

The Hague, 10 November 2017

✖ On 8 and 9 November 2017, Eurojust supported an international joint operation against online piracy criminal groups. This operation resulted in 2 arrests, one of which was based on a European Arrest Warrant, 73 searches and the seizure of several websites, servers, computers and electronic evidence.

The joint operations were co-led by units specialised in cybercrime at the offices of the prosecutor generals of Frankfurt am Main and of Dresden, as well as the State Criminal Police of Hesse and Saxony, with the assistance of the German Federal Criminal Police. The operations were carried out in close cooperation with the judicial and law enforcement authorities of France, the Netherlands, Spain, Canada, San Marino and Switzerland.

This international joint operation is the result of the investigations conducted in Germany against criminal networks suspected of managing the internet-based download portals www.usenetrevolution.info, www.town.ag and www.usenet-town.com, which illegally offered licensed or copyrighted materials (such as films, TV shows, software, computer games, music, e-books and e-papers), without paying the required fees to license or copyright owners.

In total, the download portals provided illegal access to approximately 2 million links to licensed or copyrighted materials. The owners of the platforms managed to make an illicit profit of several million euros, and this copyright infringement created damages of approximately EUR 7,5 million.

Through a coordination centre established at its premises in The Hague, Eurojust supported the international joint operations and ensured the transmission and execution of European Investigation Orders, rogatory letters and a European Arrest Warrant, as well as the swift exchange of operational information collected on the ground among all the judicial and law enforcement authorities involved.

For further information about the German investigations, please see the [press release of the prosecutor general of Dresden](#) (in German).

Background:

The following video explains the purpose and functioning of Eurojust's coordination centres. For purposes other than private use, including reproduction or transmission, please request permission from Eurojust by contacting the Corporate Communications Office at media@eurojust.europa.eu.

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EU Report: Georgia successfully delivering on its reform commitments

The details of this progress are highlighted in the 2nd Joint Association Implementation Report on Georgia, released today by the European External Action Service and the European Commission, ahead of the EU-Georgia Association Council on 8 December 2017.

"The European Union and Georgia have invested a lot in a strong partnership that is proving deeper day by day and that is bringing great benefits to our citizens. Since last March, Georgian citizens have been able to travel without a visa to the Schengen Area for short stays, we see more exchanges between our students than ever before, and there are more possibilities for trade among our businesses. Today's report demonstrates clear progress in Georgia's reform agenda. The European Union will continue to support the work that has still to be done in several important areas and will stay committed to the thorough and continued implementation of our Association Agenda", said the High Representative/Vice-President, Federica **Mogherini**.

"We continue to see positive results of the implementation of the Association Agreement", said the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**. *"The revised EU-Georgia Association Agenda provides a practical framework of priorities for joint work until 2020. The approximation to EU standards and regulations is allowing Georgia to become more and more an actor in the international market. The EU is Georgia's largest trade partner and 2017 looks to have brought further increases. The accession of Georgia to the Energy Community Treaty as a full contracting party in July 2017 was another milestone bringing the EU and Georgia closer".*

This 2nd Joint Report assesses the state of play of Georgia's implementation of the Association Agenda since the EU-Georgia Association Council of December 2016. It focuses on key developments and reforms undertaken in line with the strategic priorities agreed between the EU and Georgia. According to the report, Georgia has implemented a number of reforms, strengthening democracy and the rule of law, as well as other key areas in the EU-Georgia Association Agreement. Overall, commitments stemming from the Association Agreement, including its Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA), have been implemented in line with agreed timelines. Georgia's democratic

institutions have been consolidated and a comprehensive legislative framework for human rights and anti-discrimination has been adopted.

The report recalls that the full range of commitments under the Association Agreement will require further legislation to be passed and in parallel the steady implementation of existing rules and standards. This is essential to guarantee that Georgian citizens will, over time, fully enjoy the benefits of the DCFTA and of the broader EU-Georgia relationship.

In the area of economic development, the report underlines the benefits brought to the EU and Georgia since the start of the provisional application of the DCFTA in September 2014. With the progressive approximation of technical regulations and standards with those of the EU, Georgia has been increasingly able to strengthen its participation in international value chains. In 2016, the EU was the largest trade partner of Georgia with 30% share in its overall trade. Preliminary data on 2017 suggest a continuation of this trend, with bilateral trade remaining strong. The 1st semester of 2017 saw an increase in EU imports from Georgia by 56%, and an increase of EU exports to Georgia by 2% compared to the 1st semester of the previous year.

