

Daily News 10 / 10 / 2018

COLLEGE MEETING: A Europe that Protects – Commission calls for decisive action on security priorities

Today, the European Commission is reporting on the progress made towards an effective and genuine Security Union, calling on the European Parliament and the Council to finalise their work on priority security initiatives as a matter of urgency. To maintain the positive momentum set by the EU Leaders at the informal meeting in Salzburg today's report outlines the security initiatives that will be decisive for the completion of the Security Union before the upcoming European Parliament elections in May 2019. In this way, the report is a contribution to the discussions on internal security during the European Council on 18-19 October. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The security of our citizens is and should remain a priority for the EU every single day. Strengthening our external borders, improving information exchange, and protecting our citizens online as well as on the ground – there is no time to waste in building a genuine and effective Security Union in Europe."* Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"From chemical weapons being used on our streets to state-sponsored cyberattacks, Europe is under threat like never before, and Europeans are looking to us to act. Now is the time to ramp up our efforts to finish our work on the Security Union. On terrorism, cyber and cyber-enabled threats, where the online and the real world collide, and on tackling organised crime we are stronger when we act together. Time is short: the EU institutions and our Member States need to take responsibility for driving delivery and implementation of this vital work."* More information is available [online](#). (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444)

European Commission welcomes new high-level group on EU-Africa relations

European Commission Vice-President **Ansip** and Commissioners **Mimica**, **Hogan**, **Stylianides** and **Vella** participate today in the launch of a high-level group of personalities convened by [Friends of Europe](#), the [Mo Ibrahim Foundation](#) and the [ONE campaign](#). The high-level group includes current and former heads of international organisations and foundations, former presidents and prime ministers of African countries along with renowned experts. Bound by their commitment to ensure the success of Europe-Africa relations, participants will exchange views on this occasion about the challenge of youth unemployment in Africa. The Commission is one of the key drivers of EU-Africa relations and has recently launched a new [Africa-Europe alliance](#) aimed at boosting investment and creating jobs. The Commission welcomes this new initiative, which will further enrich the efforts to promote and seize opportunities across both continents. The inaugural meeting was hosted by Neven **Mimica**, European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. More information on the [High-level group](#) as well as the [Africa-EU Partnership](#) is available online. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz

De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

EU satellite mapping activated to help US authorities with Hurricane Michael

The EU's Copernicus emergency [satellite mapping service](#) has been activated on the request of the US Federal Emergency Management Agency to support the US authorities face Hurricane Michael. Maps will be provided for Florida, Alabama and Georgia. Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"Our Emergency Response Coordination Centre is monitoring the situation 24/7. We are helping our American friends face yet another threatening hurricane. Our thoughts are with all the people who are in the path of this powerful storm. The EU stands ready to provide further assistance"*. This is the second time this year Copernicus has been activated for hurricanes in the US. [Photos](#) of the Emergency Centre are available, as well as a video of the EU's [Copernicus](#) programme and a [factsheet](#) on the EU's emergency centre. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

L'Union européenne et les pays partenaires orientaux renforcent leur coopération en matière d'environnement, d'économie circulaire et d'action pour le climat

La deuxième réunion ministérielle officielle du partenariat oriental sur l'environnement et le changement climatique s'est déroulée hier à Luxembourg, organisée par la Commission européenne et la présidence autrichienne du Conseil de l'Union européenne. La Commission européenne était représentée par Karmenu **Vella**, commissaire européen chargé de l'environnement, de la pêche et des affaires maritimes et par Miguel Arias **Cañete**, commissaire européen chargé de l'action pour le climat et de l'énergie. L'UE et les pays du partenariat oriental (Arménie, Azerbaïdjan, Biélorussie, Géorgie, République de Moldavie et Ukraine) ont reconnu les progrès accomplis depuis la [première réunion ministérielle de 2016](#), notamment en ce qui concerne la ratification de l'Accord de Paris et les modifications politiques et législatives en matière d'eau, d'économie verte, de gestion durable des forêts et d'évaluations environnementales. Les ministres ont réaffirmé la nécessité de maintenir les actions en faveur de l'environnement et du climat parmi les priorités politiques et économiques. Une aide supplémentaire de l'UE d'un montant de près de 30 millions d'euros sera disponible pour les pays du partenariat oriental par le biais des nouveaux programmes financés par l'UE, «EU4Environment» et «EU4Climate». Le commissaire **Vella** a déclaré: *"Notre coopération dans le domaine de l'environnement avec les pays du partenariat oriental est plus forte que jamais. Nous avons été témoins de nombreuses actions mises en œuvre ainsi que de progrès dans la législation environnementale. Des travaux supplémentaires sur la mise en œuvre d'une nouvelle législation, sur l'intégration des principes environnementaux et des principes d'une l'économie circulaire dans d'autres domaines politiques sont toujours nécessaires, et je suis convaincu que l'aide de l'UE dans ce domaine contribuera à l'obtention de résultats tangibles."* Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

