

Second quarter of 2018 – Annual growth in labour costs at 2.2% in euro area – At 2.6% in EU28

Hourly labour costs rose by 2.2% in the **euro area** (EA19) and by 2.6% in the **EU28** in the second quarter of 2018, compared with the same quarter of the previous year. In the first quarter of 2018, hourly labour costs increased by 2.1% and 2.8% respectively. These figures are published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**.

[Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

Cities and finance join forces to launch new global initiative to strengthen urban climate investment

- **Pilot initiative launched today – Global Climate City Challenge – to strengthen technical preparation and financing for cities in Africa, Asia and Latin America**
- **Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy and European Investment Bank partner to accelerate urban climate action**

The Global Climate City Challenge launched in San Francisco today will address key technical and financing barriers to strengthen investment in green projects and programmes essential to improve resilience to a changing climate in cities home to millions of people.

Urban climate action projects will be strengthened by accessing best-practice and technical assistance intended to mitigate the risks of climate change, enhance impact and improve financial sustainability of first time projects.

Projects in an initial six cities will be selected to benefit from the Global Climate City Challenge and eligible schemes can get in touch today.

People living in cities around the world will benefit from the new initiative intended to mitigate the risks of climate change and enhance the impact of climate related investment. The new initiative seeks to transform financing for low-carbon and climate resilient infrastructure by mobilising significant private investment and increasing support from public resources. The programme will strengthen financing to help cities to cope better with a changing climate, cut energy bills, improve waste and water use and support

low carbon and resilient sustainable development.

Urban climate action to benefit from global perspective and unique financial expertise

The Global Climate City Challenge is a joint initiative of the Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy, representing over 9,000 cities from six continents, and the European Investment Bank, the world's largest international public bank, and in collaboration with global and local city networks, including ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability and C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group.

FELICITY, a technical assistance programme for low-carbon infrastructure projects in cities jointly led with the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) will also contribute to the Challenge. The German Federal Ministry of the Environment (BMU) envisages expanding FELICITY, which will contribute to Global Urbis and the respective partnership between GCoM and the EIB.

The Global Climate City Challenge was launched at the Global Climate Action Summit by Mauricio Rodas, Mayor of Quito and Global Covenant of Mayors Board Member, and Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Vice President.

Mauricio Rodas, Mayor of Quito and Global Covenant of Mayors Board Member:

"Cities around the world have a multitude of challenges to cope with, with limited means to do address them. Low carbon projects continue to be delayed due to technical capacity barriers to access private investment. The new Global Climate City Challenge brings together both sector experience and financial expertise to provide technical assistance, advisory services and blended financing instruments to local governments, to accelerate cities' capacity to develop high quality and investor-friendly climate action plans. This new initiative will ensure that new investments in energy, transport, water, waste and resilience will make a lasting difference in the years ahead."

Maroš Šefčovič, Co-Chair of the Global Covenant of Mayors, Vice President of the European Commission, responsible for the Energy Union: "Today, more than ever, it is essential for all levels of government to fight climate change. With the right support, cities have the power to tackle the climate challenge, transform society and create a sustainable future. We can achieve this only by working together. This collaboration between the Global Covenant and European Investment Bank is a prime example of how we can come to a solution, releasing resources and finance that will help cities to meet and exceed the objectives of the Paris Agreement."

Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Bank Vice President: "Accelerating urban investment to reduce carbon emissions and better cope with a changing climate is crucial for future generations. Schemes around the world already show how technical preparation and financing can make a huge difference to local challenges. The time has come to ensure that best-practice is shared and lessons learnt from the most successful projects benefit schemes being considered for the first time elsewhere. Bringing together expertise from the

EIB's work with cities around the world and the unique Global Covenant of Mayors network will help tackle the crucial urban climate action investment gap. I call upon all cities to see how this exciting new initiative can transform the impact of existing and future urban investment plans."

