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Single-use plastics: New EU rules to reduce marine litter

With the amount of harmful plastic litter in oceans and seas growing ever greater, the European Commission is proposing new EU-wide rules to target the 10 single-use plastic products most often found on Europe's beaches and seas, as well as lost and abandoned fishing gear. Together these constitute 70% of all marine litter items. The new rules are proportionate and tailored to get the best results. This means different measures will be applied to different products. Where alternatives are readily available and affordable, single-use plastic products will be banned from the market. For products without straight-forward alternatives, the focus is on limiting their use through a national reduction in consumption; design and labelling requirements and waste management/clean-up obligations for producers. The proposal is one of the deliverables of the [European strategy for plastics in a circular economy](#), launched by the **Juncker** Commission in 2018. Together, the new rules will put Europe ahead of the curve on an issue with global implications. A [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#) are available. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321; Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Water reuse: Commission proposes measures to make it easier and safer for agricultural irrigation

Today, the Commission is proposing new rules to stimulate and facilitate water reuse in the EU for agricultural irrigation. The new rules will help farmers make the best use of non-potable wastewater, alleviating water scarcity whilst protecting the environment and consumers. The proposal includes minimum requirements for the reuse of treated waste water from urban water treatment plants; measures for better risk management and increased transparency where the public will have access to information online about water reuse practice in their Member States. Commissioner **Vella**, responsible for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *"This proposal will create only winners – our farmers will have access to a sustainable supply for irrigation water, our consumers will know the products they eat*

are safe, and our businesses will see new opportunities. The biggest winner of them all will be our environment as the proposal contributes to better management of our most precious resource – water.” A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Pharmaceuticals: Commission refines intellectual property rules

The Commission is proposing today a [targeted adjustment](#) to intellectual property rules to help Europe’s pharmaceutical companies tap into fast-growing global markets and foster jobs, growth and investments in the EU. The EU has a strong intellectual property rights framework in place which protects Europe’s know-how and sustains the pharmaceutical industry’s world-class innovation capacity. To improve the current system further and remove a major competitive disadvantage of EU manufacturers, the Commission proposes a targeted amendment: the so-called ‘export manufacturing waiver’ to Supplementary Protection Certificates (SPCs). Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth Investment and Competitiveness, said: “Today we are proposing a well-calibrated adjustment to the current regime to remove a legal barrier that was preventing our companies from competing on equal terms on global markets where competition is fierce. We want to make sure that our pharmaceutical industry reaps the benefits of such competition.” Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, added: “Today’s proposal will help create growth and high-skilled jobs in the EU. It could generate €1 billion net additional sales per year and up to 25 000 new jobs over 10 years. It will particularly benefit the many small and medium-sized enterprises in the field. In the medium term, more competition will improve patients’ access to a wider choice of medicines and alleviate public budgets.” Supplementary Protection Certificates extend patent protection for medicinal products which must undergo lengthy testing and clinical trials prior to obtaining regulatory marketing approval. Thanks to the waiver, in the future EU-based companies will be entitled to manufacture a generic or biosimilar version of an SPC-protected medicine during the term of the certificate, if done exclusively for the purpose of exporting to a non-EU market where protection has expired or never existed. With the waiver, intellectual property (IP) protection for medicine production in Europe will remain the strongest in the world and SPC-protected medicines will retain their full market exclusivity in the EU. The proposal is accompanied by a series of safeguards which will create transparency and prevent IP-infringing products from entering Member State markets. Today’s proposal was announced in the Commission’s 2015 [Single Market Strategy](#), and follows [various studies](#), an [extensive consultation](#) and a [European Parliament resolution](#) endorsing the need to introduce before 2019 an SPC manufacturing waiver. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Maud Noyon – Tel. +32 229-80379; Victoria von Hammerstein – Tel.: +32 229 55040)