Migration: Commission provides €24.1 million to the International Organisation for Migration to provide support, help and education for migrant children in Greece

The European Commission has awarded €24.1 million in emergency assistance under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) to support Greece in responding to migratory challenges. The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) will receive the funding to help ensure that migrant children can be immediately placed in a protective environment and receive education. It will notably support child-adequate accommodation, medical and psychological support, interpretation and cultural mediation as well as food provision for up to 1,200 unaccompanied minors in the Greek islands and in the mainland and facilitate formal education by providing transport and school kits. In addition, the funding will help assist migrants registered for assisted voluntary return and reintegration programmes. Today's funding decision comes on top of more than €1.6 billion of funding support awarded by the Commission since 2015 to address migration challenges in Greece. Under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and the Internal Security Fund (ISF), Greece has now been awarded €482.2 million in emergency funding, in addition to €561 million already awarded under these funds for the Greek national programme 2014-2020. You can find a factsheet with detailed information on EU financial support to Greece [here](#). *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 80423)*

Clean mobility for cleaner air: new Commission-owned emissions labs

Following the adoption of the new EU car type approval Regulation, the Commission is investing in two additional state-of-the-art emission testing facilities, called VELA (Vehicle Emissions Laboratories), which will be operated by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC). Clean air is a top Commission priority as recalled in the [Clean Air For All Communication](#) in May. Ensuring that car emissions are being measured accurately is one of a wide variety of measures which can be used to reach our objective. Following stakeholder consultation and official adoption at EU level, new, more accurate emissions tests became mandatory in 2017. The EU has also overhauled the car type-approval and market surveillance framework, which will be applicable from September 2020. As foreseen, the Commission is now adding two VELA laboratories to the current four to be able to carry out market checks of cars independently of Member States. The two new laboratories will be ready in February 2019 and are scheduled to start in 2020 to test cars in the laboratory (WLTP) and in real driving situation (RDE). The new type-approval rules will allow the Commission to take direct action with an EU-wide recall of non-conformant vehicles. At the moment this is the responsibility of Member States and recall rates, which the [Commission publishes regularly](#), differ substantially across Europe. Yesterday, the Environment Council discussed the related issue of [air quality problems and second-hand Diesel cars](#). Commissioner for the Environment Karmenu Vella represented the Commission and underlined that *"prices of second-hand diesel cars are dropping and that makes some people happy, but many others are suffering from poor air quality. We cannot allow shifting local air quality problems from West to East within the Union by exporting polluting diesel cars."* A [web item](#)

on the VELA testing facilities is available online. (*For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040*)

La Commission accorde des subventions à 22 villes pour des projets innovants et lance un nouvel appel à projets pour la sécurité des espaces urbains publics

Cet après-midi, la Commission annoncera les villes lauréates du 3e appel à projets dans le cadre des [Actions Urbaines Innovantes](#), dans le contexte de la [Semaine européenne des villes et des régions](#). 92 millions d'euros du Fonds européen de développement régional financera des solutions innovantes pour résoudre des problèmes urbains tels que la qualité de l'air, le changement climatique, le logement, ainsi que des emplois et des compétences pour l'économie locale. En outre, la Commission lance aujourd'hui le 4ème appel à projets des Actions Urbaines Innovantes. Les villes disposeront de 100 millions d'euros pour financer des projets innovants visant à protéger et à réduire la vulnérabilité des espaces publics, comme annoncé dans le [plan d'action de 2017](#) au titre de l'[Agenda européen en matière de sécurité](#). L'appel financera également des projets numériques, environnementaux et d'intégration sociale. La commissaire chargée de la politique régionale, Corina **Crețu**, a déclaré: "Grâce à ces appels à projets, nous transformons les villes de l'UE en véritables laboratoires afin de tester des solutions susceptibles d'améliorer la qualité de la vie dans toutes les villes du monde. Et parce que la sécurité des espaces publics urbains est devenue une préoccupation cruciale pour les citoyens, après avoir subi de tragiques attentats terroristes ces dernières années, nous soutenons maintenant les villes dans leurs efforts pour protéger leurs habitants." Un [communiqué de presse](#) ainsi que de [plus amples informations](#) sur les projets sélectionnés seront disponibles en ligne à partir de 15h00. (*Pour plus d'information: Johannes Bahrke – Tél.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tél.: +32 229 56169*)