Christiana Figueres, Global Covenant of Mayors Vice-Chair, former UNFCCC Executive Secretary: "Strong and sustainable cities are a necessary driving force to reach our Paris Agreement targets. The Global Climate City Challenge between one of the world's leading finance institutions and the Global Covenant's broad network of Mayors will help cities turn their climate strategies into real investments, create jobs and help them meet their commitments for sustainable society and future."

Ashok Sridharan, Mayor of Bonn and President of ICLEI: "To bring local climate action to scale, we need investment-ready, high impact projects with clear social and environmental benefits. Initiatives like the Global Climate City Challenge bring together financial institutions and cities, building local capacity to develop, deliver and finance local projects. This is critical to achieving global climate targets and closing the gap between investment needs and funding that effectively reaches the local level. ICLEI is bringing the Transformative Actions Program to the Global Climate City Challenge as a concrete mechanism to support its strategy."

First EIB joint technical and financial urban climate action programme launched

In the coming weeks the Global Climate City Challenge will support climate action projects in six cities under an initial pilot programme. This will include working to enhance the bankability of projects and increasing financing support as well as sharing experience of smart city technology and innovative urban financing.

Strengthening investment by all urban stakeholders

Municipal and local authorities, as well as municipal authorities, utilities and partners involved in financing urban projects will be able to benefit from the new initiative.

The initiative will focus on high-impact projects in Africa, central Asia, Latin America, the European neighbourhood and EU accession counties.

www.eib.org/GCCCC

Global Climate City Challenge expected to scale up future engagement

City challenge winners will benefit from the first targeted support from the Global Climate City Challenge with engagement expected to last two years.

Looking ahead the Global Covenant of Mayors and European Investment Bank are exploring how to scale up the Global Climate City Challenge initiative and further accelerate support for urban climate action, including through cooperation with additional financial partners.

Building on urban experience

As part of its contribution to the Urban Agenda, the European Investment Bank provided nearly EUR 150 billion for investment in urban infrastructure and services between 2011 and 2017. This includes providing crucial support for new urban development, sustainable transport and social housing as well as improving water, energy, health and education infrastructure in cities across Europe and around the world.

The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy is an international alliance of cities and local governments with a shared long-term vision of promoting and supporting voluntary action to combat climate change and move to a low emission, resilient society.



Commission signs €1 billion in Macro-Financial Assistance to support reforms in Ukraine

With this assistance, the EU will continue to support economic stabilisation in the country, including through structural and governance reforms.

Valdis Dombrovskis, Commission Vice-President responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, signed the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the European Union. He said: *"Europe strongly supports Ukraine on its path of economic recovery and reform. The new programme of EU macro-financial assistance will help Ukraine reduce its economic vulnerabilities and enhance stability. At the same time, by implementing important reforms related to the new MFA operation, especially in the area of the fight against corruption, Ukraine needs to deliver on the expectations of its citizens and send a strong signal to its international partners and investors."*

The proposed new Macro-Financial Assistance complements three previous MFA programmes, through which the EU has supported Ukraine with a total of €2.8 billion since the onset of the crisis in 2014, and a programme of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The funds of the new assistance programme will be disbursed in two instalments of up to €500 million. Each disbursement is conditional on the implementation of specific policy measures agreed between Ukraine and the EU in the Memorandum of Understanding. The agreed policy programme covers in particular the fight against corruption, public finance management, governance of state-owned enterprises and banks as well as key social policies. The programme is consistent with the reform path agreed between the EU and Ukraine in the context of the Association Agreement.

As it is always the case with macro-financial assistance, disbursements will also be dependent on the fulfilment of the political preconditions, which require Ukraine to continue respecting effective democratic mechanisms, including a multi-party parliamentary system, and the rule of law and guaranteeing the respect for human rights. Finally, disbursements will be contingent on progress with Ukraine's programme with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The next step in the implementation of the MFA programme is the ratification of the Memorandum of Understanding by the Parliament of Ukraine.

Background

Macro-financial assistance (MFA) operations are part of the EU's wider engagement with neighbouring countries and are intended as an exceptional EU crisis response instrument. They are available to EU neighbour countries experiencing severe balance-of-payments problems. In addition to MFA, the EU supports Ukraine through several other instruments, including humanitarian aid, budget support, technical assistance and blending facilities to support investment.