Juncker Plan: €200 million for innovative SMEs in Poland

The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Polish financial intermediary CVI Dom Maklerski have signed a guarantee agreement for a €200 million portfolio of bonds to innovative Polish companies. Thanks to this EU support, CVI – together with Open Finance Corporate Bonds Fund – will purchase new bonds from innovative SMEs and small mid-caps at favourable terms. The agreement was made possible by the Juncker Plan's European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). Commissioner Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, responsible for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, said: *"Today's Juncker Plan agreement between the European Investment Fund and CVI Dom Maklerski will allow us to provide an additional €200 million in financing to small businesses in Poland. CVI will purchase new bonds from innovative Polish SMEs, benefitting around 60 companies. Using the EU budget guarantee to support this, and therefore provide easier access to financing to more businesses, is precisely the aim of the Juncker Plan."* (Full press release is found [here](#). For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

Tableau de bord de la justice 2018: le rôle clé des systèmes de justice pour le respect de l'état de droit et les valeurs européennes

Aujourd'hui, la Commission européenne publie le [tableau de bord 2018 de la justice](#) qui donne un aperçu comparatif de l'efficacité, de la qualité et de l'indépendance des systèmes de justice des États membres de l'UE. Le tableau de bord vise à aider les autorités nationales à améliorer l'efficacité de leurs systèmes de justice. *"Le tableau de bord 2018 est publié au moment où le respect de l'état de droit occupe une place centrale dans l'agenda européen. Sans état de droit, la démocratie, les droits civils et la bonne gestion des fonds européens sont mis en danger,"* a déclaré Věra **Jourová**, commissaire européenne chargée de la justice, des consommateurs et de l'égalité des genres. *"Grâce au tableau de bord, nous encourageons et donnons des exemples de bonnes réformes des systèmes de justice. Sans normes européennes élevées garantissant l'indépendance des systèmes de justice, il ne peut y avoir d'état de droit. Ce point est essentiel pour assurer la réussite de telles réformes. Le nouveau tableau de bord se penche sur les indicateurs clé et aide les États membres à appliquer ces normes."* En comparaison avec les éditions précédentes, le [tableau de bord 2018](#) approfondit les différents indicateurs analysant l'efficacité, la qualité et l'indépendance des systèmes de justice. Il se concentre en particulier sur l'indépendance des systèmes de justice, un élément nécessaire pour évaluer la situation de l'état de droit. Il procède à une analyse plus élaborée des conseils de la justice, à l'implication de l'exécutif et des parlements dans la nomination et le licenciement des juges et des présidents des cours de justice, ainsi que des services des procureurs. Pour la première fois, le tableau de bord présente des statistiques sur la durée des procédures à tous les niveaux d'instance. Le tableau de bord de la justice fait partie des outils de la Commission pour évaluer les réformes des systèmes de justice des États membres, au même titre que le Semestre européen, le cadre pour l'état de droit, les mécanismes de coopération et de vérification (CVM) et les procédures d'infraction. La version intégrale du tableau de bord est

disponible en ligne, ainsi qu'un [communiqué de presse](#), des [questions/réponses](#) et une [fiche d'information](#) résumant les principaux graphiques du tableau de bord. (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand- Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

Commissioners Vella and Hogan launch two new investment projects for nature conservation in Ireland and Croatia

Today, the Commission and the European Investment Bank have announced two new investment operations in Ireland and Croatia to support forestry and biodiversity conservation. The two operations are backed by the Natural Capital Financial Facility, a financial instrument of €125 million that supports **projects** through tailored loans and investments, backed by an EU guarantee. In a [stakeholder event](#) in Brussels, Commissioner **Vella** said: *"The two operations demonstrate how crucial, new investment in nature conservation across Europe can be unlocked by a well-designed financial instrument. It makes EU financing go further for nature."* For Ireland, €12.5 million were unlocked to support continuous cover forestry, a method that sustainably manages the forests and provides an alternative to clear felling that leaves hillsides bare. *"Agriculture and forestry play a key role as custodians of natural capital. This new forestry investment in Ireland, with participation of the EU's LIFE Programme and the European Investment Bank, shows how conservation considerations can be combined with commercial activity,"* said Commissioner **Hogan**. In Croatia, a dedicated technical assistance programme is rolled out with the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development that will ensure that the Bank can better identify natural capital projects with the greatest environmental impact and improve preparation of individual schemes by local businesses and public bodies. More information [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 229 56185; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321; Clémence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

