

EES Advisory Group comes together for their first meeting

The newly formed Entry-Exit System Advisory Group (EES AG), part of eu-LISA's governance structure, will hold its first working meeting on 25 June in Tallinn. The Advisory Group convenes at a time when the Agency, having received the legal mandate for the establishment of an Entry-Exit System, has made all the preparations for the new system and will start regular working meetings with the new system's governing body.

The role of the EES AG is to provide, during the designing and development phase of EES, technical expertise to support the tasks of the EES Programme Management Board, follow-up and coordinate all related activities both centrally and at national level, as well as provide support with various technical issues related to developing the system. The EES AG will also follow-up and coordinate all activities related to adapting VIS and BMS for EES purposes and will provide the Agency's Management Board with expert technical advice.

The EES Advisory Group will be composed of national EES project managers, Europol's included, and chaired by eu-LISA.

The first meeting will bring together all relevant project teams to go through various topics, amongst which the current state of play and a plan for the next steps.

The Executive Director of eu-LISA, Krum Garkov, explained the importance of the Advisory Group:

"The Entry-Exit System Advisory Group has been setup by eu-LISA and it is an important step towards the implementation of EES. The group will be instrumental in supporting the tasks of the EES Programme Management Board. Its primary tasks will be to coordinate the work of the Agency and the Member States in their efforts to implement EES in the EU and to serve as a focal point to address technical and operational matters related to the implementation and use of EES. In short, the EES advisory Group gathers expert parties around the same table in order to support successful implementation of the latest EU information system, entrusted to eu-LISA by our legislators."



Theofanis Syrigos, the Chairman of EES Advisory Group, added: *"The Schengen Area allows people to travel without internal border controls; the increasing numbers of people travelling to the Union requires efficient management of the Union's common external borders to ensure strong protection. EES is a new central register that will address the effective access management to the EU and will be essential to efficient cross-border movement. eu-LISA, in close cooperation with Member States, will build up the new system and will extend*

the existing Visa Information System and the Biometric Matching System in line with the legal provisions, for the benefit of all EU citizens. Therefore the coordination amongst all involved stakeholders is extremely important."

The Entry Exit System, the development of which is entrusted to eu-LISA, addresses an important gap in the landscape of existing EU information systems and will replace, amongst others, the current practice of manual stamping of passports. It will do this by electronically registering, in a central database, biographic and biometric information, the date and place of entry and exit of the third country nationals, visiting the Schengen area for a short stay. The system will modernise and increase automation at border-controls as well as improve reliable identification of over-stayers, whilst strengthening internal security and fighting terrorism and organised crime.

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EIOPA outlines key financial stability risks

Today, the European Insurance and Occupational Pensions Authority (EIOPA) published its June 2018 Financial Stability Report of the (re)insurance and occupational pensions sectors in the European Economic Area. The persistent low yield environment remains the main risk for both the insurance and pension fund sector. Furthermore, new types of risks are emerging with the onset of climate change and rapid technological developments.

More information in the [press release](#).

Security and defence cooperation: EU will enhance its capacity to act as a security provider, its strategic autonomy, and its ability to cooperate with partners

Press contacts

Virginie Battu

Press officer

+32 2 281 53 16

+32 470 18 24 05

To effectively address rising threats, EU military staff and equipment must be able to move more quickly, to act faster and better protect the security of European citizens

Today, foreign affairs ministers and defence ministers discussed the implementation of the EU Global Strategy in the area of **security and defence**. The Council then adopted conclusions which highlight the significant progress in strengthening cooperation in the area of security and defence and provide further guidance on next steps.

Permanent structured cooperation (PESCO)

The Council adopted today a common set of governance rules for projects within the PESCO framework. The sequencing of the more binding commitments undertaken by member states participating in PESCO is expected to be defined through a Council recommendation, in principle in July 2018. An updated list of PESCO projects and their participants, including a second wave of projects, is expected by November 2018. The general conditions for third state participation in PESCO projects are expected to be set out in a Council decision in principle also in November.

Capability development plan and coordinated annual review on defence (CARD)

The Council approved the progress catalogue 2018, which provides a military assessment of the prioritised capability shortfalls and high impact capability goals to be achieved in a phased approach. It forms a key contribution to the EU capability development priorities. These priorities are recognised by the Council as a key reference for both member states' and EU defence capability development initiatives. The aim of CARD, for which a trial run is being conducted by the European Defence Agency, is to establish

a process which will provide a better overview of national defence spending plans. This would make it easier to address European capability shortfalls and identify new collaborative opportunities, ensuring the most effective and coherent use of defence spending plans.

