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## [Speech by Vice-President Ansip at the European Parliament plenary session for the debate on the Future of Europe with Estonian Prime Minister Jüri Ratas](#)

President Tajani,

Prime Minister Jüri Ratas,

Members of the European Parliament,

Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I will today speak on behalf of the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker. I hope that you understand that if I did not speak on behalf of Jean-Claude Juncker, I would be more moderate in praising Estonia's success, but I do speak on behalf of President Juncker.

Speaking on behalf of President Juncker, let me start by thanking the Prime Minister for taking part in this debate and for his vision on the future of our Union.

As you know, this is a special year for Estonia. In February, we marked 100 years since independence.

Today, Estonia is a modern country flourishing at the heart of Europe.

It may be one of the smaller Member States, but it is an example for others to follow.

Estonia always fights to take its rightful place at the heart of our European Union – whether on Schengen, the euro or on defence.

It always seeks compromise and works for unity. We saw this repeatedly during the first ever Estonian EU Presidency last year.

All of this shows that Estonia will continue to be a leader in the European Union in the future.

Nowhere is this more important than when it comes to making our people safe.

Defence and security are not abstract terms for Estonians. They are a daily and visible pre-occupation.

This is why we have invested so much into the EU's partnership with NATO, which remains the cornerstone of our defence. Estonia knows first-hand the true value of this partnership. As I speak, Estonian troops are in Afghanistan, Mali, Kosovo, Lebanon and other countries – while the presence of NATO forces in Estonia continues to give us peace of mind.

Estonia is also leading the way through its participation in Permanent Structured Cooperation. Its planned project with Finland, Latvia and others to develop unmanned land systems is a perfect example of how we can achieve more by working together and how we can bring digital solutions to the battlefield to save lives.

And we need to back this up with the resources to match.

As part of our proposals for a new long-term European budget, we have designated EUR 13 billion for the European Defence Fund. I know we can rely on Estonia's full support for these proposals.

All of our proposals for the new Multiannual Financial Framework focus on areas where we can achieve more together to build a stronger Europe.

We have seen the potential of targeted investment.

Rail Baltica is a good example. This project connects Europeans and creates new opportunities for people and businesses from Helsinki to Tallinn, through Riga and Vilnius, and eventually to Warsaw.

This is the largest infrastructure project in the Baltics: EUR 5 billion invested into the region. These projects cannot happen overnight or within one financial period.

In that spirit, we have proposed to increase the funding for the Connecting Europe facility by 24% to focus on transport, digital and energy infrastructure. This will allow major projects to become a reality – such as the synchronisation of the Baltic countries' electricity systems, or the Baltic Connector gas pipeline between Finland and Estonia.

The same applies to digital, which is in the DNA of Estonia. It now needs to become part of Europe's too: in digital infrastructure, e-government and digital skills. This is what the EU leaders endorsed at the Tallinn Digital Summit.

This is why we are fully focused on building a true Digital Single Market.

I rely on the support of this House, as well as on the Council, to agree on

the remaining proposals as quickly as possible.

We need them urgently to build Europe's digital future.

The European Commission has proposed a new Digital Europe Programme worth EUR 9 billion to support Europe's digital transformation. This will be especially important when it comes to implementing the Tallinn Declaration on e-government.

All of this shows the importance of agreeing on the new long-term budget as quickly as possible. As President Juncker said in this very room only a few weeks ago, there would be no better message, no greater symbol to show Europeans that their Union will invest in the future and take its destiny into its own hands.

Honourable Members, Prime Minister,

Only a strong and united Europe can protect our citizens, make the most of the new digital world and create new opportunities for its people and businesses alike.

But to do so, we will have to work together and work for compromise. We will probably have to do less, be more focused on the things that matter and do things more efficiently.

As ever, Estonia is showing the way. The motto for its Presidency – Unity through Balance – shows us the way forward for our European Union. It is time to take it.

Thank you.

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## [What does the Gender Equality Index say about your country?](#)

Our Gender Equality Index country factsheets are now online. They give an in-depth analysis of how each country in the EU is doing in gender equality. You can see how your country has progressed over time and learn about the greatest improvements and challenges in each of the six domains: health, power, money, work, knowledge and time.