Poland is the 16th Member State to join the European cooperation on supercomputing

Poland has become the sixteenth EU Member State to sign the [European declaration on high performance computing](#) (HPC). It joins European collaborative efforts to boost research, further development and skills training in the area, enabling processing of vast amounts of data. The European supercomputing efforts are crucial to major innovations in many fields such as personalised medicine, energy saving and smart urban planning. With this signature Poland announced its intention to join the [EuroHPC Joint Undertaking](#). The Joint Undertaking is a legal and funding instrument aiming to pool European and national resources to build and deploy across Europe supercomputers to rank among the world's top three by 2022-2023. Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, and Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society, said: *"We are very happy to welcome Poland into this bold European initiative. Only by aligning our efforts and pooling resources will we be able to acquire and deploy an integrated world-class supercomputing infrastructure at European level. This*

infrastructure will provide a large set of advanced computing, data and networking resources and services. They will support many key HPC scientific, industrial and public sector applications such as solid state physics and fluid dynamics, epidemiology, biomolecular modelling, and neuroscience for a wide variety of users from Poland and from all over Europe.” The declaration was [launched](#) in March 2017 at the first EU [Digital Day](#) in Rome and initially signed by France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. More details are available [here](#) and in a [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)

Eurostat: Citoyens de l’UE dans d’autres États membres – 4% des citoyens de l’UE qui sont en âge de travailler vivent dans un autre État membre – Une mobilité plus forte parmi les diplômés de l’enseignement supérieur que dans le reste de la population

Au total, 3,8% des citoyens de l’Union européenne (UE) en âge de travailler (20-64 ans) résidaient dans un autre État membre que celui dont ils avaient la citoyenneté en 2017. Cette part a progressé par rapport aux 2,5% d’il y a dix ans. La situation varie considérablement selon les États membres, et la proportion s’échelonne entre 1,0% des citoyens en âge de travailler dans le cas de l’Allemagne et 19,7% dans celui de la Roumanie. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d’informations: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillon – Tel.: +32 229 67094)

State aid: Germany needs to recover illegal aid from certain large electricity users exempted from network charges in Germany in 2012-2013

The European Commission has concluded that the exemption for certain large electricity users in Germany from network charges in 2012-2013 was against EU State aid rules. This concerns electricity users that had an annual consumption above 10 gigawatt hours and a particularly stable electricity consumption. The Commission investigation found that there were no grounds to fully relieve those users from paying network charges, which are part of the usual electricity costs that any electricity user connected to the grid has to pay. Large electricity users, even if they have a stable electricity consumption, also generate network costs and make use of network services and it is for them to bear these costs. It is now for Germany to determine the amount of network charges generated by each beneficiary of the exemption in 2012 and 2013, in line with the methodology set out under the Commission decision, and recover the illegal aid. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: “All electricity users have to pay network operators for the services they use – fully exempting certain large users from these charges is an unfair advantage and increases the financial burden on other electricity users. That is why Germany must now recover the unpaid network charges from these users.” The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [DE](#), [FR](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark for its universal service obligation

The European Commission has concluded that the compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark to fulfil its public service mission during the period 2017-2019 is in line with EU State aid rules. In February 2018, Denmark notified plans to compensate Post Danmark for carrying out its universal postal service obligation during the period 2017-2019. This includes the provision of basic postal services throughout Denmark at affordable prices and at certain minimum quality requirements. Post Danmark will, through its parent company, the PostNord Group (jointly-owned by Denmark and Sweden), receive a maximum of in total DKK 1.192 billion (SEK 1.683 billion or approx. €160 million) for the period 2017-2019. The Commission examined the measure under [EU State aid rules on public service compensation](#) adopted in 2011. According to these rules, Member States can grant State aid to companies to compensate them for the extra cost of providing a public service mission, subject to certain criteria. The Commission's assessment showed that the compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark will not exceed the net cost of the public service mission, meaning there is no overcompensation. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure is in line with EU State aid rules. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Easy access to postal services is vital for all EU citizens. Today's decision enables Post Danmark to continue performing its fundamental social and economic role and important public service mission, without unduly distorting competition."* The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [DA](#), SV. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