Ukraine has so far benefitted from a total of €2.8 billion worth of EU MFA loans since the onset of the crisis in early 2014. This includes €1.6 billion disbursed in 2014-2015 as part of two earlier MFA operations and €1.2 billion in 2015-2017 as part of a third operation. An additional tranche of €600 million was not disbursed as not all conditions had been implemented by the time the availability period of the assistance expired in January 2018.

In March 2018, in response to Ukraine's request, the Commission proposed a new macro-financial assistance programme for up to €1 billion. This proposal was adopted by the European Parliament and Council on 4 July 2018.

Further Information

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

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

[EU-Ukraine relations](#)

[EU Delegation to Ukraine website](#)

[Statement by Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis](#)

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President Juncker attends the Three Seas Initiative Summit

The President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, will attend for the first time the Three Seas Initiative Summit on Monday 17 September and Tuesday 18 September in Bucharest, Romania. The Summit aims at achieving concrete progress in multiplying transport, energy and digital interconnections in the region. To that effect, representatives of the participating EU Member States located between the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black Seas, as well as their guests, will discuss concrete contributions in order to boost connectivity in the region, increase convergence, cohesion and EU unity, as well as strengthen transatlantic ties. President **Juncker** will address the Summit, in its plenary session '*An Initiative which delivers – key projects in energy, transport, digital interconnections. The Three Seas Initiative as catalyst for the cohesion and convergence of the EU and for the strengthening of the transatlantic link*', on 18 September. Commissioner **Crețu** will accompany the President and will attend the Business Forum, organised in the margins of the [Summit](#). The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is a flexible political platform launched in 2015, which includes the 12 EU Member States located between the Adriatic, the Baltic and the Black Seas: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Mixing transport modes to improve quality of life: Commission launches the EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK

This Sunday, the European Commission will kick off the 17th edition of the [EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK](#) taking place from 16 to 22 September across more than 2400 towns and cities. The objective of the EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK is to promote sustainable urban mobility and reduce emissions, particularly in cities. In doing so, it contributes to the EU commitments of defending the Paris Agreement and leaving a healthier planet behind for those that follow, as they were outlined by President **Juncker** in his [State of the Union address](#). This year edition will encourage people to use shared forms of transportation such as bicycle and car sharing under the slogan 'Mix and Move'. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: "With this year's edition of the EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK, we want to encourage everyone to consider different mobility options and select the most appropriate ones for each trip. By mixing the ways we move, we can save time, improve our health, and lower our transport costs. This week is also an opportunity for cities to accelerate this social shift by making sure the right services and infrastructure are in place." Karmenu **Vella**, EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: "Mixing and moving means supporting a transition to a more human transport system. It means promoting cleaner, more fuel-efficient modes, and more human-powered travel. It's a great way of keeping the focus at the local level and helping European towns and cities to improve the environmental performance of their transport system. It means cleaner air, quieter cities, and healthier citizens – what's not to like?" The EUROPEANMOBILITYWEEK will include events such as car-free days all across Europe and the third edition of the [European day without a road death](#), which aims at raising awareness on road safety. More information is available [here](#).

(For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143)

Latest Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions call breaks all records

The [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) support excellent researchers at all stages of their careers, irrespective of nationality and encourage transnational, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobility. With 9,830 applications for [Individual Fellowships](#) from researchers across the world, this year's call is the biggest ever in terms of applications under the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#). Candidates come from a wide variety of disciplines ranging from physics to linguistics and from health-sciences to mathematical modelling. A total budget of EUR 273 million will allow the EU to offer around 1,400 researchers a fellowship in January 2019 that will be worth on average EUR 200,000. A grant provides an allowance to cover living, travel costs and support for family. It also supports researchers to restart their careers in Europe after a break, such as a parental leave. The grant is awarded to the host organisation, usually a university, research centre or a company in Europe. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"This is the biggest ever call under Horizon 2020 in terms of submissions. The enormous interest is proof of the success of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions – and it shows that we are right in seeking to strengthen them in the EU's next long-term budget. It is good to see an increase of 47% in applications by researchers looking for a host institution in the private sector. This gives excellent researchers the necessary skills for job opportunities in companies where their expertise is in high demand."* The Actions are a key part of [Horizon 2020](#), the EU's research and innovation programme. During the current financing period (2014–2020), with a budget of EUR 6.2 billion, the programme is expected to support around 65,000 researchers. For the period after 2020, the Commission has proposed to raise the budget to EUR 6.8 billion over seven years. More information on the Actions is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#) and Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229 56184](#))

