-term decarbonisation plans with the SDGs. The Platform members also propose ideas in policy areas considered vital for achieving the SDGs such as social inclusion, sustainable consumption and production, climate and energy, food, farming and land-use, and cohesion.

The Platform members welcomed at yesterday's meeting a delegation of independent scientists that presented the initial findings of the UN Global Sustainable Development Report. Finally, Platform members discussed plans for their future work, and were updated on the European Sustainability Award 2019.

Background

The Communication 'Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future', adopted by the Commission on 22 November 2016, announced the launch of a multi-stakeholder platform, chaired by First Vice-President **Timmermans**, to play a role in the follow-up and exchange of best practices on the Sustainable Development Goals.

The Platform brings together a diverse group of high level representatives with different backgrounds and areas of knowledge. Experts from academia, non-governmental organisations, business, civil society, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Committee of the Regions advise the Commission on delivering the SDGs at EU level, and exchange best practices at local, regional, national and EU level.

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their 169 associated targets are global in nature, universally applicable and interlinked. All countries, developed and developing alike, have a shared responsibility to achieve the Development Goals.

The EU's answer to the 2030 Agenda includes two work streams. The first work stream is to fully integrate the Development Goals in the European policy framework and current Commission priorities. A second track includes the reflection on our longer term vision and the focus of sectoral policies after 2020.

For more information

Contribution of the High-level Multi-stakeholder Platform on the SDGs

The multi stakeholder platform on SDGs

EU Approach to Sustainable Development

Monitoring of SDGs in Europe

Commission Communication: Next Steps for a Sustainable European Future

Letter of Intent on the 2018 Commission Work Programme

A new bioeconomy strategy for a sustainable Europe

Daily News 12 / 10 / 2018

EU fuel labelling: clearer information for consumers and operators

Today, a new harmonised set of fuel labels will appear across Europe. They will give drivers better information on the suitability of fuels for their vehicles wherever they travel in the EU, helping them avoid misfuelling and informing on the environmental impact of their choice. This initiative is taken on the basis of Article 7 of the Alternative fuels infrastructure Directive of October 2014 and in line with the Commission's Action Plan on Alternative Fuels Infrastructure, adopted in November 2017, which sets out a number of support actions to accelerate the roll out of infrastructure, increase investments and improve consumer acceptance. It also complements the Juncker Commission's proposals "Europe on the Move" for a clean, safe and connected mobility. A full press release and fact sheet explaining the new labels are available online. *(For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)*

Plan Juncker: 40 millions d'euros pour des petites et moyennes entreprises innovantes au Luxembourg

Le Fonds européen d'investissement (FEI) et la Banque et la Caisse d'épargne de l'État (BCEE) ont signé hier un nouvel accord sur un portefeuille de prêts de 40 millions d'euros afin d'améliorer l'accès au financement des petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) innovantes au Luxembourg. Cet accord bénéficie du soutien du Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques (EFSI), au cœur du Plan d'Investissement pour l'Europe, le plan Juncker, et d'InnovFin, le programme européen qui soutient l'innovation dans les PME. Cet accord devrait profiter à une centaine d'entreprises dans le pays. Carlos **Moedas**, Commissaire chargé de la recherche, de la science et de l'innovation, a déclaré: *«C'est une excellente nouvelle pour les petites et moyennes entreprises luxembourgeoises innovantes, qui n'ont parfois besoin que d'un petit coup de pouce financier pour transformer leurs idées en projets concrets à haute valeur commerciale. Les entreprises innovantes à travers l'Europe peuvent s'attendre à un soutien européen encore plus important pour développer de nouveaux produits et se développer dans le prochain budget à long terme de l'UE, notamment avec les nouveaux programmes Horizon Europe et InvestEU.* » Le Plan **Juncker** a déjà mobilisé plus de 344 milliards d'euros d'investissement dans toute l'Europe et soutient 793,000 entreprises. *(Un communiqué de presse est disponible ici. Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tél.: +32 229 50055; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Slovakia: less traffic congestion and better connectivity with neighbouring countries thanks to EU investments