Cohesion Policy: the EU invests in the tramway of Sofia

€46.6 million from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is invested to upgrade tramway infrastructure and services in the Bulgarian capital. EU-funded works include the reconstruction of the tramway track along "Kamenodelska" Street and "Tsar Boris III" Boulevard, a section that serves 5 tramlines including tram line 5 which transports over 50,000 people a day. The ERDF will also fund the purchase of new low-floor articulated trams and the upgrade of traffic management and passenger information systems. €34 million from the ERDF was already invested in the Sofia tramway in the previous EU budget period. "Thanks to EU funds, the inhabitants of Sofia will enjoy a modern and comfortable tramway. They will also enjoy cleaner air in the capital," said Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu**, "as we hope they will trade their usual car ride for the new tram. This is how Cohesion Policy promotes clean mobility, everywhere in the EU." The EU has also significantly invested in Sofia's metro's lines 1, 2 and 3. Overall, the EU invested €1 billion in Sofia's urban transport since 2007. (*For more*

information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Cohesion Policy: Commission announces winners of the 2018 RegioStars awards

Yesterday Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina Crețu held the annual ceremony announcing the winners of the [RegioStars awards](#), rewarding this year's best Cohesion Policy projects. And the winners are: Category 1) Supporting smart industrial transition: [Business and Shared Services Centre](#), a business centre in the town of Fundão, Centro region, Portugal Category 2) Transition towards a sustainable, low-carbon economy: [TeKiDe – textile fibre recycling](#), a project that makes new textiles from cotton waste in Helsinki-Uusimaa, Finland, as part of a bio and circular economy hub attracting investment to the region; Category 3) Better access to public services: Social Housing in the City of Ostrava, a social housing programme in the Czech Moravian-Silesian region; Category 4) Addressing the migration challenge: [Labour integration & social inclusion of refugees](#), a special integration programme in the Spanish region of Murcia which helps migrants find their place in society; Category 5) Investing in cultural heritage: [Nant Gwrtheyrn](#), an abandoned mining village on the north west Wales coast which has been restored to become a cultural centre. The [Vista Alegre Heritage Museum](#) in Portugal received the public choice award. Commissioner Crețu said: "RegioStars are true ambassadors of Cohesion policy. In our effort to better communicate what Europe is doing for its citizens, these projects are valuable assets and I hope they inspire many regions when they select EU-funded projects." (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615, Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

The Commission protects Europeans from hazardous chemicals in clothing and textiles

Over the past 10 years, the EU has significantly reduced our citizens' exposure to harmful chemicals, and the Commission constantly evaluates how to further enhance the protection of consumers, workers and the environment. Against this backdrop, the Commission today adopted [new restrictions for the use of 33 substances](#) known to cause cancer and reproductive health problems for their use in clothing, footwear and other textile articles. The new rules have been adopted by amending the [REACH regulation](#) – the most advanced and comprehensive chemical legislation in the world. The measures adopted today aim to protect the health of European citizens' by limiting their exposure to CMR chemicals (substances classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic and toxic for reproduction), which may be particularly harmful in case of frequent contact with human skin. These new rules set maximum concentration limits for the use of CMR substances in clothing and textiles and prohibit products exceeding these limits from being placed on the EU market, regardless of their origin of production. The restrictions have been prepared on the basis of scientific and technical recommendations by the European Chemicals Agency, and following broad consultations with stakeholders. They will become applicable 24 months after publication of the regulation in the Official Journal of the EU. The Commission is also issuing an explanatory guide on the restriction, which will be available [here](#) after the publication in the Official Journal. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32

229 87278 Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of B&B Italia, Flos and Louis Poulsen by Carlyle and Investindustrial

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of B&B Italia of Italy, Flos also of Italy and Louis Poulsen of Denmark, by Carlyle of the US and Investindustrial of the UK. B&B Italia manufactures and distributes designer furniture, while both Louis Poulsen and Flos manufacture and distribute designer lighting. Carlyle is a global alternative asset manager. Investindustrial is a European group of investment, holding and financial advisory companies, which currently has sole control of B&B Italia, Flos and Louis Poulsen. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as it would not give rise to any horizontal overlaps or vertical links between Carlyle's activities and those of B&B Italia, Flos and Louis Poulsen. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under case number [M.9102](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