La Commission approuve deux nouvelles indications géographiques protégées de Grèce et d'Italie

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription des termes [«Marrone di Serino»](#) et [«Castagna di Serino»](#) et de [«Αγκινάρα Ιπίων»](#) (Agkinara Irion) dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). Le «Αγκινάρα Ιπίων» est un artichaut au goût très doux produit dans la région de Nauplie dans le Péloponnèse. Les terres de cette région sont très propices à la culture de cet artichaut qui jouit d'une excellente réputation dans tout le pays, et est un ingrédient central de bons nombres de recettes locales et traditionnelles. Le «Marrone di Serino»/«Castagna di Serino» (les deux noms sont utilisés) est un marron cultivé dans les provinces d'Avellino et de Salerne, situées près de Naples. Ces marrons sont très demandés par les pâtisseries et confiseurs, notamment pour la fabrication des marrons glacés. Il est utilisé sous toutes ses formes en cuisine, que ce soit pour des confitures, des tartes ou des gâteaux tels que le castagnaccio. Ces nouvelles

appellations vont rejoindre plus de 1 430 produits déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [D00R](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (pour plus d'information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 2 29 56 185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229 52 509)

State aid: Commission approves €12.5 million scheme for the production of solid biomass fuel by micro, small and medium sized enterprises in the Spanish region of Extremadura

The European Commission has approved under EU state aid rules a Spanish scheme to support the production of solid fuel originating from forest biomass and agricultural residues in the Spanish region of Extremadura. The measure consists in a regional investment aid scheme providing support in the form of grants to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises either starting production or converting existing activities into the production of solid biomass fuel. The scheme, which will have an overall budget of up to €12.5 million, will be funded via the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and will run until 31 December 2020. Extremadura, a sparsely populated region of Spain with an agricultural focus, is eligible for regional aid under the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Commission assessed the scheme under the [Guidelines on Regional State Aid](#) for 2014-2020, which enable Member States to support economic development and employment in the EU's less developed regions and to foster regional cohesion in the Single Market. The Commission concluded that the measure fully meets the criteria set out in the Guidelines and will make an important contribution to a coherent regional development strategy in Extremadura, in line with EU objectives. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition's website](#) in the [public case register](#) under the case number SA.49406 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

Commission signs €1 billion in Macro-Financial Assistance to support reforms in Ukraine

The European Commission has today signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Ukraine in Kyiv for Macro-Financial Assistance (MFA) of up to €1 billion in the form of medium- and long-term loans. With this assistance, the EU will continue to support economic stabilisation in the country, including through structural and governance reforms. Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, responsible for the Euro and Social Dialogue, also in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, signed the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the European Union and said: "Europe strongly supports Ukraine on its path of economic recovery and reform. The new programme of EU macro-financial assistance will help Ukraine reduce its economic vulnerabilities and enhance stability. At the same time, by implementing important reforms related to the new MFA operation, especially in the area of the fight against corruption, Ukraine needs to deliver on the expectations of its citizens and send a strong signal to its international partners and investors." (A statement by the Vice-President is available [here](#) and a full press release can be found [here](#). For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Hearthside by Charlesbank and Partners Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over H-Food Holdings, LLC ("Hearthside") by Charlesbank Capital Partners, LLC ("Charlesbank"), both of the US, and Partners Group AG of Switzerland. Hearthside, currently solely controlled by Partners group, is active in the outsourced manufacturing of branded food (also called "contract food"), contract food packaging and contract food equipment. Charlesbank and Partners Group are private investment firms whose portfolio companies are active in a wide variety of sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that the companies' activities do not overlap and that the vertical links between them are very limited with moderate market shares in the relevant markets. 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.9035](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Eurostat: La croissance annuelle des coûts de la main-d'œuvre à 2,2% dans la zone euro, à 2,6% dans l'UE28