The European Union continues to fully support Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The EU actively supports conflict resolution efforts through the work of the EU Special Representative for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia, and the EU Monitoring Mission in Georgia. On security, the fight against terrorism and transnational organised crime, Georgia continues to be an important partner of the EU. In April 2017, Georgia and Europol concluded a Strategic and Operational Agreement, and the first high level EU-Georgia Strategic Security Dialogue took place in October. Georgia provides personnel to EU military and civilian operations, strengthening the EU's role as a global security provider and increasing the resilience of countries worldwide.

More information:

[Full Joint Report](#)

[Full text of the EU-Georgia Association Agreement, including the DCFTA](#)

[Association Agenda between the EU and Georgia](#)

[EU-Georgia AA/DCFTA in brief](#)

[EU-Georgia AA/DCFTA Myth buster](#)

[EU-Georgia relations factsheet](#)

[Website of the European Union Delegation in Georgia](#)

The European Union steps up support to independent media in the Western Balkans

Freedom of media is one of the political criteria for EU accession – a must for countries willing to join the European Union. At the EU-Western Balkans Media Days conference, the Commission put forward comprehensive proposals to strengthen independent media in the region. New EU funds will provide training for young and mid-career journalists across the region, thereby boosting investigative journalism that contributes to reconciliation. A new technical assistance programme for Public Service Broadcasters will support regional co-production of investigative journalism, media content for youth and digitalisation. In addition, to support independent media, new actions with the European Endowment for Democracy will benefit start-ups for new independent media outlets and small-scale initiatives.

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations, participating at the EU-Western Balkans Media Days said: *“Freedom of expression is a fundamental value of the European Union and inextricably linked to further progress on the EU path. The EU-Western Balkans Media Days pave the way to a more comprehensive approach to support independent media outlets, assist the expansion of media literacy in the region, help digitalisation and know-how transfer. A vibrant, economically sustainable, independent and pluralistic media sector is equally important for exercising freedom of expression as are the legal, political and judicial conditions that guarantee it.”*

Background

1) Regional Training and Support Programme to improve Quality and Professionalism in Journalism (€2 million)

The action will focus on young and mid-career journalists trained in quality journalism and enhance publications of qualitative investigative stories. A regional network will support the development and exchange of investigative skills by involving journalists, training providers from the EU and the Western Balkans, as well as academic Institutions. The existing EU Award for Investigative Journalism will continue as part of the action. The project is expected to be launched in the first half of 2018.

2) Technical assistance programme to Public Service Media in Western Balkans (€1.5 million)

The programme aims at establishing standards and best practices across the Western Balkans as a common frame of reference for independent and professional media. The initiative will generate synergies between the 6 Public Service Media promoting regional exchanges on policies and practices. This will initiate a new phase in the media reform process, including

integrated newsrooms, editorial guidelines, and long-term strategies. Finally, the programme will expand cooperation on investigative journalism, mechanisms for co-production on selected topics and regional exchange of digitised archive materials. The projects will start in the beginning of 2018.

3) [Implementing a scheme to support Civil Society Organisations and media in the Western Balkans \(€4 million\)](#)

The Commission, in close cooperation with the [European Endowment for Democracy](#), will provide demand driven support to start-ups and new media initiatives. Support will be provided to journalists, bloggers and researchers in the region as well as to provide bridge funding for small-scale initiatives. The projects will start in the beginning of 2018.

EU-Western Balkans Media Days conference

The EU-Western Balkans Media Days took place in Tirana, Albania, on 9-10 November 2017 gathering over 250 representatives of media outlets and media-organisations, as well as policymakers from the EU and the Western Balkans, to discuss about freedom of expression, economic sustainability of the media sector, and the role of media in the accession process.

Two panels and six workshops provided a platform for media professionalism to exchange views and share best practices. The conference contributed to pave the way for new forward-looking initiatives to foster independent, sustainable and professional media in the region.

For More Information

[Factograph – EU support to media in the Western Balkans](#)

[Website of the EU – Western Balkans Media Days](#)

[Speeches by Commissioner Hahn at the EU – Western Balkans Media Days](#)

[Daily News 10 / 11 / 2017](#)

The European Union is stepping up efforts to improve military mobility

As part of the drive to better protect citizens and improve the Union's security environment, the European Commission and the High Representative are today proposing a number of actions to improving military mobility within the European Union. A [Joint Communication adopted today](#) outlines steps to be taken to address the obstacles which are hampering the movement of military equipment and personnel across the EU with the aim of facilitating and expediting their mobility to react in a fast and effective way to internal and external crises. In doing so, the European Commission and the High