STATEMENTS

Statement by President Juncker following the arrest of a suspect in the investigation of journalist Victoria Marinova's murder

*President **Juncker** welcomes the swift and intensive efforts by Prime Minister Borissov and the Bulgarian authorities who in close cooperation with law enforcement agencies from other EU Member States successfully arrested the suspected murderer of journalist Victoria Marinova. The swift reaction and joint efforts demonstrate the resolve to bring justice for such despicable acts. Our thoughts remain with Victoria Marinova's family and friends. The statement is available online in [EN](#) and [BG](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners Avramopoulos, Jourová and King in Luxembourg for the Justice and Home Affairs Council

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera **Jourová** and Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** will attend the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Luxembourg on 11 and 12 October. On Thursday, Justice Ministers are expected to reach a general approach on

the [Directive](#) on insolvency, restructuring and second chance, to adopt stronger rules criminalising money laundering (see [statement](#)), as well as adopt the new data protection regulation applicable to EU institutions. Commissioners **Jourová** and King will then participate in the discussion on the new [electronic evidence](#) proposals, after which the Ministers will exchange views with the Director of the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), Michael O’Flaherty, and adopt the 2017 conclusions on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. In the afternoon, Commissioner **Jourová** will update the Ministers on establishing the [European Public Prosecutor’s Office](#) (EPPU), as well as on the proposals made in September to secure [free and fair European elections](#). Ministers will also exchange views on mutual recognition in criminal matters. The meeting will be followed by a press conference at +/- 17.00 (CET) which will be available on [EbS](#). The keynote speeches by the Commissioners will be available on [EbS](#). On Friday, Commissioner Avramopoulos will discuss the new Commission proposals to reinforce the [European Border and Coast Guard Agency](#), improving the effectiveness of European return policy as well as the next long-term EU budget in the areas of migration, borders and security with Home Affairs Ministers. The Ministers will also exchange views on the state of play of the ongoing reform of the common European asylum system and take stock of the migratory situation along the Mediterranean migratory routes. Commissioner Avramopoulos will participate in the press conference at +/- 17:00 on Friday which will be available on [EbS](#). While in Luxembourg, Commissioners **Avramopoulos** and **King** will also host a High-Level Conference of the [Radicalisation Awareness Network](#) on Thursday to address the challenges related to children returning from terrorist-held territory and the radicalisation of prisoners. The keynote speeches by the Commissioners will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: *Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Christian Wigand- Tel.: +32 229 62253*)

Commissioner Jourová speaks at Debt Advice Stakeholder Forum to look into how to better support consumers in repaying their debts

Today, Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality will close the first EU Debt Advice Stakeholder Forum, which focuses on how to support European consumers in paying back their debts. Personal debt levels are still high in Europe, despite the recent recovery of the European economy. This persisting problem has both serious economic and social consequences. Commissioner **Jourová** said: *“When people have too much debt, they often cannot find a way out by themselves. Debt advice can be an answer to help European households cut the chains of debt and get back on their own feet.”* As debt advice offers vary a lot across the different Member States and depending on the providers, the 2017 [Consumer Financial Services Action Plan](#) calls on the Commission to look into how to address consumer over-indebtedness linked to credit activities. The outcomes of the Forum will be instrumental in exploring further action by the Commission in areas of debt advice and households’ over-indebtedness. More information can be found online about [EU rights on consumer credit](#), about [the Forum](#) and its [conclusions](#). (For more information *Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Melanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659*)

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

[A Europe that Protects: Commission calls for decisive action on security priorities](#)

To maintain the positive momentum set by the EU Leaders at the informal meeting in Salzburg today's report outlines the security initiatives that will be decisive for the completion of the Security Union before the upcoming European Parliament elections in May 2019. In this way, the report is a contribution to the discussions on internal security during the European Council on 18-19 October.

