

Humanitarian aid: €37.5 million for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran

“The assistance we are announcing today will reach those affected by the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, both within the country and across the region, many of whom face of extremely dire conditions. The EU’s commitment to the Afghan people remains unwavering. Incidents such as last week’s attack on a humanitarian organisation take innocent lives and threaten lifesaving support to those most in need. It’s fundamental that international humanitarian law is respected.” said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, Christos **Stylianides**.

The European Commission will provide €27 million for lifesaving supplies to the most vulnerable populations in **Afghanistan** who are bearing the consequences of the conflict. The assistance will cover areas such as emergency trauma care, food, water and sanitation, shelter and protection to newly displaced people. Vulnerable Afghans in **Pakistan** will benefit from funding of €5.5 million, which will primarily help Afghan refugees and those affected by food insecurity and malnutrition as a result of natural disasters. A further €5 million will support Afghan refugees in **Iran** and provide food assistance, shelter, health, protection, as well as education for vulnerable Afghan children.

Background

The European Commission has provided humanitarian assistance to the countries in the region since the 1990s. Funds are allocated strictly on the basis of the humanitarian principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality to ensure access to all those in need.

Since 1994, the EU has allocated almost €1.4 billion in humanitarian aid to the region in addition to EU development assistance. The EU’s humanitarian support has addressed the most pressing needs of vulnerable populations affected by the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan and its consequences in neighbouring countries, as well as improving local capacities to prevent and respond to the effects of natural disasters and climate change.

For More Information

[Factsheet – Afghanistan](#)

[Factsheet – Pakistan](#)

[Factsheet – Iran](#)

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Air Quality Ministerial Summit: Member States have until end of next week to complete their national submissions [updated on 30/01/2018 at 12:22]

Ministers from 9 Member States convened today in Brussels upon the invite of Commissioner for Environment Karmenu **Vella**, in a final effort to find solutions to address the serious problem of air pollution in the European Union. The 9 Member States, namely the Czech Republic, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom, face infringement procedures for exceeding agreed air pollution limits. At the meeting, Commissioner Vella called on Member States to finalise their submissions by end of next week on how they intend to comply with EU law on air quality or else face legal action. Following the meeting, Commissioner **Vella** gave the following statement: *“This Commission has consistently said that it wishes to be ‘big on the big things’. And it doesn’t get bigger than the loss of life due to air pollution[...] As much as protecting our citizens is a key priority for President Juncker and the entire College of Commissioners, in Member States this need to become a key priority of the entire governments, of all Ministers concerned: be it Ministers for transport, energy, industry, agriculture or finance. Our shared credibility depends on it.”* See Commissioner Vella’s full statement [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: + 32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Eurostat: Estimation rapide préliminaire pour le quatrième trimestre 2017: le PIB en hausse de 0,6% tant dans la zone euro que dans l’UE28, +2,7% et +2,6% respectivement par rapport au quatrième trimestre 2016

Au cours du quatrième trimestre 2017, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a augmenté de 0,6% tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l’UE28 par rapport au trimestre précédent, selon l’estimation rapide préliminaire publiée par Eurostat, l’office statistique de l’Union européenne. Au cours du troisième trimestre 2017, le PIB avait progressé de 0,7% dans les deux zones. En comparaison avec le même trimestre de l’année précédente, le PIB corrigé des variations saisonnières a enregistré une hausse de 2,7% dans la zone euro et de 2,6% dans l’UE28 au quatrième trimestre 2017, après +2,8% dans les deux zones au troisième trimestre 2017. Sur l’ensemble de l’année 2017, le PIB a progressé de 2,5% dans les deux zones. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Humanitarian aid: €37.5 million for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran

The European Commission has announced today €37.5 million of humanitarian assistance to help people affected by conflict and natural disasters in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. *“The assistance we are announcing today will reach those affected by the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, both within the country and across the region, many of whom face of extremely dire conditions. The EU’s commitment to the Afghan people remains unwavering.*

Incidents such as last week's attack on a humanitarian organisation take innocent lives and threaten lifesaving support to those most in need. It's fundamental that international humanitarian law is respected," said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, **Christos Stylianides**. The European Commission will provide €27 million for lifesaving supplies to the most vulnerable populations in Afghanistan. Afghans in Pakistan will benefit from humanitarian funding of €5.5 million. A further €5 million will support Afghan refugees in Iran. More information is available in the [press release](#). (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Investment Plan for Europe: Additional €30 million from the EU for micro-enterprises in Ireland over the next 5 years

The [European Investment Fund \(EIF\)](#) has signed a second agreement with [Microfinance Ireland \(MFI\)](#) to support 2,100 micro-entrepreneurs under the European Commission's [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#), after the first one signed in 2015. As a result of the EU support, the EaSI guarantee provided by the EIF will enable MFI to provide an additional €30 million in loans to micro-borrowers including migrants and entrepreneurs over the next five years. European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, said: *"Thanks to this new financial boost of €30 million from the EU, more than 2000 micro-entrepreneurs will get financial support to start up or develop their business. Considering that Microfinance Ireland already created 4000 jobs through loans to small businesses, we can safely say that these loans are an excellent means to boost jobs and growth, whereby the most vulnerable people in the labour market are not left behind."* This new financing agreement was made possible by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the core of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). More information on the agreement can be found in this [press release](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253, Siobhan Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361, Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Agriculture: the Commission approves new geographical indication from the United Kingdom

