

Press release: Auditors publish briefing on EU plans for broadband

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Daily News 14 / 09 / 2017

State of the Union 2017: Commission unveils initiatives for an balanced and progressive trade agenda

The Commission today unveiled an ambitious package of trade and investment proposals for a progressive and balanced trade agenda. Those include a **European screening framework** to ensure that foreign direct investment does not compromise the EU's strategic interests, as well as three **draft negotiating mandates** for trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand, and for a multilateral agreement to create an investment court. The Commission also steps up further the **inclusiveness and transparency** of its trade policy by setting up an Advisory Group on EU trade agreements and deciding to publish as of today any new proposals for negotiating mandates. These initiatives – explained and put in context in a [Communication: A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalisation](#) – build on [“Trade for All” strategy of 2015](#) and the Commission's broader [Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation](#) from May 2017. For more information on today's trade policy package see related press releases ([general](#); [investment screening](#)) and other documents available [here](#). The [press conference](#) held today in Brussels can be watched on EbS. (For more information: Daniel Rosario: + 32 2 2956185, Kinga Malinowska: +32 2 2951383)

State of the Union 2017: President Juncker strengthens ethical rules for Members of the Commission in new Code of Conduct

On the occasion of his [2017 State of the Union](#) address, President Juncker announced a [new Code of Conduct for Members of the Commission](#). The modernised rules set new standards for ethical rules in Europe. The announcement continues President Juncker's push for greater transparency since the beginning of his mandate and his [recent proposal](#) to extend the “cooling-off” period from currently 18 months to two years for former Commissioners and to three years for the President of the Commission. The proposed modernisation goes further by setting clearer rules and higher ethical standards as well as introducing greater transparency in a number of areas. It will also create an Independent Ethical Committee replacing the current Ad hoc Ethical Committee, to reinforce its status, to strengthen scrutiny and to provide advice on ethical standards. Full press release is available in all languages [here](#).

(For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265; Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382)

Commission supports more than 150 new reform projects in 15 Member States under its new Structural Reform Support Programme

The Commission's [Structural Reform Support Service](#) (SRSS) now engages with 15 EU Member States to carry out more than 150 projects ranging from assistance for reforms in sectors from judiciary to digital. The structural reform assistance comes under the Service's €142.8 million programme from 2017-2020. The role of the Structural Reform Support Service was mentioned in President **Juncker's** [State of the Union Address](#). Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, will give an on-the-record briefing today in Tallinn on the latest set of reform support projects. On the eve of the informal ECOFIN, he said: *"Today we are launching cooperation with 15 countries to design and implement important growth-enhancing reforms. I would like to acknowledge the leadership and efforts of the involved authorities. Reforms require investing political capital, which is not always easy. But experience shows that reforms pay off. They bring more jobs and robust growth."* For more information on the Structural Reform Support Service, see the factsheet [here](#). (For more information, including on the briefing: Annika Breidthardt – Tel.: +32 229 56153; Juliana Dahl – Tel.: +32 229 59914)

Solidarity with Italy: European Parliament backs Commission proposal for €1.2 billion of aid following the earthquakes

The Commission welcomes the European Parliament's vote on the [proposal](#) to grant Italy €1.2 billion under the [EU Solidarity Fund](#), the highest sum ever mobilised under the fund, following the deadly earthquakes of 2016 and 2017. This exceptional amount will help Umbria, Lazio, Marche and Abruzzo heal and bounce back and, as President **Juncker** said, help people living in these regions turn the page on this painful chapter and build a new future. *"We have repeatedly said that we would not leave Italy alone in this crisis and we are delivering on this commitment,"* said Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Crețu**, *"The EU cares. It is leaving none of its Member States alone in the face of difficulty. Both our emergency help response and long-term assistance are concrete expressions of EU solidarity with its citizens."* The proposal now has to be formally adopted by the Council. The money is expected to be paid to Italy this autumn. More information on [EU support to Italy following the earthquakes](#) and, more generally, on [the EU helping citizens and Member States at home](#) is available online. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