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"The security of our citizens is and should remain a priority for the EU every single day. Strengthening our external borders, improving information exchange and making all our data systems interoperable and protecting our citizens online as well as on the ground – there is no time to waste. It's time for those promises to be turned into reality, paving the way towards an effective and genuine Security Union."*

Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: *"From chemical weapons being used on our streets to state-sponsored cyberattacks, Europe is under threat like never before, and Europeans are looking to us to act. Now is the time to ramp up our efforts to finish our work on the Security Union. On terrorism, cyber and cyber-enabled threats, where the online and the real world collide, and on tackling organised crime we are stronger when we act together. Time is short: the EU institutions and our Member States need to take responsibility for driving delivery and implementation of this vital work."*

Over the past 3 years, the Commission has taken decisive action to tighten security rules within the EU and at its external borders. In his [2018 State of the Union Address](#), President Juncker announced further measures to protect Europeans – online and offline. However, attempted terror attacks, the use of chemical weapons on the streets of a Member State and most recently, the disrupted cyber-attack on the headquarters of an international organisation underline that more than ever, Europe remains a target – and it shows the ever greater importance of enhancing our collective security and resilience.

Accelerating work on priority security files

While a number of legislative proposals made by the Commission have now been approved, there are still many important files that need to be finalised as a matter of urgency before the European Parliament elections in May 2019. The Commission therefore calls for acceleration of this work and a swift adoption of the outstanding files, in particular, those identified in the Joint Declaration and the new measures proposed by President Juncker in his 2018

State of the Union Address:

- **Protecting Europeans online:** a wide-ranging set of measures to raise EU cyber resilience and increase cyber security capabilities was presented in September 2017 and followed up last month by proposals specifically aimed at protecting the security of our elections. Given the recent hostile cyber operations it is imperative that all legislative proposals are finalised as a matter of priority. In addition, to make sure that internet platforms are not misused to disseminate terrorist content online, the proposed new rules, in particular the obligation to remove terrorist content within one hour, should be agreed by the European Parliament and the Council before the May 2019 elections.
- **Interoperability of EU information systems:** allowing EU information systems for security, migration and border management to work together in a smarter and more efficient way is a core element of the Commission's efforts to close information security gaps. Presented in December 2017, the proposal on interoperability of EU information systems should be agreed by the European Parliament and the Council before the European Parliament elections of 2019. Similarly, the upgrades of different EU information systems, such as the European Criminal Records Information System (ECRIS), Eurodac and the Visa Information System (VIS) should be swiftly finalised.
- **Fighting cross-border crime:** to help police and judicial authorities to track down leads online and across borders, the Commission proposals on electronic evidence should be agreed before the May 2019 elections. The Commission also invites the European Council together with the European Parliament to extend the competence of the European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) to include the investigation of cross-border terrorist offences.
- **Strengthening EU borders:** The EU's internal security depends on how we manage our external borders, and this is why the proposals to reinforce the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, the EU rules on return and the European Union Agency for Asylum, taken together, will provide for the necessary tools to better ensure the effective management of the external borders.

To support Member States' efforts to increase security within the EU, the Commission has earmarked €70 million under the Internal Security Fund (ISF) for 2018-2019 for targeted security funding, including: countering radicalisation (€5 million); fighting CBRN threats, restricting access to "home-made" explosives, and protecting public spaces and critical infrastructure (€9.5 million); and supporting implementation of existing rules such as EU Passenger Name Records (€1.5 million). This comes in addition to €100 million made available under the Urban Innovative Actions, including for the protection of public spaces (more information available [here](#)).

Background

Security has been a political priority since the beginning of the Juncker Commission's mandate – from President Juncker's [Political Guidelines](#) of July 2014 to the latest [State of the Union](#) Address on 12 September 2018.

On 14 December 2017, the presidents of the European Parliament, the rotating Presidency of the Council and the European Commission signed a [Joint Declaration](#) on the EU's legislative priorities for 2018-2019, which underlined the central importance of better protecting the security of citizens by placing it at the heart of the Union's legislative work. Priority was given to initiatives designed to ensure that Member States' authorities know who is crossing the common EU external border, to establishing interoperable EU information systems for security, border and migration management, and to reinforcing the instruments in the fight against terrorism and against money laundering.

The [European Agenda on Security](#) guides the Commission's work in this area, setting out the main actions to ensure an effective EU response to terrorism and security threats, including countering radicalisation, boosting cybersecurity, cutting terrorist financing as well as improving information exchange. Since the adoption of the Agenda, significant progress has been made in its implementation, paving the way towards an effective and genuine [Security Union](#). This progress is reflected in the Commission's reports published on a regular basis.