The Commission has approved today the addition of a new product from the United Kingdom to the quality register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGI). ['Traditional Welsh Caerphilly', also called 'Traditional Welsh Caerffili'](#) (both terms are protected) is a white, hard cheese with a mild slightly lemony taste. It is made in Wales from pasteurised or raw milk produced on Welsh farms and is actually the only native cheese of this region. The cheese is to be eaten young from 10 days old or can be matured for up to 6 months. During the 19th century dairy schools were established throughout Wales to educate cheese producers and to pass on the specific skills and knowledge required. This new denomination will be added to the list of over 1420 products already protected. More information: webpages on

[quality products](#) and [DOOR database](#) of protected products. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel: +32 229 56 185; Clémence Robin – Tel: +32 229)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Clean Energy Trading by BayWa

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Clean Energy Trading GmbH by BayWa r.e., both of Germany. Clean Energy Trading is active in the fields of direct marketing of electricity from renewable energy plants and the supply of electricity to end customers. BayWa is active in the fields of solar energy, wind energy, bioenergy and geothermal energy. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the overlaps between the companies are very limited and a number of strong players remain in the market after the merger. 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.8758](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of TMF by CVC

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of TMF Orange Holding B.V. ("TMF") of the Netherlands by CVC Capital Partners SICAV-FIS S.A. of Luxembourg. TMF provides financial, legal and HR administrative services for corporate, alternative investment as well as private clients. CVC provides advice to and management of investment funds and platforms. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because there is no horizontal overlap between the companies' activities. Moreover, despite the existence of a vertical relationship between CVC and TMF, their individual and combined market shares are well below 30%. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8715](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner King in The Hague

Commissioner **King** is in The Hague, the Netherlands today where he will meet Ms Kajsa Ollongren, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior, and Mr Ferdinand Grapperhaus, Minister of Justice and Security. Discussions will focus on issues relating to security, in particular information exchange, countering radicalisation and enhancing cybersecurity, following up on the [progress report](#) towards an effective and genuine Security Union presented by

the Commission last week. Later in the afternoon, Commissioner **King** will also visit the Netherlands Passenger Name Records platform. (*For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444*)

[Upcoming events](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-508_en.htm) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-18-508_en.htm

Statement by Commissioner Karmenu Vella following Air Quality Ministerial meeting

Good morning ladies and gentlemen.

A few words about this morning's Air Quality ministerial meeting.

This Commission has consistently said that it wishes to be 'big on the big things'. And it doesn't get bigger than the loss of life due to air pollution.

First of all, I must stress that I invited ministers to Brussels because my primary concern, the primary concern of this Commission in fact, is with protecting citizens. When I say citizens, I mean the people who are already suffering and all the others who are at risk. Children who have asthma and their parents. Parents who have obstructive lung diseases and their children.

And that concern was one shared by the Ministers. I want to thank them for coming at such short notice. And I want to thank them for sharing my perspective that protecting citizens is the priority.

Furthermore Ministers expressed an understanding that to be credible with citizens, effective action must be taken and that means respecting the process that ensures that.

Every year, an astonishing number of citizens' lives are cut short because of air pollution. We have known this for decades, and the air quality limit values have been in place for almost as long.

And yet, still today, in 2018, 400 000 people are still dying prematurely every year because of a massive, widespread failure to address the problem. And many more suffer unnecessarily from air quality related diseases.

I am sure that those present at this morning's meeting share my frustration that a sense of urgency is not always evident across Member states, and across other Ministries.

Secondly, I must also stress that this is not just a personal initiative. Today's meeting was held not only with the full support of President Juncker, but also the full support of 500 million citizens. We are also determined – as a College – to act on this problem, with the seriousness it demands.

The State of the Union commitment to protecting citizens cannot be illustrated more clearly than by protecting the air people breathe.

And thirdly, a reminder about the ongoing legal process. The deadlines for meeting the legal obligations have long elapsed.

And some say, we have waited already too long.

But we can delay no more. And I have made this very clear to Ministers this morning.

And I want to underline that I consider Environment Ministers as my key allies in redressing the situation by taking all possible measures without delay.

As much as protecting our citizens is a key priority for President Juncker and the entire College of Commissioners, in Member States, this needs to become a key priority of the entire governments, of all Ministers concerned: be it Ministers for transport, energy, industry, agriculture or finance. Our shared credibility depends on it.

In our exchange, there were some positive suggestions. But at first sight these were not substantial enough to change the big picture. Without new and effective measures, in many cases, air quality standards will further continue to be exceeded for months and years, even well beyond 2020. In the face of such longstanding failures to take serious action, and in view that the ongoing legal process will continue, I urge all Member states to address this life-threatening problem with the urgency it deserves.

Inaction has consequences. It has consequences for citizens and the polluted air they breathe. Member states have responsibilities. Responsibilities to act. Inaction also has legal consequences for the Member States in question. Ministers were reminded of both these responsibilities as well as the legal consequences.

Thank you!

[ESMA updates equity transparency calculations and tick sizes band](#)

assessment for MiFID II/ MiFIR

The update modifies the previously published values for two specific instruments, namely DK0060946788 and IE00BF0L3536. The modifications are displayed alongside the calculations already published on 19 January 2018. The calculations for the two updated instruments were executed by National Competent Authorities (NCAs) and refer to instruments that were traded for the first time on a trading venue between 13 September 2017 and 2 January 2018 (included).

ESMA may receive further corrections for the TTC for equity and tick sizes in the following two weeks. If so, ESMA will update the associated files without necessarily announcing each update. Users of the information will find the date of the last update in the file within the section “Explanatory note”.

ESMA updates equity transparency calculations and tick sizes band assessment for MiFID II/ MiFIR

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