L'Union Européenne investit pour une mobilité propre et rapide en Pologne

97,5 millions d'euros du [Fonds européen de développement régional](#) (FEDER) sont investis dans la modernisation de la connexion ferroviaire entre les

villes de Poznań et Pila, dans la région Wielkopolska au centre-Ouest du pays. Les trains circulant sur la section rénovée pourront désormais rouler à une vitesse de 80 à 120 km/h, ce qui permettra de réduire de près de 50 minutes le trajet entre les deux villes. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina Crețu a commenté: *"De meilleures connexions ferroviaires sont essentielles à l'activité économique du pays. En réduisant les temps de trajet et en promouvant un mode de mobilité propre, ce projet améliorera aussi directement la qualité de vie des Polonais."* Les 250 000 habitants du Nord de la région pourront rejoindre plus rapidement Poznań, la capitale régionale, lorsque le projet sera achevé en 2020. Plus d'informations sur les fonds européens en Pologne sont disponibles sur [la plateforme Open Data](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

EU supports Greece following oil tanker spill

The European Commission has helped mobilise immediate support for Greece following a request for assistance to deal with a [marine pollution](#) incident in the sea area of Piraeus. Greece has activated the [European Civil Protection Mechanism](#) requesting a vessel to help with clean-up operations. The request was channelled through the Commission's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) and the European Maritime Safety Agency promptly offered an oil recovery vessel as well as satellite imaging. *"Our EU emergency centre responded swiftly to Greece's request and I'm pleased to see another concrete example of EU solidarity in action. The oil recovery vessel offered by the European Maritime Safety Agency has already started response activities in the affected area,"* said Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides. The European Commission's Emergency Response Coordination Centre monitors natural and man-made disasters 24/7, including marine pollution emergencies and is closely monitoring the latest developments. The [European Maritime Safety Agency](#) manages a network of standby at-sea oil spill recovery vessels based in all the regional seas of Europe. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

European Commission launches public consultations to improve the security of EU citizens' documents

Have you ever lost your passport while on holiday? Did you ever need an emergency travel document to get home? Or do you worry that someone might make a fake copy of your ID card? The Commission wants to better address these issues by launching two public consultations to improve the security of EU citizens' documents, as announced in the [2017 EU Citizenship Report](#). Commissioner Jourová said: *"EU citizens should be able to exercise their citizenship rights wherever they go. Having identity cards and residence cards that are more secure is crucial for security across the EU. We also want to modernise the rules on emergency travel documents to make it easier for EU citizens to access consular protection outside the EU."* The [first](#) consultation will gather views on how to improve the security of identity cards and residence documents. The [second](#) consultation aims at evaluating the existing rules for emergency travel documents for people living or travelling outside the EU where their country does not have an embassy or

consulate. Both consultations will run until 5 December 2017 and are open to all EU citizens. *(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

Commissioner Hahn pays visit to Serbia

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations is travelling to Belgrade, [Serbia](#) the day after the [State of the European Union](#), to reaffirm the EU's perspective for the country and the Western Balkan region, as set out by President **Juncker** in his address yesterday. Commissioner **Hahn** will reiterate the unquestionable commitment of the EU to [Serbia's EU integration](#) and support for its reform process. He will discuss with his interlocutors the state of play of Serbia's accession process as well as priority issues such as the implementation of the [Regional Economic Area](#) and the [connectivity agenda](#). Tomorrow, 15 September Johannes **Hahn** will meet with President Aleksandar Vučić, Prime Minister Ana Brnabić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Ivica Dačić. Commissioner **Hahn** will also participate in the event 'EU-Serbia: A strategic partnership for the future' organised by the European Convent, where he will deliver a speech and will have an exchange with Serbian Erasmus students. Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#). *(For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)*

Tackling Challenges for Independent Media in Eastern Partnership Countries

The [2nd Eastern Partnership Media Conference](#) took place yesterday in Kyiv, Ukraine to shine a spotlight on the growing challenges facing journalists in the EU's [Eastern partner countries](#). Bringing together 350 media professionals and donors from [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Belarus](#), [Georgia](#), the [Republic of Moldova](#) and [Ukraine](#) as well as the EU Member States and beyond, it offered a unique platform to identify the obstacles to healthy media environment, discuss ways of addressing them, and examine how the European Union and other donors can best support independent journalism in these countries. In his message to the participants, Johannes **Hahn**, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, stressed that *"Freedom of expression is one of the very foundations on which our Union is built. We believe that a strong, independent press is fundamental to successful societies everywhere. Today's conference clearly shows the importance of closer engagement of the EU with partner countries on the issues of plurality and independence of media."* The [full press release](#) and the factsheet [EU support to media in the Eastern Partner countries](#) are available online. *(For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)*

EU steps up efforts to prevent violent extremism and counter-terrorism in the Middle East and North Africa