Over €380 million from the Cohesion Fund is invested in two transport projects in Slovakia, aiming to upgrade the motorway network. EU-funded works will provide solutions to congestion problems and improve road connections in the north-west and north-east parts of the country. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Creţu** said: "*These two projects will improve quality of life in Slovakia, with faster, more comfortable journeys, less traffic congestion and better connections within the country. And the Slovak economy will also directly benefit from these projects, with positive spillovers for trade, tourism and growth.*" €312 million is invested is the construction of a section of the D1 motorway between the towns Lietavská Lúčka and Dubná Skala, near the city of Žilina, in the North of the country. This section is part of the future dual carriageway D1 from Bratislava via Žilina and Košice to the border with Ukraine, on the Rhine-Danube corridor of the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T). The project also includes the construction of the Višňové tunnel, which will be about 7.5 km long and soon the longest tunnel in the country. Then, over €71 million is invested in the construction of a section of the D3 motorway in the mountainous north-western part of the country. The section will run in parallel to the road passing through the city of Čadca, which faces heavy congestion due to the situation of Čadca as an opening gate to traffic coming from the Czech Republic and Poland. This new EU-funded road will contribute to alleviate traffic congestion in the city, for the direct benefit of the inhabitants. Both projects should be operational by end 2020*. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

2018 Consumer Markets Scoreboard: trust of Europeans in services still needs improvement

Today, the European Commission published the 2018 Consumer Markets Scoreboard that monitors how EU consumers rate the performance of 40 goods and services sectors. While the overall trust in markets has followed a positive trend since 2010, the report reveals that only 53% of consumers trust that businesses in the services sectors comply with consumer rules. On a positive note, the report concludes that the East-West gap in consumer trust is slowly closing. Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová**, said: "*Consumer trust is growing, but there are still too many consumers that have bad experiences in certain markets. In April 2018, we presented a 'New Deal for Consumers' to strengthen enforcement of consumer rights and give consumers new means to defend their rights. The possibility to launch a collective action should give consumers more trust that they can defend their rights and push businesses to better respect the rules.*" The key findings of the 2018 Consumer Markets Scoreboard suggest that there has been little improvement compared to 2016, although the trend has remained positive since 2010. Notably, the report concludes that the East-West gap in consumer trust is slowly closing as markets in Western Europe continue to perform better for consumers, while on average the biggest improvements this year in performance are reported in Eastern Europe again. Improving consumer protection has been high on the Juncker Commission's agenda. The Commission proposed in April 2018 a New Deal for Consumers, which will empower qualified entities to launch representative actions on behalf of consumers and introduce stronger sanctioning powers for Member States' consumer authorities. A press release and some factsheets, are available online. *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

EU Battery Alliance: Major progress in establishing battery manufacturing in Europe in only one year

One year on from the launch of the European Battery Alliance (EBA), the Commission Action Plan is in place, the first pilot production facilities are being built and further projects are announced to establish the EU as the lead player in the strategic area of battery innovation and manufacturing. For Europe, battery production is a strategic imperative for clean energy transition and the modernisation and competitiveness of its industry and automotive sector. This will, at the same time, be providing a boost to jobs and growth, stimulate research and innovation and prepare the European industry to support climate commitments and targets set by the EU to tackle climate change also in the context of the Paris Agreement. Moreover, the Commission's 'New Industrial Policy Strategy' goal is to make the EU the world leader in innovation, digitisation and decarbonisation. Today Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič** is hosting a high-level meeting with Member States and CEOs to present main achievements and to discuss next decisive steps. *"I am impressed to see how strong a kick has been created by the European Battery Alliance. As we mark its one year anniversary, we will show how various pieces of puzzle are coming together thanks to collaborative work by the Commission, the EIB, governments and industry. This will also be a unique opportunity to discuss next decisive steps to make Europe the lead player in the strategic area of battery innovation and manufacturing."* said Vice-President **Šefčovič** ahead of the meeting. Internal Market Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** added: *"This alliance is at the heart of our industrial policy. A strong battery industry is a perfect fit for our ambition to promote clean mobility. E-cars are the standard example, but we're also already thinking about how the battery alliance could be useful for trucks, sea shipping and ferries. If Europe wants to lead and compete with other big industrial players around the world, we need to hurry up."* The meeting will be followed by a press point at **16h30** with Vice-President **Šefčovič** and his counterparts from Germany, France, Poland and Sweden**.** Watch it live on EbS. A press release and a Q&A will also be available online. *(For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 66430; Lucia Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)*