Les coûts horaires de la main-d'œuvre ont augmenté de 2,2% dans la zone euro (ZE19) et de 2,6% dans l'UE28 au deuxième trimestre 2018, par rapport au même trimestre de l'année précédente. Au premier trimestre 2018, les coûts horaires de la main-d'œuvre avaient progressé de 2,1% et 2,8% respectivement. Ces données sont publiées par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Les deux principales composantes des coûts de la main-d'œuvre sont les salaires & traitements ainsi que les coûts non salariaux. Dans la zone euro, les coûts des salaires & traitements horaires ont augmenté de 1,9% et les coûts non salariaux de 2,9% au deuxième trimestre 2018, par rapport au même trimestre de l'année précédente. Au premier trimestre 2018, les variations annuelles s'établissaient respectivement à +1,8% et +2,8%. Dans l'UE28, tant les coûts des salaires & traitements horaires que les coûts non salariaux ont progressé de 2,6% chacun au deuxième trimestre 2018. Au premier trimestre 2018, les variations annuelles s'établissaient respectivement à +2,7% et +3,1%. Un communiqué de presse est [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tél.: + 32 229 67094)

Eurostat: Excédent de 17,6 milliards d'euros du commerce international de biens de la zone euro, de 100 millions d'euros pour l'UE28

D'après les premières estimations pour le mois de juillet 2018, les exportations de biens de la zone euro (ZE19) vers le reste du monde se sont

établies à 194,6 milliards d'euros, en hausse de 9,4% par rapport à juillet 2017 (177,8 milliards). Les importations depuis le reste du monde ont quant à elles été de 177,1 milliards d'euros, en hausse de 13,4% par rapport à juillet 2017 (156,2 milliards). En conséquence, la zone euro a enregistré en juillet 2018 un excédent de 17,6 milliards d'euros de son commerce international de biens avec le reste du monde, contre +21,6 milliards en juillet 2017. Le commerce intra-zone euro s'est établi à 162,3 milliards d'euros en juillet 2018, soit +9,3% par rapport à juillet 2017. D'après les premières estimations pour le mois de juillet 2018, les exportations de biens extra-UE28 se sont établies à 170,4 milliards d'euros, en hausse de 9,6% par rapport à juillet 2017 (155,5 milliards). Les importations depuis le reste du monde ont quant à elles été de 170,4 milliards d'euros, en hausse de 15,4% par rapport à juillet 2017 (147,7 milliards). En conséquence, l'UE28 a enregistré en juillet 2018 un excédent de 0,1 milliards d'euros de son commerce international de biens avec le reste du monde, contre +7,8 milliards en juillet 2017. Le commerce intra-UE28 s'est élevé à 288,0 milliards d'euros en juillet 2018, en hausse de 8,7% par rapport à juillet 2017. Un communiqué de presse est [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tél.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tél: +32 229 51383)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commission members on official visit to China to discuss economy, financial services and innovation

The EU and China work together on a large number of economic, financial and innovation matters. It is against that backdrop that, on 17 September, Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** (Euro and Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union), Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** (Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs) and Commissioner Carlos **Moedas** (Research, Science and Innovation) will travel to China to engage with political authorities and business representatives to foster our cooperation. Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will meet a number of Chinese officials and business leaders, including Liu Kun, Minister of Finance of China; Liu Shiyu, Chairman of the China Securities Regulatory Commission and Zhang Xuyang, Vice-President of Baidu Group. Commissioner **Bieńkowska** will start her trip in Chengdu to meet with Mr Yin Li, Governor of Sichuan and to deliver the opening speech at the 13th EU-China Business & Technology Cooperation Fair. She will furthermore visit company sites in the area of smart manufacturing, display products and intelligent systems and engineering construction. In Beijing, both Commissioners **Moedas** and **Bieńkowska** have meetings with their Chinese counterparts from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Ministry of Science and Technology. In Tianjin, Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Moedas** will attend the World Economic Forum (WEF) 12th Annual Meeting of the New Champions, which is co-chaired by Commissioner **Moedas**. The Vice-President will take part in the panel discussion "Strategic Outlook on Europe". See [full agenda](#) of the Vice-President and Commissioners. Further information on this year's [EU-China tourism year](#) and on EU-China cooperation and economic and financial dialogues is available [online](#). (For more information: Christian

Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Annikky Lamp – Tel.: +32 229 56151; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Commissioner Hahn in Skopje for the EU-Western Balkans Media Days: investing in young generation of journalists and strengthening media freedom

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations will be in Skopje on 17 and 18 September to open the [EU-Western Balkans Media Days](#). The conference will gather more than 300 representatives of media and civil society organisations as well as policymakers from the Western Balkans and the EU to discuss the crucial role of media in the accession process and to develop forward looking proposals and actions to improve the situation of journalists and strengthen independent media. This year's edition will focus on young generation of journalists and themes such as economic sustainability, regional cooperation of media and professional training. Ahead of the visit, Commissioner Johannes **Hahn** said: *"I am looking forward to attend the second edition of the EU – Western Balkans Media Days, which became a well-known brand after its successful start last year. I am proud to welcome this year more than 300 media professionals and organisations dealing with media. The conference will focus on topics such as how to strengthen media freedom and support independent media, the importance of quality reporting in times of disinformation and fake news; business sustainability, media literacy, professional training and the role of public broadcasting. The exchange of experts and top professionals will pay a substantial contribution to raising awareness of the crucial role of independent media and quality reporting in the EU accession process"*. In Skopje, Commissioner **Hahn** will also meet with political authorities, including Prime Minister Zoran Zaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs Nikola Dimitrov, Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs in charge of European Affairs Bujar Osmani and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence Radmila Sekerinska as well as with the leader of the VMRO-DPMNE party Hristijan Mickoski. He will also participate in a citizens' dialogue in Shtip. More information on the [EU-Western Balkans Media Days](#) is available online. Photo and videos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). *(For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)*

Commissioner Gabriel visiting Serbia to discuss digital cooperation

Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** will visit Belgrade, Serbia on Monday for a number of meetings to discuss implementation of the [Digital Agenda for Western Balkans](#) – a joint project with the Western Balkan partners to support the transition of the region into a digital economy and bring about the benefits of the digital transformation, such as faster economic growth, more jobs, and better services. In the morning she will hold a bilateral meeting with Serbian Prime Minister Ana Brnabić. Together they will pay a visit to the State Data Centre and the Science Technology Park, where several successful startup projects will be presented

to the Commissioner, including the EU-funded BioSense Institute. Later in the afternoon the Commissioner will meet the representatives of the Regulatory Agency for Electronic Communication and Postal Services, and end the day by meeting Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade, Tourism and Telecommunications Rasim Ljajić as well as Mrs Jadranka Joksimović, Minister of European Integration. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund Tel.: +32 229 50698)*

Commissioner Thyssen at the first meeting of the High-Level Group on Pensions

Today, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, attended the first meeting of the High-Level Group on Pensions, taking place in Brussels. The High-Level Group was set up in December 2017 by the Commission, with the aim to investigate challenges and recommend ways to improve the adequacy of pensions in Europe through the further development and strengthening of occupational and personal supplementary pensions. The Group consists of representatives of the social partners, experts from the academic world and the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority, as well as stakeholders. In her speech kicking off this first meeting, Commissioner **Thyssen** said: *"Europe is growing older. By 2060, the time we spend in retirement will be more than half of that spent in employment. Moreover, the rapid changes in the new world of work further challenge the adequacy and sustainability of our pension systems. While public pensions will remain the main pillar of retirement income, supplementary pensions become increasingly important. I look forward to the analysis and recommendations by the High-Level Group, which will help us to work on future-proof solutions."* The full speech can be found [here](#). More information on the High-Level Group, including their activities and the outcomes of their meetings can be found [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)*