Representative are delivering on the commitment to use all the tools at their disposal to build a Union that protects. *"European citizens understand that only together, as a Union, can we tackle the security challenges of our times. Cooperation inside the European Union and with our partners has become a must. There is a growing demand for our Member States to coordinate and work together on defence. So while we are moving forward with the Permanent Structured Cooperation to make our defence more effective, we have also decided to further strengthen military mobility among EU Member States and in cooperation with NATO,"* said High Representative/Vice-President **Federica Mogherini**. Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** said: *"The European Union has a modern transport network that serves the needs of Europeans. These needs can also be of a military nature. The swift movement of military personnel and equipment is hindered by physical, legal and regulatory barriers. This creates inefficiencies in public spending, delays, disruptions, and above all a greater vulnerability. It is high time we maximise civil and military synergies also through our transport network in an efficient and sustainable manner."* More information is available in a [press release](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 [6 91 43](#))

EU report: Georgia successfully delivering on its reform commitments

Georgia's implementation of its Association Agenda in 2017, which has been supported by the European Union, confirms the country's commitment to political association and economic integration to the EU. The details of this progress are highlighted in the 2nd Joint Association Implementation Report on Georgia, released today by the European External Action Service and the European Commission, ahead of the EU-Georgia Association Council on 8 December 2017. *"The European Union and Georgia have invested a lot in a strong partnership that is proving deeper day by day and that is bringing great benefits to our citizens. Since last March, Georgian citizens have been able to travel without a visa to the Schengen Area for short stays, we see more exchanges between our students than ever before, and there are more possibilities for trade among our businesses. Today's report demonstrates clear progress in Georgia's reform agenda. The European Union will continue to support the work that has still to be done in several important areas and will stay committed to the thorough and continued implementation of our Association Agenda",* said the High Representative/Vice-President, **Federica Mogherini**. *"We continue to see positive results of the implementation of the Association Agreement",* said the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, **Johannes Hahn**. *"The revised EU-Georgia Association Agenda provides a practical framework of priorities for joint work until 2020. The approximation to EU standards and regulations is allowing Georgia to become more and more an actor in the international market. The EU is Georgia's largest trade partner and 2017 looks to have brought further increases. The accession of Georgia to the Energy Community Treaty as a full contracting party in July 2017 was another milestone bringing the EU and Georgia closer"*. This 2nd Joint Report assesses the state

of play of Georgia's implementation of the Association Agenda since the EU-Georgia Association Council of December 2016. It focuses on key developments and reforms undertaken in line with the strategic priorities agreed between the EU and Georgia. A full press release on the Joint Report is available [online](#). The Joint Report itself can be found [here](#), and more information on EU-Georgia relations is available on the [website of the EU Delegation](#) and in the dedicated [factsheet](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

The European Union steps up support to independent media in the Western Balkans

Freedom of media is one of the political criteria for EU accession – a must for countries willing to join the European Union. At the [EU-Western Balkans Media Days](#) conference that took place on 9-10 November in Tirana, Albania, the Commission announced that it will invest in new initiatives to support independent journalism, sustainable media outlets, and boost regional cooperation among public service media. Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations, participating at the EU-Western Balkans Media Days said: *“Freedom of expression is a fundamental value of the European Union and inextricably linked to further progress on the EU path. The EU-Western Balkans Media Days pave the way to a more comprehensive approach to support independent media outlets, assist the expansion of media literacy in the region, help digitalisation and know-how transfer. A vibrant, economically sustainable, independent and pluralistic media sector is equally important for exercising freedom of expression as are the legal, political and judicial conditions that guarantee it.”* A full press release is available [here](#). The concluding [speech](#) by Commissioner **Hahn** will be available online. [Photos](#) and [video](#) of the event are available on EbS. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

Commission facilitates new network to resolve consumer disputes in the travel sector

Today, the European Commission is supporting the launch of TRAVEL-NET, a network of Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies handling consumer disputes in the travel and public transport sector. Věra **Jourová**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality said: *“Passengers frequently face severe delays or issues when they travel, as we’ve seen with the cancellation of Ryanair flights and the failure of Monarch Airlines over the past weeks. Consumers need efficient means of redress. I welcome the creation of the Travel network which brings key stakeholders in the travel sector together to endorse swift and simple alternative dispute resolution.”* The network will allow the participating Alternative Dispute Resolution bodies to share knowledge and provide a forum to exchange best practices to help them deliver more effective dispute resolution. Issues with travel companies are the number one type of cross-border consumer dispute in Europe. These kinds of dispute can be resolved with help from an [alternative dispute resolution](#)

(ADR) body. If the dispute is about an online purchase, then consumers can use the [Online Dispute Resolution](#) (ODR) platform to ask an Alternative Dispute Resolution body for help. Using these bodies has benefits for both the consumer and the company, since they are simpler, faster and cheaper than taking a case to court. The launch event is being hosted at the Commission's office in Berlin, and is being attended by representatives of major transport companies, business and consumer associations and national authorities. *(For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