European defence fund

The European Defence Fund is one of the key security and defence initiatives by the Commission, reaffirmed in its proposal for the future multiannual financial framework (2021-2027), with a proposed envelope of €13 billion. The European Defence Fund aims to **foster innovation and allow economies of scale** in defence research and in the industrial development phase by supporting collaborative projects in line with capability priorities identified by Member States within the CFSP framework. This will strengthen the competitiveness of the Union's defence industry.

Under the current financial framework, with the same objectives, **the European Defence Industrial Development Programme (EDIDP)** was agreed by the representatives of the co-legislators on 22 May 2018. **The Council welcomes this agreement.** The EDIDP should aim at **incentivising collaborative development programmes** in line with defence capability priorities commonly agreed by EU member states, in particular in the context of the capability development plan.

European peace facility

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy proposed the creation of a European Peace Facility in the context of the future multiannual financial framework, an off-EU budget fund devoted to security and defence. The aim of the facility would be: funding the common costs of military operations under the Common Security and Defence Policy (currently covered by the Athena mechanism); contributing to the financing of military peace support operations led by other international actors (currently covered by, for example, the African Peace Facility); and providing support to third states' armed forces to prevent conflicts, build peace and strengthen international security. **The Council takes note of the proposal** and invites the relevant Council preparatory bodies to **take the work forward and present concrete recommendations** on the proposed facility.

Military mobility

The aim of improving military mobility is to address those obstacles which hinder the movement of military equipment and personnel across the EU. The High Representative and the Commission presented a joint communication on improving military mobility in the EU on 10 November 2017 and an action plan on 28 March 2018. The Council **welcomes this action plan and calls for its swift implementation.** As a first step in this direction, the **Council approves the overarching high-level part of the military requirements for military mobility** within and beyond the EU.

The Council also stresses that improvement in military mobility can only be

achieved with the full involvement and commitment of all member states, fully respecting their national sovereignty.

The conclusions also touch on other strands of work in the field of EU security and defence, including **strengthening civilian CSDP**, developing a more strategic approach for **EU partnerships on security and defence with third countries**, and increasing resilience and bolstering capabilities to counter **hybrid threats**, including further developing the EU's strategic communication approach together with member states.

Background

On 14 November 2016, the Council adopted conclusions on implementing the EU Global Strategy in the area of security and defence. These conclusions set out three strategic priorities in this regard: responding to external conflicts and crises, building the capacities of partners, and protecting the European Union and its citizens.

Since then, the EU has significantly increased its efforts in the area of security and defence. Progress was noted and further guidance provided through Council conclusions on 6 March 2017, on 18 May 2017 and 13 November 2018. Council conclusions on strengthening civilian Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) were adopted on 28 May 2018. At the same time, the EU has also increased its cooperation with NATO, on the basis of the joint declaration on EU-NATO cooperation signed by the President of the European Council, the President of the European Commission and NATO Secretary-General on 8 July 2016 in the margins of the Warsaw summit.

[Visit the meeting page](#) [Download as pdf](#)

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A modern budget for a Union that protects, empowers and defends: Commission note ahead of the June European Council

Today the Commission is publishing a note ahead of the European Council on the next Multiannual Financial Framework. In the note, the Commission recalls the principal features of [the proposal of 2 May 2018](#) for a modern and fair long-term budget for the 2021-2027 period, and the [proposals for the 37 programmes](#) which will implement and support the political priorities around which the new budget is built. The note also sets out the key innovations proposed for the next long-term budget and makes a strong case for Member States and the European Parliament to work at an accelerated pace for a political agreement on the new budget by Spring 2019. Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources Günther H. **Oettinger** will present the note in a press conference at 12:30. Follow live on [EbS](#). **The note will be available [here](#).**

(For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

European Commission and four online marketplaces sign a product safety pledge to remove dangerous products

Today, four major online marketplaces, Alibaba (for AliExpress), Amazon, eBay and Rakuten – France have signed a commitment for faster removal of dangerous products sold on their online marketplaces. Thanks to a dialogue facilitated by the European Commission, four major online companies have committed to responding to notifications on dangerous products from Member State authorities within 2 working days and take action on notices from customers within 5 working days. Věra **Jourová**, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said: *“More and more people in the EU are shopping online. E-commerce has opened up new possibilities for consumers, offering them more choice at lower prices. Consumers should be just as safe when they buy online, as when they buy in a shop. I welcome the Product Safety Pledge which will further improve consumer safety. I call also on other online marketplaces to join this initiative, so that the internet becomes a safer place for EU consumers.”* Online sales represented 20% of the total sales in 2016 in the EU ([Eurostat](#)). More and more of the dangerous products notified in the [Rapid Alert System](#) are sold online. This shows the need for all online marketplaces to continue and further step up their efforts when it comes to removing dangerous products. The pledge and the full press release are available [online](#). In parallel, today and tomorrow, product safety authorities of the United States, China, and the European Union are meeting in Washington for the sixth trilateral EU-China-U.S. summit to continue joint efforts on product safety. This summit is focussing on safety challenges presented by e-commerce, including emerging issues such as connected products. A joint statement will be available after the summit [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