Commissioner Malmström in Argentina for G20 trade meeting

Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** is in Mar del Plata, Argentina, to participate in the G20 Trade Ministers meeting held there today and tomorrow. Ministers are meeting to discuss current global developments, with the aim of developing a positive agenda for international trade and investment and avoid a further escalation in trade tensions. Commissioner **Malmström** will discuss with Ministers how to address the root causes of present trade tensions and ways to tackle them, including strengthening and modernising the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The EU, along with many partners, wishes to see political support from the G20 to strengthen the WTO's negotiating, monitoring and dispute settlement functions. At the sidelines of the G20 Ministerial, Commissioner **Malmström** is also meeting several Ministers for bilateral discussions. The G20 is made up of 19 countries and the European Union. More information about the Ministerial meeting is available on the website of the [Argentine G20 Presidency](#). *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel: +32 229 51383)*

Les commissaires Crețu et Hogan participent à un dialogue citoyen à Cluj-Napoca, en Roumanie

La commissaire à la politique régionale, Corina **Crețu**, et le commissaire à l'agriculture et au développement rural, Phil **Hogan**, ont participé aujourd'hui à un [dialogue citoyen](#) à Cluj-Napoca en Roumanie sur le thème "Un budget moderne pour une Union plus forte". Ils ont répondu aux questions des participants aux côtés du ministre roumain pour l'agriculture, M. Petre Daea, et de l'eurodéputé Daniel Buda. Ce dialogue citoyen a lieu dans le cadre d'une visite plus longue en Roumanie pour les deux Commissaires. Au cours de ses deux jours sur place, le commissaire **Hogan** aura entre autres rencontré la Première ministre de Roumanie, Mme Vasilica-Viorica Dăncilă, et le ministre roumain de l'Agriculture, M. Daea. Dans la province de Cluj, il aura aussi fait le tour de différentes exploitations agricoles. La Commissaire **Crețu** est quant à elle en Roumanie jusqu'au 18 septembre pour discuter du présent et du futur de la politique de cohésion. Le 15 septembre, elle va visiter Turda et Alba-Iulia pour rencontrer les autorités locales. Les dialogues citoyens sont une caractéristique régulière du travail quotidien de la Commission Juncker, où les Commissaires vont à la rencontre des citoyens pour répondre à leurs questions sur l'Europe et le travail de la Commission. *(Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario- Tél.: +32 229 56 185, Clémence Robin – Tél.: +32 229 52509)*

[Calendar](#)

Commissioners' weekly activities

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

Statement by Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis at the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding of the 4th Macro-Financial Assistance for Ukraine

President Poroshenko, Minister's, Governor, Ladies and Gentlemen

I am happy that today we can sign the Memorandum of Understanding of the new Macro-Financial Assistance programme of 1 billion euro.

Our shared goal is the economic stability and prosperity of Ukraine and its

people.

This programme will address economic vulnerabilities and support economic stabilisation, growth and job creation in Ukraine.

It will provide confidence to domestic and international investors in Ukraine's future.

Despite the difficulties it faces, Ukraine has launched ambitious reforms, to unleash its enormous economic potential. They are already bringing first results, and they must be sustained.

The new Macro-Financial Assistance programme supports key reforms through the agreed policy programme attached to it.

The reforms cover public finance management, governance of state-owned companies and sector reforms, as well as social policies.

A key focus is on the fight against corruption, where the new programme also follows up on the unmet conditions from our previous operation.

Disbursements under the EU's Macro-Financial Assistance programmes are also conditional on a parallel programme of the International Monetary Fund being on track. Therefore it is very important to conclude the ongoing negotiations with the IMF mission positively.

To conclude, I welcome the commitments made by President Poroshenko, Prime Minister Groysman and his Government on an ambitious reform plan for Ukraine, and to the benefit of Ukraine's people.

Thank you !