Greece joins EU efforts to cooperate on high-performance computing

Greece is the 12th country to sign the [European declaration on high-performance computing](#) (HPC), joining the European effort to build the next generation of computing and data infrastructure. The [EuroHPC declaration](#) was launched in March 2017 and signed first by France, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain during the [Digital Day](#) in Rome (see the [press statement](#), [speech](#) and [blog post](#) by Vice-President Ansip). Four other countries have since joined this European initiative: [Belgium](#) in June, [Slovenia](#) in July, [Bulgaria](#) and [Switzerland](#) in October. Greece signed the EuroHPC declaration today in Athens. Vice-President **Ansip**, responsible for the Digital Single Market, and Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society welcome this important step for EuroHPC: *"We are very pleased that Greece is now part of this ambitious European project. By joining forces, we can lead in both the production and use of HPC technology in Europe and open the way to new innovative applications to benefit people, such as designing and simulating new medical treatments."* The signatories of this declaration have committed to work together to establish a world-class [high-performance computing ecosystem](#) that will acquire and operate world-class supercomputers and also build key hardware, software tools and applications needed to run HPC technology. The aim is to have EU exascale supercomputers operational by 2022-2023. All other Member States and countries associated to Horizon 2020 research and innovation framework programme are encouraged to join forces and to sign the EuroHPC. More details are available [here](#). *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698)*

State aid: Commission approves Spanish support scheme for renewable electricity

The European Commission has found the Spanish scheme supporting electricity generation from renewable energy sources, high efficiency cogeneration of heat and power and waste to be in line with EU State aid rules. The Commission concluded that the Spanish measure will boost the share of electricity produced from renewable energy sources, in line with EU [energy and climate goals](#), while any distortion of competition caused by the State support is minimised. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"I am pleased to see the latest Spanish renewables auctions have shown the positive effects of competition: companies are ready to invest in new installations with very low levels of State support. Spain's transition to a low carbon, environmentally sustainable energy supply is important and this support scheme will help."* The full press release is

available online in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#), [ES](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of the West Midlands franchise by Abellio, Mitsui and EJR

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of the West Midlands passenger rail franchise by Abellio Transport Group Limited both of the UK, Mitsui & Co. Ltd. and Mitsui & Co. Europe Plc (Mitsui) and East Japan Railway Company (EJR), both of Japan. The West Midlands franchise is a passenger rail service across the West Midlands, from London Euston to Crewe and from Liverpool to Birmingham. Abellio, which is ultimately owned by the Dutch rail operator NS Group, operates a number of passenger railway concessions or franchise contracts in the UK and Germany. Mitsui is a major Japanese trading house engaged in a number of commodities and other business. EJR operates rail networks in Japan. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its limited impact on the market structure. 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.8636](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Avramopoulos in Bern for Ministerial Conference on Central Mediterranean Migration Route

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will be in Bern, Switzerland on 12 and 13 November to participate in the third Ministerial Conference on the Central Mediterranean Migration Route, hosted by the Swiss Confederation this time. Discussions will focus on the comprehensive cooperation along the route. Commissioner **Avramopoulos** will be joined by the President of the Swiss Confederation Doris Leuthard and Justice Minister Simonetta Sommaruga as well as the Estonian Minister of the Interior Andres Anvelt, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, together with the responsible ministers from Austria, France, Italy, Malta and Slovenia, the state secretary for the interior from Germany, and ministers from Chad, Tunisia, Mali, Niger and the Interior ministry secretary general of Algeria. The Director General of the International Organization for Migration William Lacy Swing and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi will also be present, together with Director General Yves D'Accord from the International Red Cross. A press conference is scheduled for 13:00 CET and can be followed on [EbS](#) (For more information: Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Thomas Kramer – Tel.: +32 229 58602)

Commissaire King lundi à Paris pour commémorer des attentats terroristes du 13 novembre 2015

Le Commissaire européen chargé de l'Union de la sécurité Julian **King** sera à Paris lundi où il participera à la cérémonie de commémoration des attentats terroristes du 13 novembre 2015 au Bataclan. A l'occasion de cette visite, il y rencontrera la Garde des Sceaux, Ministre de la Justice, Madame Nicole Belloubet et le Directeur de cabinet du Président de la République, Monsieur Patrick Strzoda, pour discuter, entre autres, des questions relatives aux défis actuels de la sécurité. Le Commissaire King visitera l'Agence Nationale de la Sécurité des Systèmes d'Information (ANSSI), où il rencontrera le Directeur général, Monsieur Guillaume Poupard. Dans l'après-midi, le Commissaire rencontrera le Coordinateur de la Coordination Nationale du Renseignement et de lutte contre le terrorisme (CNR), Monsieur Pierre Bousquet de Florian, ainsi que le secrétaire d'Etat au numérique, Monsieur Mounir Mahjoubi. (*Pour plus d'informations: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444*)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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