The EU's score for gender equality is currently 66.2 out of 100 and only 11 countries rank higher. Across the EU, all countries have room to improve and while some have moved forwards, others have slipped backwards. Certain countries perform better in specific areas. For example Denmark tops the knowledge domain but when it comes to money, Luxembourg reigns. The Index

gives Member States the opportunity to see what's working best in other countries and learn from each other's initiatives and policies.

The results of this edition of the Index show gaps among different groups of women and men. Depending on a person's age, education, country of birth, disability and family type, their life can be completely different to the rest of the population. For example, in the Czech Republic, only 9 % of women with disabilities have a tertiary degree, compared to 19 % of women without disabilities and in the Netherlands, 28 % of lone mothers are at risk of poverty compared to 4 % of lone fathers.

For more information, please contact Veronica Collins, phone +370 5 2157 449, [veronica.collins@eige.europa.eu](mailto:veronica.collins@eige.europa.eu)

To find out more, read out factsheets [here](#).

Explore our Gender Equality Index [here](#).

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## **Daily News 03 / 10 / 2018**

### **Major EU investments in infrastructure help write a new chapter in Greece**

This week, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** will travel to Greece to visit or inaugurate three major transport and environment projects which have received a total of €1.3 billion in support from EU funds. In addition to this, the Commission has adopted a decision for a €121 million investment for a motorway connecting the Aktio peninsula to the Ionia highway, a key transport section linking North-Western Greece to the South. Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *“As President **Juncker** mentioned in his State of the Union speech, Greece is now back on its own two feet. And these four projects will, each in their own way, help Greece write a new chapter in its history. Greece is already one of the main beneficiaries of EU funds and for the next decade, the Commission proposes even more Cohesion Policy resources for lasting growth in the country, jobs and an ever better quality of life for the Greek people.”* A full press release is available [here](#). In Greece this week the Commissioner will meet Alexis Tsipras, the Greek Prime Minister, Yiannis Dragasakis, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Development and Stathis Giannakidis, Deputy Minister of Development. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615 – Tel.: +32 229 50595; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

### **EU Civil Protection Mechanism activated in response to the earthquake in Indonesia**

The [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) has been activated to respond to the devastating effects of the earthquake and tsunami in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. The Commission’s [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) is now working [24/7](#) to mobilise offers of assistance to the affected areas. In an immediate response, initial offers have been made by Belgium and

Denmark. More assistance is expected to be channelled in the coming days. *“European solidarity knows no borders. We are working round the clock to channel essential supplies through our Civil Protection Mechanism. I thank the states that have offered assistance so far and I call on our Member States to continue to respond swiftly.”* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**. This comes on top of the [€1.5 million package of initial EU humanitarian assistance](#) that was mobilised in the immediate aftermath of the disaster already last weekend. Additionally, Copernicus, the Commission’s emergency satellite mapping services, has produced [satellite maps](#) to assess the situation in the affected areas and help national authorities and responders on the ground. The Commission co-finances the transport costs of assistance mobilised through the Civil Protection Mechanism, which can only be activated upon request of an affected country. [Photos](#) and [video](#) stockshots of the Emergency Centre are available. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322 ; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

### **Commission welcomes adoption of the Regulation for a single digital gateway**

In two years’ time citizens and businesses will be able to find all information, administrative procedures and assistance services linked to their Single Market rights on one single, easily accessible online portal: ‘Your Europe’. The European Parliament and Council have today formally adopted the underlying Regulation that will establish this single digital gateway. Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs said: *“Today, citizens and businesses, wishing to move, work or do business across Europe, face a jungle of confusing rules and endless paperwork. That costs much time and money for our citizens. In line with the promises laid out in the [Digital Single Market Strategy](#), the single digital gateway this will change, making administration procedures easier, better and faster.”* As of 2020, EU citizens and businesses will be guided, from the [Your Europe](#) portal, to all information they need on EU or national rules related to work, education, healthcare, business establishment, taxes or employment of staff. In addition, anyone looking for assistance will also be guided towards the most suitable service offer marked with a trustworthy gateway quality label. The Regulation will ensure that in five years’ time more than 20 of the most important procedures can be handled fully online, such as requests for a birth certificate, car registrations, income tax declarations or university enrolments. Citizens and companies will no longer be blocked because their phone numbers, postal codes or e-IDs are rejected, and they will get information in a language that they can understand. The ‘once-only’ principle reduces cross-border red tape, as citizens and businesses can ask for already submitted data or documents to be exchanged directly between authorities. The Regulation will now be published in the Official Journal of the EU and will enter into force 20 days after. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278)*