State aid: Commission approves public service compensation to Bacau International Airport in Romania

The European Commission has found public service compensation granted to Regia Autonoma "George Enescu" Bacau International Airport for the operation of Bacau airport to be in line with EU State aid rules. Bacau airport is located in the north east of Romania, near the border with the Republic of Moldova. The public funding will facilitate regional connectivity and contribute to the area's development, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. The approved public compensation amounts to approximately €57 million and is granted for ten years. The Commission assessed this measure under its [2014 Guidelines on State aid to airports and airlines](#) and [the Services of General Economic Interest Framework](#), which allow Member States to grant aid in the form of compensation to airports that have an important role for regional connectivity and the social as well as economic development of the area served. The Commission found that the compensation allows for the provision of a genuine service of general economic interest because the closest airports are located at a long distance, particularly in Iasi and Suceava, where the road infrastructure is poor and there is no high speed rail. In addition, Bacau airport is important for the mobility of the residents, and for numerous Romanian citizens working abroad coming from the region. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.49203. (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Scandlines by 3i Group, FSI and Hermes

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Scandlines of Denmark by First State Investments International Limited (FSI) of Australia, 3i Group plc and Hermes Investment Management Group (Hermes), both of the UK. Scandlines provides ferry services for passengers and freight on two short-distance routes between Germany and Denmark. 3i Group is an international investor and investment manager, focused on midmarket private equity and infrastructure investments. FSI is the asset management division of the Commonwealth Bank of Australia. Hermes is a UK investment manager specialising in developing bespoke and diversified private equity and infrastructure portfolios on behalf of its clients. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited impact it would have on the market. 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.8895](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le président Juncker prononcera un discours lors du Forum économique de Bruxelles, le 5 juin

Le président **Juncker** participera cette année au [Brussels Economic Forum](#), la conférence économique annuelle phare de la Commission, qui donnera la septième conférence Tommaso Padoa-Schioppa. Le vice-président **Valdis Dombrovskis** et le commissaire Pierre **Moscovici** participeront également. Le Forum rassemble des décideurs politiques européens et internationaux, des leaders d'opinion, des universitaires, des représentants de la société civile et des chefs d'entreprises pour débattre de sujets économiques brûlants et partager de nouvelles perspectives sur les défis économiques de l'Europe. L'événement de cette année se concentrera sur l'avenir de l'économie européenne dans une ère de perturbation numérique. Parmi les autres participants figurent Mario Centeno, président de l'Eurogroupe, et Kristalina Georgieva, directrice générale de la Banque mondiale. Ceux qui souhaitent participer au Forum doivent s'inscrire à l'avance [ici](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)*

TRADE: Commissioner Malmström to meet with civil society organisations in Brussels

Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** is meeting today in Brussels with a variety of civil society organisations, including trade unions, trade and business associations and NGOs. In a [web streamed](#) event started at 11.00

(CET), Commissioner Malmström is presenting the latest developments in EU trade policy and exchange views with the participants about all policy aspects. This is part of the European Commission trade department's long-running outreach programme of [civil society dialogues](#). This will be the seventh such event held in 2018. The next one will be on 29 May to specifically discuss the EU's ongoing negotiations for a new trade agreement with Chile, in the presence of the chief negotiators from both sides. *(For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: + 32 22956185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)*

Le Commissaire Avramopoulos à Paris

Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, le Commissaire européen pour la migration, les affaires intérieures et la citoyenneté, sera à Paris cet après-midi, où il rencontrera le Ministre de l'intérieur, Gérard Collomb. Ils discuteront des questions relatives à la politique migratoire, les frontières extérieures de l'UE et la sécurité. *(Pour plus d'informations: 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)

Justice Scoreboard 2018 – Q&A

What is the EU Justice Scoreboard?

The EU Justice Scoreboard is a comparative information tool that aims to assist the EU and Member States to improve the effectiveness of national justice systems. It does this by providing objective, reliable and comparable data on the quality, independence and efficiency of the justice systems in all Member States.