Further €70 million under Juncker Plan for renewable energy projects in France and Germany

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and Franco-German regional bank SaarLB have signed a €70 million guarantee agreement. This deal will enable SaarLB to grant additional loans of almost €140 million for new renewable energy projects in France and Germany. This is the second part of an €150 guarantee agreement [first signed in 2016](#), made possible by the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** said: *“The clean energy transition will only succeed in Europe if we think beyond national borders and work together. SaarLB is doing precisely that by financing renewable energy in Germany and France. I am pleased that the EU is able to contribute through the EIB and the European Fund for Strategic Investments. This is something we are also set to encourage under the next EU budget 2021-2027. By pooling various instruments, we aim at leveraging further investment, notably from the private sector, and at boosting the strategic uptake of renewable energy technologies.”* (Full press release is available [here](#). For more information:

Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

EU and China discuss economic and trade relations at the 7th High-level Economic and Trade Dialogue

The EU and China held today in Beijing the 7th annual EU-China High-level Economic and Trade Dialogue (HED). The discussions covered a range of strategic issues under the overall theme of “Harnessing Globalisation”. Topics included global economic governance, support for the multilateral trading system, trade and investment questions – notably negotiations on an investment agreement and on geographical indications – as well as the digital economy, climate and environmental cooperation, and connectivity. The Dialogue was timely to prepare the upcoming EU China Summit that will take place in the Chinese capital. The meeting was co-chaired by Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** and Vice-Premier of the State Council Liu He, who is responsible for the relations with the EU and the US. European Commission Vice-President for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness Jyrki **Katainen** said: “I am confident that the exchanges we have had with my new counterpart, Liu He, have been useful in paving the way towards a successful EU-China Summit in the economic and trade field. I am particularly pleased with the progress achieved in our investment negotiations and look forward to an exchange of offers at the Summit.” A full [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

Digital Assembly 2018: Commission launches Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans

Today at the [Digital Assembly 2018](#) in Sofia, Bulgaria, the European Commission and six Western Balkan partners will launch together Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans. The programme aims to support the transition of the region into a digital economy and bring benefits of the digital transformation to its citizens, such as faster economic growth, more jobs, and better services. Specifically, the [Digital Agenda](#) commits the participating states to invest more in broadband connectivity; increase cybersecurity, trust and digitisation of industry; strengthen the digital economy and society; and boost research and innovation. On this occasion, at 13:40 (CEST), Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** will also deliver a keynote speech, at the launching event with Ministers from the six Western Balkans partners (webstreamed [here](#)). The Digital Agenda builds on the [informal EU-Western Balkans summit](#) from 17 May 2018 in Sofia, where leaders of the European Union and the Western Balkan partners committed to boosting the digital connectivity in the region. More information on the Digital Agenda can be found in the [press release](#) and in a [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Harnessing new data sources to support an effective migration policy

Today, the European Commission launches [the Big Data for Migration Alliance \(BD4M\)](#), a global initiative to unlock the potential of big data sources and provide valuable insights related to migration. Social media platforms and other new, innovative sources can enhance traditional sources of data with more up to date, dynamic information on migration trends and statistics, helping policymakers keep a grip on the issues as they develop. The Joint Research Centre, the European Commission's science and knowledge service, will present research at today's launch event which explores how data from the Facebook advertising platform can be interpreted to gain an accurate picture of migration trends. The Big Data for Migration Alliance will ensure that data is handled in a way that respects the highest standards with regard to confidentiality, security and ethics. The project will only work with anonymised data, assessing numbers and trends similarly to how regular statistics are used. A network of 'data stewards' will be integral to the alliance, set up across private and public institutions to foster the efficient and responsible use of data. The alliance will be jointly convened by the European Commission's Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography and the Global Migration Data Analysis Centre of the United Nations' International Organization for Migration. Relevant partners from the scientific, policy and business communities will be identified for specific activities as work progresses. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tél .: +32 229 56184)*