**TRADE: Commission extends duties on imported steel pipes and tubes from Russia and Ukraine for another five years**

Following an investigation the Commission decided the existing anti-dumping measures on Russian and Ukrainian imports of seamless pipes and tubes should stay in place for another five years to ensure fair conditions for EU producers. The duties range from 24.1% to 35.8% for imports from Russia and from 12.3% to 25.7% for imports from Ukraine. The [decision](#) is another example of the continued Commission's commitment to creating a level playing field for EU steel industry, with 52 trade defence measures currently in place on steel and iron products. The investigation to review of the measures was conducted upon request from the European Steel Tube Association (ESTA). It showed that significant dumping from both Russia and Ukraine had continued over the previous period (over 30% for Russia, and over 20% for Ukraine) and, if the measures were to lapse, it is likely that significant quantities of dumped Russian and Ukrainian exports would again be directed to the EU market threatening the EU pipe and tubes producers, based among others in Czech Republic, France, Germany and Italy. The decision helps therefore preserving jobs in a sector that employs today over 13,000 Europeans. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)*

#### **Eurostat: Excédent de 62,0 milliards d'euros des échanges courants de l'UE28**

Le compte des opérations courantes de la balance des paiements de l'UE28, corrigé des variations saisonnières, a enregistré un excédent de 62,0 milliards d'euros (1,6% du PIB) au deuxième trimestre 2018, en baisse par rapport à l'excédent de 68,2 mrd (1,7% du PIB) du premier trimestre 2018 et en hausse par rapport à celui de 41,3 mrd (1,1% du PIB) du deuxième trimestre 2017, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182)*

#### **Eurostat: Le volume des ventes du commerce de détail en baisse de 0,2% dans la zone euro**

En août 2018 par rapport à juillet 2018, le volume des ventes du commerce de détail corrigé des variations saisonnières a diminué de 0,2% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et est resté stable dans l'UE28, selon les estimations d'Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. En juillet 2018, le commerce de détail avait reculé de 0,6% dans la zone euro et de 0,2% dans l'UE28. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182)*

#### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Convergys by Synnex**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Convergys Corporation ("Convergys") by Synnex Corporation ("Synnex"), both of the US. Convergys provides customer relationship management business process outsourcing services to client businesses, including through the provision and operation of "call centres". Synnex provides business-to-business services that help clients and business partners grow and enhance their customer-engagement strategies. The

Commission concluded that, given the limited impact of the transaction on the market structure, the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.9063](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

#### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over ExxonMobil Exploration Argentina and Mobil Argentina by ExxonMobil and Qatar Petroleum**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over ExxonMobil Exploration Argentina S.R.L. and Mobil Argentina S.A., both of Argentina, by ExxonMobil of the US and Qatar Petroleum of Qatar. ExxonMobil Exploration Argentina and Mobil Argentina are wholly owned affiliates of ExxonMobil, which own and operate the Vaca Muerta shale field in Argentina and are active in the exploration, development, production, and sale of crude oil and gas. ExxonMobil is active worldwide in the development, production, and sale of crude oil and natural gas, the refining and sale of refined petroleum products, the development, production, and sale of various chemical products, and power generation. Qatar Petroleum is active worldwide in the exploration, drilling and production operations, transport, storage, marketing and sale of crude oil, refined products, liquefied natural gas (LNG), petrochemicals and fertilizers. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of the negligible actual and foreseen activities of the companies in the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.9101](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

#### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Spielbank Mainz by Gauselmann, NOVOMATIC and Spielbank Bad Neuenahr**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Spielbank Mainz GmbH & Co. KG and Spielbank Mainz Beteiligungsgesellschaft mbH (together "Spielbank Mainz") by Gauselmann Spielbanken Beteiligungs GmbH ("Gauselmann"), NOVOMATIC Spielbanken Holding Deutschland GmbH ("NOVOMATIC") and Spielbank Bad Neuenahr GmbH & Co. KG, all of Germany. Spielbank Mainz operates three casinos in Germany. Gauselmann operates casinos and arcades in Germany and other countries and is part of the Gauselmann group which develops and manufactures gaming machines for casinos and arcades, as well as developing games, gaming-software and gaming-systems. NOVOMATIC is part of the Austrian Novomatic group, a global provider of gaming-technology which produces and sells gaming-technology and -equipment and operates companies active in gaming and gambling. Spielbank Bad Neuenahr operates three casinos in Germany. The Commission concluded that, given the limited impact of the transaction on the market structure, the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case](#)