The Scoreboard contributes to identifying good practices, improvements and potential shortcomings. It shows trends in the functioning of national justice systems over time. It does not present an overall single ranking, but an overview of how all the justice systems function. This is based on various indicators that are of common interest to all Member States.

The Scoreboard does not promote any particular type of justice system and puts all Member States on an equal footing. Whatever the model of the national justice system – or the legal tradition in which it is anchored – timeliness, independence, affordability and user-friendly access are some of the essential features of an effective justice system.

Why are national justice systems important for the EU?

Justice systems play a crucial role in upholding the rule of law and the EU's

fundamental values. They ensure that individuals and businesses can fully enjoy their rights, strengthen mutual trust, and help to build a business and investment-friendly environment in the single market. This is why improving the effectiveness of national justice systems is one of the priorities of the [European Semester](#) – the EU's annual cycle of economic policy coordination. The EU Justice Scoreboard helps Member States to achieve this priority.

What are the main novelties in the sixth edition?

The 2018 edition develops further certain aspects of the functioning of justice systems:

- **Judicial independence:** new data, particularly on the Councils of the Judiciary and on the involvement of the executive and the parliament in the appointment and dismissal of judges and court presidents;
- **Criminal justice:** updated data on the average length of money-laundering offences and information on the organisation of the Member States' prosecution services;
- **Structural funds:** new overview of how they are used for justice reforms;
- **Length of proceedings:** new data on the length of proceedings in all courts instances (first, second and third instance) for civil and administrative cases;
- **Access to justice for specific groups:** showing how the justice system takes into account the needs of specific groups of users (e.g. children, visually impaired people, non-native speakers).

The Scoreboard also presents:

- How legal aid and court fees impact access to justice;
- How ICT is used in the communication of lawyers with courts and whether a small claims procedure can be handled online in the courts of the Member States;
- The distribution of financial resources: levels and criteria in the judicial system;
- How citizens and companies perceive the independence of judges compared to previous years (see 2018 survey).

What are the main findings of the 2018 EU Justice Scoreboard?

- **Improved or stable perception of judicial independence among businesses:** this is the case in more than two-thirds of Member States, both when compared with last year or since 2010. The most stated reason for the perceived lack of independence of courts and judges is the interference or pressure from government and politicians.
- **Use of ICT tools still limited in some countries:** in more than half of Member States electronic submission of claims is limited or does not exist. An updated survey of the actual use of ICT between courts and lawyers shows that ICT tools are widely used in 12 out of 22 Member States covered and that last year these tools became compulsory in more Member States.
- **Limited access to justice for poorer citizens:** the Scoreboard confirms

that in some Member States, citizens whose income is below the poverty threshold do not receive any legal aid in certain types of disputes. The legal aid has also become less accessible over the years, since poverty levels have gone up, while the threshold for legal aid remained the same.

- **Most Member States have standards on timing:** quality standards fixing time limits are most widespread, while standards on timeframes and backlogs are used less. However, certain Member States facing efficiency challenges are not currently using such standards.
- **Overall shorter civil and commercial court proceedings:** including in Member States whose justice systems are facing challenges. However, several Member States still have very long court proceedings. In a few Member States with the most substantial challenges the length of the administrative proceedings further increased.
- **Civil first instance courts are generally able to deal with the incoming cases:** nearly all Member States, including those facing challenges, report a high clearance rate (more than 97%) in civil and commercial court proceedings.
- **Substantial length of combined administrative and judicial proceedings in the consumer protection area:** the combined length reaches two years in a number of Member States. While most consumer complaints are solved by consumer authorities without the need for judicial review, the cumulative effect of both proceedings can be very substantial, in particular for a consumer seeking redress.
- **Analysis of the fight against money laundering:** new data shows that in about half of Member States first instance court proceedings take up to a year on average. In some Member States facing challenges they can take on average two or more years.

What is the European Semester?