Blind and visually impaired EU citizens gain easier access to books across EU borders

As of today, books, magazines and other printed material will be more easily available in accessible formats for all blind and visually impaired persons and across the EU. This follows the ratification of theMarrakesh Treatyby the EU, which was finalised on 1 October 2018. As part of the Digital Single market strategy, the new rules create a mandatory and EU-wide exception to copyright rules.Vice-President for the Digital Single Market Andrus **Ansip** said: "*This Treaty is a real step to improve social inclusion, access to culture and entertainment, of people who are blind, visually impaired, or otherwise print-disabled*. They will allow special formats of print material – such as braille or daisy – to be made and disseminated for people with print disabilities." Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society said: "Today marks an important breakthrough for more inclusiveness for blind and visually impaired in the EU. Finally, they not only gain easier access to books and other published works necessary for work or pleasure, but can also exchange them across the EU. Without the prior authorisation of rights holders, fast access to more and more diverse content will be guaranteed."The Marrakesh Treaty itself was adopted at the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) in 2013. The EU legislation on the Marrakesh Treaty was proposed by the Commission as part as the ongoing modernisation of the EU copyright legislation.*(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)*

Sustainable Development Goals: High level multi-stakeholder platform presents input to the Commission Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030'

On Thursday 11 October, the Commission's high level multi-stakeholder platform on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) met for the second time. The Platform members adopted a joint contribution to the Commission's Reflection Paper 'Towards a Sustainable Europe by 2030', which will be presented soon as part of the Future of Europe debate launched by President Juncker. The Platform's contribution will help the Commission in the ongoing preparation of the Reflection Paper and its future work in this field. Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, who chairs the Platform, said: "*It is so encouraging to see such a broad group of stakeholders coming together and agreeing on the way forward on implementing the SDGs – from Birdlife Europe to BusinessEurope we have managed to get everybody on the same page. This is a minor miracle, and is good news for people and for the planet.*" Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, added: "*This is Europe at its best: building consensus among various stakeholders, on the single most important topic for our future: sustainability. I am grateful for this crucial contribution, from which we should all learn.*" The Platform suggests, among other things, that the EU develop an overarching Sustainable Europe 2030 strategy to guide all EU policies and programmes. A press release is available here and the full contribution of the Platform is online here. *For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)*

State aid: Commission approves extension of Danish tonnage tax scheme to new types of vessels

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules the extension of the existing Danish tonnage tax scheme to additional types of vessels (including, for example, cover guard vessels, vessels servicing off-shore installations and vessels for raising, repairing and dismantling windmills). The Commission decided today that those types of vessels are involved in maritime activities that are subject to the same legal requirements and competitive conditions as maritime transport and therefore approved the extension of the scheme to these vessels under EU State aid rules (the Commission's 2004 the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport). The decision also confirms that Denmark will amend certain aspects of its existing tonnage tax scheme to align it with the Commission's current interpretation of the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport. In this respect, Denmark will amend its tonnage tax scheme to ensure that it applies only to genuine maritime shipping activities by limiting revenues from non-core activities to an acceptable level. The Commission assessed the amended Danish tonnage tax scheme under the Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport and concluded that it is in line with EU State aid rules. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager** in charge of competition policy, said: "*Denmark's revised tonnage tax scheme will help the shipping industry remain competitive on the global market. It will preserve jobs and promote high environmental standards in the maritime transport sector. The scheme complies with the Commission's State aid guidelines and contains new safeguards to ensure equal treatment of European shipping companies and avoid distortions of competition.*" The full press release is available online in EN, FR, DE, DA.*(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

State aid: Commission approves €50 million public support for broadband network project in remote rural areas of Lithuania

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, €50 million of public support to the Lithuanian state-owned network operator "Plačiajuostis internetas" for the extension of the public wholesale-only backhaul network ("RAIN"). Access to the RAIN infrastructure will be provided to third party network operators and service providers on equal and non-discriminatory terms. The backhaul network will be deployed in remote rural areas in Lithuania where no equivalent infrastructure is in place or planned by private investors in the near future. The measure, which aims to facilitate the deployment of privately funded access networks providing download speeds of at least 30 megabits per second, is in line with other extensions of the RAIN infrastructure previously approved by the Commission under EU State aid rules. The Commission assessed the measure under its 2013 Broadband Guidelines and concluded that the measure complies with EU State aid rules since the positive effects of the scheme on competition in the Lithuanian broadband market outweigh any potential distortion of competition brought about by the State aid. The scheme complies with the Digital Agenda for Europe and the 2025 objectives for high speed internet connections set out in the Commission's Communication on a Gigabit Society. More information will be available, once potential confidentiality issues have been resolved, on the Commission's competition website, in the State Aid Register under the case number SA.49614. *(For more information: information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Italmatch Chemicals by Bain Capital