[register](#) under the case number [M.8828](#). (For more information: *Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526*)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of trendtours Touristik by Bregal Unternehmerkapital**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of trendtours Touristik GmbH and its sister company Bus und Service, Organisations- und Werbegesellschaft mbH (together “trendtours Touristik”) by Bregal Unternehmerkapital II LP, all of Germany, by the way of purchasing all shares of trendtours Touristik’s holding company Dating, Datenerfassung und -verarbeitung, Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung. Trendtours Touristik provides tour operator services. Bregal Unternehmerkapital is an investment fund ultimately controlled by COFRA Holding AG of Switzerland. The Commission concluded that, given the limited impact of the transaction on the market structure, the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission’s [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.9111](#). (For more information: *Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526*)

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

#### **Commissioners Avramopoulos and Jourová at the EU-Western Balkans Forum on Justice and Home Affairs in Tirana, Albania**

On Thursday and Friday, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for Justice, Gender Equality and Consumers, Věra **Jourová** will participate in the EU-Western Balkans Ministerial Forum on Justice and Home Affairs in Tirana, Albania. On Thursday, Commissioner **Jourová** will discuss with Justice Ministers how to strengthen the rule of law through the promotion of standards for the judiciary. They will also exchange views on the indicators necessary to assess the progress of justice reforms. The Commissioner will then make a statement on media freedom on behalf of the European Commission. A press conference with the Albanian and Austrian Federal Justice Ministers will follow at around 18:15 local time. On Friday, Commissioner **Avramopoulos** will join Home Affairs Ministers to discuss current challenges related to migration and border management as well as to security, in particular police cooperation and countering terrorism and violent extremism. Commissioner **Avramopoulos** will then sign the agreement on cooperation between Albania and European Border and Coast Guard and the Joint EU–Western Balkans Action Plan on Counter-Terrorism. He will also participate at the initialling of working arrangements for cooperation between the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction EMCDDA and Albania. A press conference with Commissioner **Avramopoulos**, Albanian and Austrian Federal Home Affairs Ministers will follow the meeting and will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: *Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: 32 229 63444; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659*)

## **Commissioner Navracsics in Austria for creative industries conference**

Tomorrow morning, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will be in Vienna to give an opening speech at the [8<sup>th</sup> European Creative Industries Summit](#) alongside Austrian Federal Minister for Digital and Economic Affairs, Margarete Schramböck. Part of the programme of the Austrian Presidency of the EU and organised by the [European Creative Business Network](#), the title of conference is “Beyond: Cross-Innovation as Driver for Growth in the European Digital Single Market”. It will bring together leading policy makers and representatives of the cultural and creative industries. The Commissioner will underline the importance of the conference taking place during the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#). In May this year, the Commission [proposed a modern budget for the period 2021-2027](#), which will ensure the continuous support for the creative sector in the future. His speech will be available [here](#). (*For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184*)

## **European Aviation Summit: Transport Commissioner Violeta Bulc calls for more action on social issues and on the modernisation of the Single European Sky**

Today, EU Transport Commissioner Violeta **Bulc** will host the “[European Aviation Summit – Up to the next level](#)” jointly organised with the Austrian Presidency in Vienna. Commissioner **Bulc** will update an audience of ministers and aviation leaders on the EU’s progress of the [European Aviation Strategy](#) and the Commission’s expectations for the remaining mandate. With air traffic delays rising during the past months, Commissioner **Bulc** together with Karima Delli, Chair of the European Parliament’s TRAN Committee, has recently called for progress on the [Single European Sky](#) and more genuine cooperation between national air navigation service providers and Eurocontrol to improve the efficiency and capacity of the European aviation network. Together with the deployment of digital state-of-the-art solutions this will reduce delays and congestion in Europe’s airports, and also help to mitigate the environmental impact of aviation. The European Aviation Summit will be a unique opportunity for decision-makers to discuss the challenges European aviation faces. The event will dedicate special attention to social matters, the external dimension of aviation, the internal aviation market as well as digital solutions for the sector. *For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917*)

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