The European Commission has set up a yearly cycle of economic policy coordination called the European Semester. Each year the European Commission undertakes a detailed analysis of EU Member States' plans for macroeconomic, budgetary and structural reforms and issues recommendations for the next 12-18 months to be adopted by the Council. The European Semester cycle starts in November with the publication of the Commission's Annual Growth Survey. The Annual Growth Survey sets out general economic and social priorities for the EU and provides Member States with generic policy guidance for the following year.

In the 2018 [Annual Growth Survey](#), the Commission underlines that "stronger and more efficient public institutions are crucial for building resilient economic structures that foster investment and growth, in full respect of the rule of law. (...) Countries with more efficient institutions are also less likely to suffer lower growth volatility and severe output collapses. For example, an effective justice system supports business by facilitating contract enforcement and contributing to fight corruption. (...) The rule of law and improvement in the independence, quality and efficiency of justice

systems are crucial for a business friendly environment.”

How does the EU Justice Scoreboard contribute to the European Semester?

The Scoreboard provides information on the functioning of justice systems and helps assessing the impact of justice reforms. If the Scoreboard reveals poor performance, the reasons behind it always require deeper analysis. This country-specific assessment is carried out in the context of the European Semester process through bilateral dialogue with the authorities and stakeholders concerned.

The country-specific assessment takes into account the particularities of the legal system and the context of the concerned Member State. It may eventually lead the Commission to propose that the Council adopts Country-Specific Recommendations on the improvement of national justice systems.

How can effective justice systems support growth?

Effective justice systems play a key role in establishing confidence throughout the business cycle. When judicial systems guarantee the enforcement of rights, creditors are more likely to lend, firms are dissuaded from opportunistic behaviour, transaction costs are reduced, and innovative businesses are more likely to invest.

The positive impact of national justice systems on the economy is underlined in literature and research, including from the [European Central Bank](#), [International Monetary Fund](#), [OECD](#), [World Economic Forum](#) and [World Bank](#).

How does the 2018 EU Justice Scoreboard examine the effectiveness of justice?

The Scoreboard uses indicators that examine the three main features of an effective justice system: efficiency, quality and independence.

Efficiency

The indicators related to the efficiency of proceedings include: the caseload, the length of judicial proceedings (disposition time); the clearance rate (the ratio of the number of resolved cases over the number of incoming cases); and the number of pending cases. The Scoreboard also presents the average length of proceedings in specific fields when EU law is involved.

Quality

Easy access to justice, adequate resources, effective assessment tools and appropriate standards are key factors that contribute to the quality of justice systems. The Scoreboard uses various indicators to cover these factors: such as the electronic submission of claims, communication between the courts and parties, the training of judges, financial resources, and ICT case management systems and standards.

Independence

The Scoreboard examines the perception of judicial independence both among the general public and companies. It also presents information on legal safeguards in Member States for certain situations where judicial independence could be at risk.

What is the methodology of the EU Justice Scoreboard?

The Scoreboard uses various sources of information. Large parts of the quantitative data are provided by the Council of Europe Commission for the Evaluation of the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) with which the Commission has concluded a contract to carry out a specific annual study. This data ranges from 2010 to 2016, and has been provided by Member States according to CEPEJ's methodology. The study also provides detailed comments and country-specific fact sheets that give more contextual information and complement the figures.

The other sources of data are the groups of contact persons on national justice systems, the [European Network of Councils for the Judiciary \(ENCJ\)](#), the [Network of the Presidents of the Supreme Judicial Courts of the EU](#), [Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the EU \(ACA\)](#), the [European Competition Network](#), the [Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe \(CCBE\)](#), the [Communications Committee](#), the [European Observatory on infringements of intellectual property rights](#), the [Consumer Protection Cooperation Network](#), the [Expert Group on Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism](#), [Eurostat](#), the [European Judicial Training Network \(EJTN\)](#), the [World Bank](#) and the [World Economic Forum](#).

Why is some data missing?

Although data is still lacking for certain Member States, the data gap continues to decrease, particularly concerning the efficiency of justice systems. The remaining difficulties in gathering data are often due to insufficient statistical capacity or the fact that the national categories for which data is collected do not exactly correspond to the ones used for the Scoreboard. In very few cases, the data gap is due to the lack of national authorities' willingness to contribute. The Commission will continue to encourage Member States to further reduce this data gap.