State aid: Commission approves €3 million restructuring aid by Slovenia to Semenarna Ljubljana

The European Commission has approved the granting of restructuring aid to Semenarna Ljubljana d.o.o., through a €3 million long-term loan by the Slovenian authorities. The company, based in Ljubljana and active in the research, production and sale of products for gardeners and farmers, employs 235 people. The loan, together with a contribution from Semenarna mainly from the sale of redundant premises, as well as from financial restructuring agreed with its main creditors, will allow Semenarna to conduct an in-depth organisational restructuring. Compensatory measures, including the closure of an agricultural stores business, will reduce the potential distortions of competition brought about by the restructuring aid. The Commission therefore concluded that the restructuring plan is in line with the [2014 Rescue and Restructuring Guidelines](#). More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [State Aid Register](#) under the case number [SA.49214](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Farmexim and Help Net by Phoenix

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Farmexim SA and Help Net Farma SA, both of Romania, by Phoenix PIB Austria Beteiligungs GmbH of Austria. Farmexim is active in the wholesale of pharmaceutical products in Romania. Help Net operates a chain of pharmacies in Romania. Phoenix is a pharmaceutical wholesaler, pharmacy retailer and provider of pharma related services. It is active in Lithuania

and Germany, with only a very small volume of sales in Romania. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies' moderate combined market shares. 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.8922](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Concentration: la Commission européenne autorise l'acquisition du contrôle exclusif de ABN AMRO Bank Luxembourg par BNP Paribas

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle exclusif de ABN AMRO Bank (Luxembourg) S.A., basée au Luxembourg, par BNP Paribas ("BNPP"), basée en France. ABN AMRO Bank Luxembourg fournit des services bancaires aux particuliers. BNPP est active à l'échelle mondiale sur les marchés de la banque de détail et des services bancaires aux particuliers, ainsi que de la banque d'entreprise et de la banque institutionnelle. La Commission a conclu que l'opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, compte tenu des chevauchements horizontaux et verticaux limités entre les activités des deux entreprises. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8890](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition d'Alto 1 par Malakoff Médéric et Ilmarinen

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition d'Alto 1 S.à.r.l. ("Alto"), basée au Luxembourg, par le groupe Malakoff Médéric ("Malakoff"), basé en France, et Ilmarinen Mutual Pension Insurance Company ("Ilmarinen"), basée en Finlande. Alto détient et loue un actif immobilier actuellement en construction au Luxembourg. Malakoff est actif dans la gestion des régimes de retraite complémentaire et dans l'assurance. Ilmarinen est une société d'assurance retraite mutuelle pour les salariés et les indépendants. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence compte tenu de son impact très limité sur la structure du marché. De plus, les entreprises ne sont pas actives sur le même marché et aucune des sociétés mères n'a d'activité liée verticalement à Alto. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.8931](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of VeriFone Systems by Francisco Partners Management

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over VeriFone Systems, Inc. ("VeriFone") by Francisco Partners Management LP ("Francisco Partners"), both of the US. VeriFone is primarily active in the design, manufacture and supply of point of sale (POS) payment devices and related services. Francisco Partners is a private equity firm, exclusively focused on investments in software and technology-enabled businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the minor horizontal overlaps and the lack of vertical relationships between the companies' activities. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8928](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič in Washington for a set of bilateral talks and the 27th World Gas Conference

From 25-27 June, Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič will be in Washington, holding a series of bilateral talks, including with US Secretary of Energy Rick Perry, US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross and Senators Ben Cardin, Ron Johnson and Chris Murphy. He is also attending the 27th [World Gas Conference](#), the largest global gas event, where he will speak about the "Future of Europe's Energy Market". In the margins of the WGC, there will be bilateral meetings with the Azeri Energy Minister Parviz Shahbazov and the Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak. Moreover, Vice-President Šefčovič is delivering a keynote speech at the "21st century Energy Systems in Central and Eastern Europe" conference organised by the [Atlantic Council](#). Other engagements include for instance, his participation at a number of events dedicated to climate action and the clean energy transition, such as "Climate Diplomacy Day" or "Energy, environment and technology – challenges and opportunities for the transatlantic community". *(For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)*

Commissioner Avramopoulos in Iran

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris Avramopoulos is in Tehran, Iran. He is meeting First Vice-President of the Republic Es'haq Jahangiri, Minister of Foreign Affairs Mohammad Javad Zarif and Minister of Interior Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli. Discussions will provide an opportunity to advance cooperation between the EU and Iran, and to launch the EU-Iran dialogues on migration as well as drug related challenges. *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 80423)*

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