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Italmatch Chemicals of Italy by Bain Capital of the US. Italmatch Chemicals is active in the manufacture of specialty chemicals. Bain Capital is active in private equity investment in companies across several industries. 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.9037. *(For more* *information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission approves the acquisition of SI Group by SK Capital

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of Schenectady International Group, Inc. ("SI Group") by SK Capital Partners, LP ("SK Capital") through SK Capital's portfolio company Addivant USA Holdings Corp ("Addivant"), all of the US. SI Group and Addivant are both suppliers of specialty chemicals and intermediates, active globally. SK Capital is a private investment firm. It intends to combine the activities of SI Group and Addivant after the acquisition. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the presence of alternative competitors in the limited markets where the activities of SI Group and Addivant overlap. The Commission also analysed the vertical links arising from the transaction in relation to a number of chemical intermediates and concluded that the operation is unlikely to lead to competitors being unable to access inputs and/or customers. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's competition website, in the public case register under the case number M.9017. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over APA by CK Asset Holdings and CK Infrastructure Holdings

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over APA which comprises Australian Pipeline Trust ("APT") and APT Investment Trust ("APTIT"), both of Australia, by CK Asset Holdings Limited ("CKA") and CK Infrastructure Holdings Limited ("CKI"), both of Hong Kong. APA owns and operates natural gas transportation and energy infrastructure assets across Australia. CKA is a multinational corporation with diverse activities including, inter alia, property development and investment, and infrastructure and utility asset operation. CKI is a global infrastructure company that has diversified investments in energy, ransportation and waterinfrastructure, waste management, waste-to-energy, household infrastructure and infrastructure related businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of the negligible actual and foreseen activities of APA 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.9100. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Eurostat: Industrial production up by 1.0% in euro area

In August 2018 compared with July 2018, seasonally adjusted industrial production rose by 1.0% in the euro area (EA19) and by 0.8% in the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In July 2018, industrial production fell by 0.7% in the euro area and by 0.6% in the EU28. In August 2018 compared with August 2017, industrial production increased by 0.9% in the euro area and by 1.2% in the EU28. A press release is available here. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

A Europe that Protects: Commission to discuss election interference in the digital age

On 15 and 16 October, Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King,** in collaboration with the European Commission's Security Union Task Force and the European Political Strategy Centre, will host a High-Level Conference on 'Election Interference in the Digital Age: Building Resilience to Cyber-Enabled Threats'. Commissioners Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Věra **Jourová** and Mariya **Gabriel** will also speak at the event. The High-Level Conference will gather leading experts and political figures from around the world to discuss questions relating to election security and how best to tackle the associated challenges, particularly in view of the upcoming 2019 European Parliament elections. It will be followed by a closed workshop with Member States, bringing together national electoral commissions and cybersecurity officials to exchange best practices and promote cooperation with a view to better securing election life-cycles in the digital age. Over the past years, the Commission has taken a number of legislative measures to that end, and most recently in his 2018 State of the Union Address, President Jean-Claude **Juncker** proposed new rules to better protect our democratic processes from manipulation by third countries or private interests. The press point with Commissioner King, former Secretary General of NATO Anders Fogh Rasmussen and Head of the European Political Strategy Centre Ann Mettler will take place on Monday at 15.30 CET (BERL, 5th floor) and will be available to follow on EbS. To register for the press point, please contact Katarzyna.kolanko@ec.europa.eu. More information on the event is available online. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)*

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

Calendar – Commissioners' weekly activities

[2018 Consumer Markets Scoreboard: trust of Europeans in services still needs improvement]

While the overall trust in markets has followed a positive trend since 2010, the report reveals that only 53% of consumers trust that businesses in the services sectors comply with consumer rules. For goods, the figure is slightly higher at 59%. Consumer trust in services and goods' markets has not improved compared to the 2016 scoreboard. Telecoms, financial services and utilities (water, gas, electricity, and postal services) remain particularly problematic areas for consumers in most EU Member States. On a positive note, the report concludes that the East-West gap in consumer trust is slowly closing. Also, services such as personal care services (hairdressers, spas), holiday accommodation and packaged holidays benefit from a high trust from consumers.