What is the new mechanism the Commission proposed on rule of law in the Multi Annual Financial Framework?

The proposed Regulation equips the Union to better protect its budget when weaknesses in the rule of law impair – or threaten to impair – sound financial management or the financial interests of the Union.

In particular, the Regulation could be invoked when a generalised deficiency as regards the rule of law in a Member State endangers one of the following State functions:

- The proper functioning of the authorities implementing the Union budget,
- The proper functioning of investigation and public prosecution of fraud or corruption relating to the budget,

- The effective judicial review by independent courts,
- The prevention and sanctioning of fraud, corruption or other breaches of EU law relating to the budget, or
- The effective and timely cooperation with the European Anti-Fraud Office and with the European Public Prosecutor's Office.

What is the relation between the EU Justice Scoreboard and the Commission EU Rule of Law Framework adopted in 2014?

These two tools are separate and serve different purposes.

The EU Justice Scoreboard provides yearly, reliable and comparable data on the independence, quality and efficiency of national justice systems. This can be used to support recommendations made to the Member States in the context of the European Semester.

The EU Rule of Law Framework ([IP/14/237](#)) allows the Commission to enter into a political dialogue with the Member State concerned. The aim of the political dialogue is to prevent an emerging systemic threat to the rule of law from further escalating.

Will the EU Justice Scoreboard replace the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism?

No, the EU Justice Scoreboard and the [Cooperation and Verification Mechanism \(CVM\)](#) pursue different objectives and have different scopes.

The Cooperation and Verification mechanism is specific to Bulgaria and Romania. When they joined the EU on 1 January 2007, Romania and Bulgaria still had progress to make in the fields of judicial reform, as well as the fight against corruption and – in the case of Bulgaria – organised crime. To smooth the entry of both countries into the EU and at the same time safeguard the workings of its policies and institutions, the EU decided to establish a special “cooperation and verification mechanism” to help them address these outstanding shortcomings.

The Justice Scoreboard is a comparative tool which covers all Member States. Its main focus is on civil, commercial and administrative justice. It aims to present trends in the functioning of national justice systems over time. It is not a binding mechanism. It is intended to help identify issues that deserve particular attention.

For further information

[Press release](#)

EESC 9th civil society days: The digital era needs human skills and a proper legal environment



Citizenship, Democracy and Culture in a digitalised Europe was the motto of the 2018 Civil Society Days, organised by the Liaison Group at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) on 24 and 25 May in Brussels. In six workshops, participants discussed living together in a digital Europe in the future and concluded with the adoption of seven [key recommendations](#). Panels focused on culture and education, identities and polarisation, cybersecurity and data protection, digital democracy and citizen participation, overcoming the digital divide and artificial intelligence as a common good.

In his opening address, EESC President **Luca Jahier** stressed the importance of the Civil Society Days – which is why he had proposed organising this event on the very same day as the EESC's 60th anniversary celebration. "We represent Europe at work. This has given the EESC the authority to advise the other institutions for the past 60 years. You can be assured that the recommendations you are drafting today will not remain on paper only but feed in the European policy work."

He also highlighted the fact that for the first time civil society organisations were joining forces to debate the complex issue of digitalisation in a comprehensive way and that they were here to help shaping the digital world we are living in by asking the right questions and proposing answers for the common good.

In his keynote speech, **Andrea Renda**, Chair in Digital Innovation at the College of Europe, underlined the key role civil society has to play in shaping Europe's future: "We need to put our strength and resources together and craft our future in a sustainable way", he said. For the medium term, he predicted a lot of destruction accompanying digitalisation, not least because of the tremendous speed of change. However, in the long run he was convinced that: "We will work less and differently, with better subjective well-being. In the future work will be more rewarding".

MEP Ana Gomes stressed the importance of steering digitalisation at European level and referred to the key role of education: "Nothing replaces human sensitivity; we need to continue to invest in human education".