For More Information

[Factsheet](#): A Europe that protects

[Factsheet](#): Building strong cybersecurity in Europe

[Communication](#): 16th Progress Report toward an effective and genuine Security Union

[Annex](#): List of legislative initiatives

Vice-President Šefčovič at the “Energy Union in motion – Cohesion Policy supporting Coal Regions in Transition” event

Speech by Vice-President Šefčovič, in charge of Energy Union, at the “Energy Union in motion- Cohesion Policy supporting Coal Regions in Transition” event, in Brussels.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to this event on the coal regions in transition !

I am thrilled we could organise this session, as part of the *European Week of Regions and Cities*

Climate action starts with our regions.

Regions are THE actors, the drivers, the testbed, in some cases also the pioneers and the engines, of the clean energy transition.

They experience first-handedly not only the benefits but also the **social and industrial challenges** linked to the **low carbon transition**.

Our ultimate objective is: to make sure **no region, no sector, no worker is left behind**. To push a “fair” transition.

This is fundamentally why we have launched the Coal Regions in Transition Initiative – **a structural support action for coal** (and carbon intensive) **regions** – to help drive their transition and **mitigate the social impacts of the clean energy transformation**.

The stakes are high. Because it's about people's **health** as well as their **jobs** – we are talking more than 240.00 direct jobs involved in 41 regions.

As Mayors recently put it to me in Silesia, it is about ensuring that our **young people** stay in, or even come back to, their own communities.

It is about offering them not only **good job prospects** but also a **healthy and thriving environment** to live in, and grow, together with their families.

Let me briefly present what it is we are doing:

We are now working with regions **in 7 pilot EU countries** – in Poland, Greece, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and we are starting with Germany and Spain.

We are **mobilising many of our EU programmes and funding instruments** for this **great cause**.

Our structural funds of course – and Corina will tell you more about the reprogramming of operational programmes, but also LIFE, the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund, and the EU Emissions Trading Scheme.

They are all currently being used to support projects to improve air quality, or the ecological restoration of mining sites and degraded land, modernization of energy system and energy efficiency projects, industrial parks, workers up and re-skilling, social centres for the youth and the elderly. I could continue.

Beyond funding, coal and carbon intensive regions often lack capacity to design transition reforms and build project proposals. This is why the Commission Structural Reform Support Service and JASPERS deliver technical assistance to help move from strategic planning to project implementation and results. This is why our Joint Research Centre also helps in assessing the industrial strengths of each regions, with smart specialization strategies at hand.

To sum up, through these operational country teams, we offer **regions tailor-made support** to guide structural transformation.

This means that we are helping regions on three fronts:

- To prepare or refine their **long-term transition strategies**, based on their competitive edge
- To develop and deploy a **pipeline of flagship projects** to kick-start the transition
- To optimise their use and **implementation of existing – and future – EU funds**.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today is about these regions. About their ownership of and leadership in the low carbon transition.

I am very happy that we can have high-level representatives from Poland, Germany, Romania, Czech Republic and Slovakia in our panel.

They are each at **different stages of development**, and follow **different growth models**. Some regions have decided to phase out coal altogether, going for robust economic and ecological diversification (e.g. geothermal, hydroenergy in former coal mines, innovation centres, agro-tourism). Others want to invest primarily in advanced coal technologies and ecoinnovation. But all need to retain jobs and growth in communities heavily impacted by declining competitiveness of sectors pertaining to the last, fossil fuel-based, industrial revolution.

We also want to support regions' cross-fertilization and exchange of best practices. To that end, we have launched the **European Coal Regions in Transition Platform**, which third meeting should take place on 5-6 November.

Finally, this is a stepping-stone to the global level:

First, we are starting to work closely with international investors. We recently launched a partnership **with Michael Bloomberg** and Bloomberg Philanthropies, to put coal regions on the investment map of business leaders.

Second we want to showcase EU global leadership and team up with our international partners on this important challenge. To this end, we will **bring this initiative to the COP24 at Katowice**. We want to position the EU as an international hub of expertise for the regional transition. And I am convinced that here again, **it is multilateral cooperation**, that will make the difference. Because no actor can do this alone.

But for now, let me turn to Corina and our distinguished representatives from the regions.

Pressemitteilung: Infolge einer Reihe von Verzögerungen werden etliche neue IT-Systeme für den Zoll im Jahr 2020 nicht zur Verfügung stehen. Der EU-Rechnungshof untersucht, was falsch gelaufen ist.

[Download PDF](#)

Press release: After a series of delays, new customs IT systems will not be available by 2020. EU Auditors examined what went wrong

[Download PDF](#)