"Consumer trust is growing, but there are still too many consumers that have bad experiences in certain markets, for instance when buying real estate or a second-hand car." said Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality. *"In April 2018, we presented a 'New Deal for Consumers' to strengthen enforcement of consumer rights and give consumers new means to defend their rights. The possibility to launch a collective action should give consumers more trust that they can defend their rights and push businesses to better respect the rules."*

Key findings of the 2018 Consumer Markets Scoreboard

- **Compared to 2016, there has been little improvement, although the trend has remained positive since 2010.** Mortgages, water supply, gas and electricity services have improved most over the past two years, but they remain among the least trusted markets, with the exception of gas services.
- **Markets in Western Europe continue to perform better for consumers, while on average the biggest improvements this year in performance are reported in Eastern Europe again**. This suggests that the East-West gap in how markets work for consumers is slowly closing. The Commission's and the Member States' ongoing activities on the issue of the dual food quality should be able to further improve the situation in this respect.
- **Internet provision and mobile telephone services are still the most problematic for consumers**, with 20.3% and 17.5% having faced problems in these sectors respectively in the past year. Other areas mentioned by at least 10% of consumers include: TV subscription, fixed telephony, sales of ICT and electronic goods, train and urban transports, second hand cars, real estate, postal services, new cars, car rental and car repair services.
- **Financial services are the sector where consumers suffer the highest**

detriment (financial loss or waste of time) in case of problems. At least 35% of consumers having faced problems in home insurance, mortgages, loans and credit, electricity and water supply report severe detriment as a result. Other areas where consumers facing problems report high levels of detriment are airlines, investment products, and car insurance.
- **Real estate and second hand cars are the least trusted sectors by consumers.** Only 38% of consumers trust that real estate service providers comply with consumer protection rules and 36% of consumers do so for the second hand car sector.

Commission actions to improve consumer protection and trust

Improving consumer protection has been high on the Juncker Commission's agenda. The Commission proposed in April 2018 a New Deal for Consumers, which will empower qualified entities to launch representative actions on behalf of consumers and introduce stronger sanctioning powers for Member States' consumer authorities. It will also extend consumers' protection when they are online and clarify how EU law to clarify that dual quality practices misleading consumers are prohibited.

Under the EU Consumer Protection Cooperation (CPC) Regulation, the Commission together with consumer authorities have launched several enforcement actions to make sure businesses fully respect EU consumer rules. A recent example of such an action includes the improvement of Airbnb 's terms and conditions.

Background

The Consumer Scoreboards provide an overview of how the Single Market works for EU consumers. Published since 2008, they aim to ensure better monitoring of consumer outcomes and provide evidence to inform policy.

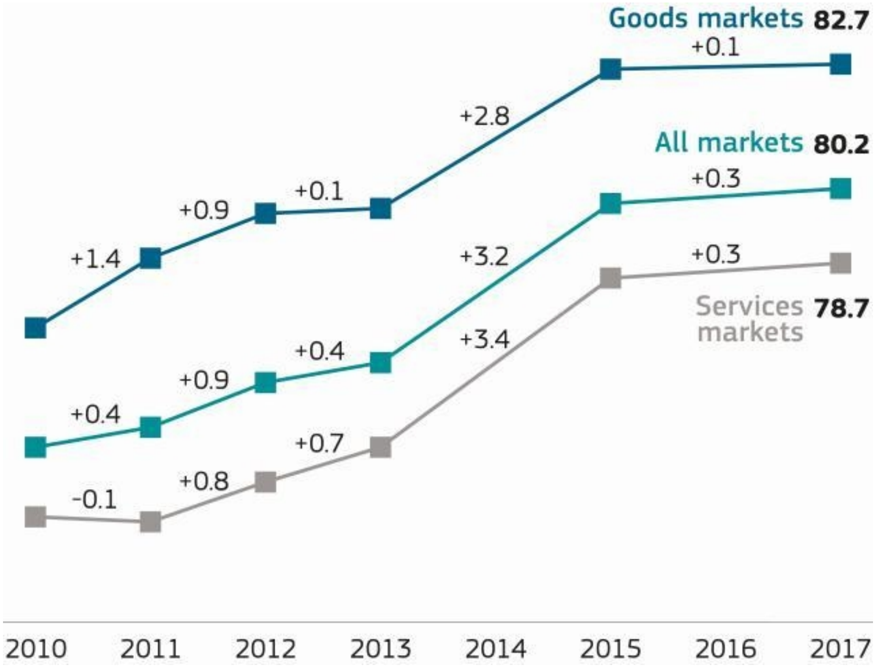
There are two types of scoreboards, published in alternate years and based on representative EU-wide surveys:

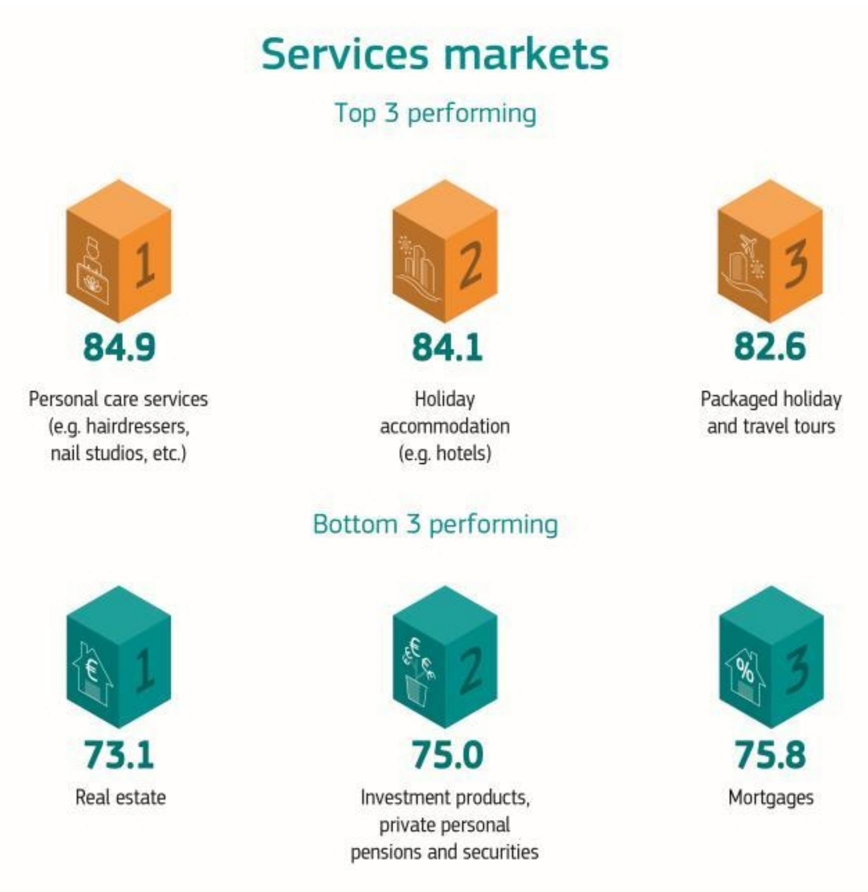
- The **Consumer Markets Scoreboard** tracks the performance of over 40 consumer markets based on key indicators such as trusting that sellers comply with consumer protection rules, comparability of offers, the choice of retailers/suppliers, the extent to which markets live up to consumer expectations, and the degree to which problems encountered in the market cause detriment. Other indicators, such as switching and prices, are also monitored and analysed.
- The **Consumer Conditions Scoreboard** monitors national conditions for consumers in three areas: (1) knowledge and trust, (2) compliance and enforcement and (3) complaints and dispute resolution. It also examines progress in the integration of the EU retail market (2017 Consumer Conditions Scoreboard).

For further information

Consumer scoreboards

Market Performance Indicator, 2010-2017






Goods markets
Top 3 performing
1
85.3
Spectacles and lenses
2
85.1
Small household appliances
3
84.6
Dairy products
Bottom 3 performing
1
75.5
Second hand cars
2
NEW
80.4
New cars
3
81.3
Meat and meat products