According to **Ray Pinto**, policy director at DIGITALEUROPE, access to the internet should be a fundamental right. Digitalisation, if used properly, could help create a unified democratic, transparent, digital Europe, where citizens can voice their views and take a more active role in decision-making.

But technologies and artificial intelligence (AI) needed experts to handle

them. In Europe there was a shortage of around half a million experts. Only 16.7% of ICT experts were women, while 83.3% were men (compared with 54% men/46% women in the workforce as a whole).

Furthermore, while the US and China were registering huge increases in AI patents, Europe was lagging behind. 83% of external investment in AI was being absorbed by the US and China.

Maarit Palovirta from the Internet Society whose mission is to keep the internet open and neutral, globally connected, secure, trustworthy and accessible for everyone acknowledged that this mission had been challenged by incidents such as online crime episodes, fake news, etc. She said: "We cannot ignore this, but no business and no government can tackle these problems alone. As internet users, as civil society we need to use our power to influence policies and take responsibility for the future of the internet. Our job is to bring back a positive approach towards the internet, including transparency and ethics".

Dr Beate Wagner, managing director of the Global Young Academy, belongs to a group of 27 people who are promoting a Digital Charter for the EU. "It is not about inventing new fundamental rights but rather of reformulating rights partly in the light of the digital era", she explained. The goal was to commit state and non-state actors. Since Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and others form a public space it was in the group's view necessary to address this challenge accordingly. "When it comes to automated decision-making, it needs human beings to take the responsibility", Dr Wagner emphasised.

Also **Alessandro Mantelero**, Professor of Law at the Polytechnic University of Turin, emphasised the huge impact of algorithms on decision-making and recommended a particular focus on risk management. "When it comes to artificial intelligence, we don't need to consider just whether it is legally compliant but also whether it is socially compliant", he said. The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) must contribute to creating a digital environment which is not a mere data ecosystem but primarily a rights-based, value-oriented and participatory environment.

In his conclusions, Secretary General of SOLIDAR and co-chair of the liaison group **Conny Reuter**, who moderated the event referred to the great European philosophers Kant, Hegel and Rousseau, stressing that digitalisation is also about ethics and the social contract of our society and honoured those member organisations of the EESC Liaison Group which had organised the six interactive workshops.

The Civil Society Days, which the EESC organised this year for the 9th time, are intended to highlight and foster the important role that civil society plays in building a European Union which is more in tune with citizens' aspirations – a European Union that people can make their own.

More on the speeches and presentation as well as the recommendations of these workshops can be found on the EESC's webpage.

Press statement by President Jean-Claude Juncker with Giorgi Kvirikashvili, Prime Minister of Georgia, in front of the EU stand on the day of celebration of the 100th anniversary of Georgia's First Democratic Republic

Dear Giorgi,

I am delighted to see the European Union playing such a full and visible role on this very special day for Georgia.

I am very proud that the Prime Minister was and is visiting our stand – this is the stand of the European Union and it is good to have him with us. We have come a long way together in a relatively short period of time. I thank him for his European spirit and for always having the courage of his convictions, which does not happen so often in Europe.

Georgia is a country close to my heart, close to the heart of Europeans, because we are friends and partners, linked by our history and by our geography.

Many other European countries are celebrating their 100 years of independence these days and I am particularly proud and happy to be here today because this is a very special day for Georgia.

I promised the Prime Minister years ago that Europe will always be on the side of Georgia. The more you reform, the more support we will give to you, our friends.

I am delighted that today I can announce an extra EUR 40 million worth of funds for this year's bilateral allocation. This brings to EUR 597 million the total of our financial support for Georgia from 2014 to 2018.

And on top of that, we have the possibility to announce a fresh macro-financial assistance worth EUR 45 million.

According to a promise I made to the Prime Minister, we have liberalised the visa regime. Since March 2017 more than 253,000 Georgians have travelled to Europe, and I would like to invite all of those who are here and who never dare to go there, because it is worth being visited.

We are launching in a few months from now a European School here in the city.

And we have agreed, the Prime Minister and myself, to have an annual meeting between the Georgian Government and the Commission. We are not doing this with each and every country but I would like this to happen year after year.

Thank you.