The European Union adopted a programme under the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace worth €17.5 million to address the terrorist threat in

the Middle East and North Africa. This three-year programme will address drivers and threats from terrorism in the region to foster human security and build resilience in both states and societies. Federica Mogherini, High Representative/Vice-President, said: *"We are increasing as a priority our work and cooperation on counterterrorism with partner countries. We have developed a network of counterterrorism experts that are deployed in key countries and a series of counterterrorism dialogues with our partners to exchange best practices and to learn from each other. The best way to address radicalisation and violent extremism effectively is by working together, in a comprehensive and concerted way."* The full [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de MutRé par SCOR

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de MutRé par SCOR. Les deux entreprises sont basées en France et actives dans le secteur de la réassurance vie. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait aucun problème de concurrence, car les chevauchements entre les activités des entreprises sont limités. Leurs relations verticales sont également limitées. 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 de concurrence de la Commission, sous le numéro [M.8589](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of parking-facilities operator Q-Park by KKR

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Q-Park of the Netherlands by KKR of the US via purchase of shares. Q-Park constructs, renovates and operates off-street parking facilities. KKR is a global investment firm which offers a broad range of alternative asset management services to public and private market investors, and provides capital markets solutions for the firm, its portfolio companies and clients. 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.8561](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

New rules adopted to finance the Single Resolution Board's administrative costs

The Commission has today adopted new rules on how to finance the administrative expenditures of the [Single Resolution Board \(SRB\)](#), the EU agency responsible for ensuring the orderly resolution of failing banks in the Banking Union. A strong Single Resolution Board with sufficient resources and highly qualified staff is essential for the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM) to function properly and protect financial stability without recourse to taxpayers' money. The SRB has an autonomous budget, with a dedicated part for its administrative costs that consists of the annual contributions from banks. The administrative budget is distinct from the Single Resolution Fund (SRF), which works on the basis of contributions raised by national resolution authorities, which are then transferred to the Fund. Since it was set up in 2014, the SRB has collected advance payments for its administrative costs only from bigger banks. Today's rules require all banks in the Banking Union to contribute to the SRB's funding, in proportion to the resource requirements that they place on the Board, i.e. according to their size and the risks of their activities. The new rules, which take the form of a delegated act and will enter into force unless opposed by the European Parliament and the Council, will apply from 2018 onwards. Banks that made advance payments from 2015 to 2017 will be reimbursed for any excess contributions, as needed. Other banks will need to make back payments. The new rules are inspired by the European Central Bank's (ECB) supervisory fees, meaning that banks are already familiar with the calculation methodology. For more information, see [here](#). *(For more information: Vanessa Mock – Tel.: +32 229 56194; Letizia Lupini – Tel.: +32 229 51958)*

Eurostat: Annuaire régional d'Eurostat 2017: Comment se situe ma région au sein de l'Union européenne? Faits et chiffres aux niveaux des territoires

Les chiffres nationaux seuls ne peuvent pas refléter le tableau complet et parfois complexe de ce qui se produit à un niveau plus détaillé au sein de l'Union européenne (UE). Les États membres de l'UE sont souvent comparés les uns avec les autres, mais en réalité, il est très difficile de comparer un petit pays comme Malte ou le Luxembourg avec l'Allemagne, l'État membre le plus peuplé de l'UE. Comparer des données à un niveau régional ou infranational est donc souvent plus révélateur et une telle analyse peut également mettre en évidence des disparités potentielles à l'intérieur des pays. En tant que telles, les données infranationales contribuent à améliorer la compréhension de la diversité qui existe au sein des États membres et à travers l'UE dans son ensemble. La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina Crețu a commenté: "Je salue la publication de cet annuaire, qui est un formidable outil pour aider à la prise de décision. Ces données ont nourri notre analyse et réflexion sur l'état actuel de la cohésion économique, sociale et territoriale en Europe, que vous retrouverez bientôt dans le 7e rapport Cohésion." Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)

Commission extends the mandate of Jean-Pierre Bourguignon, President of the

European Research Council

The Commission has re-appointed Professor Jean-Pierre Bourguignon as President of the European Research Council (ERC), the EU's premier funding body for investigator-driven frontier research. Professor Bourguignon, a mathematician and French national, has worked in this role since 2014, and will now continue until the end of 2019. The ERC is part of Horizon 2020, the EU's research and innovation programme. Its mission is to encourage the highest quality research in Europe across all fields through competitive funding awarded on the basis of scientific excellence. Further information, including Professor Bourguignon's [biography](#), is available [online](#). (For more information: Lucia Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 87278; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič, Commissioners Oettinger, Bulc and Gabriel in Frankfurt to discuss connected and automated driving

Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič, Commissioner for Budget & Human Resources Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc and Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel are today in Frankfurt where they will attend the opening of the [International Motor Show](#) (IAA) led by German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Vice-President Šefčovič will deliver a [speech](#) on "European Mobility – Accelerating into the future". Later today, Commissioners Bulc and Gabriel will take part in the [Second High-Level Dialogue on Automated and Connected Driving](#). This is a follow-up to the "[Amsterdam Declaration](#)" of April 2016 where the Commission and EU transport ministers agreed to intensify cooperation for the development of self-driving technology. On Friday, 15 September, Commissioners Oettinger and Gabriel will take part in the sixth edition of the Round Table on Connected and Automated Driving, a platform which includes Member States and the representatives of the European industry. As President Juncker pointed out in the [State of the Union](#), it is essential to invest in the cars of the future to keep Europe at the forefront of innovation and digitisation. To this end, President Juncker announced a new industrial policy strategy. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 6 91 43; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229 50698; Julia Bräuer – Tel.: +32 229 80707)

Commissioner Jourová on official visit to Austria

On Friday 15 September Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera Jourová will travel to Austria to meet Vice-Chancellor and Justice Minister Brandstetter. Talks will mainly focus on the functioning of the prison system, security in the European Union as well as the rule of law. They will visit the youth prison of Gerasdorf, where they will discuss how to prevent radicalisation in prisons. A press conference will be organised on the premises of the prison at 11:30. In the afternoon, Commissioner Jourová and Vice-Chancellor Brandstetter will visit the exhibition "Alles was Recht

ist" organised by the region of Lower Austria.*(For more information: Christian Wigand– Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)*

Commissioner King in Tallinn to give keynote speech at EU Cybersecurity Conference

EU Security Union Commissioner Julian **King** will be in Tallinn, Estonia tomorrow to deliver the keynote speech at the [EU Cybersecurity Conference](#). The event, entitled 'Digital Single Market, Common Digital Security 2017', will focus on the current cyber threat landscape and ways to safeguard the digital single market. Topics for discussion will also include new cyber tools, such as a European Cybersecurity Agency, proposed by President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in the [2017 State of the Union address](#). *(For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 299 63444)*

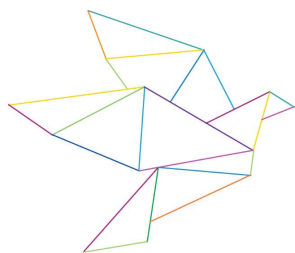
La Commissaire Crețu en Espagne pour discuter du futur de la politique de Cohésion

La Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu** sera demain en Espagne. A Madrid, elle discutera du futur de la politique de Cohésion après 2020 avec Alberto Nadal, Secrétaire d'Etat au Budget et rencontrera Manuela Carmena, la maire de la capitale. La Commissaire se rendra ensuite à Valence pour participer à "Together", un [événement](#) sur le futur de la politique de Cohésion, aux côtés notamment de Karl-Heinz Lambertz, président du Comité des Régions. La Commissaire **Crețu** a déclaré: *"Depuis plus de 30 ans la politique de Cohésion accompagne l'Espagne dans sa transition vers une économie du savoir, moderne et compétitive. Les plus de 75 000 emplois que les fonds structurels ont créés dans le pays au cours de la dernière décennie sont autant d'arguments en faveur d'une politique de Cohésion substantielle dans le futur. C'est pourquoi je souhaite que l'Espagne et les espagnols se joignent activement à la discussion sur la politique de Cohésion de demain."* Plus d'informations sur les fonds européens en Espagne sont disponibles sur [la plateforme Open Data](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

Commissioner Gabriel takes oath of independence at the European Court of Justice

Commissioner Digital Economy and Society Mariya **Gabriel** took her formal oath of office today in Luxembourg, at the Court of Justice of the EU. With this "solemn undertaking", the Member of the Commission pledged to respect the Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU, to carry out her responsibilities in complete independence and in the general interest of the Union. The Commissioner also promised not to seek or take instructions from any authorities, to refrain from engaging in actions incompatible with her duties and performance of her tasks, and to respect her obligations during and after her term of office.*(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel. +32 229 67083; Johannes Bahrke – Tel. +32 229 58615; Inga Höglund – Tel. +32 229 50698)*

State of the Union 2017 – Trade Package: Commission unveils initiatives for a balanced and progressive trade policy



On 13 September, in his annual State of the Union address, President Jean-Claude **Juncker** stated: *“I want us to strengthen our European trade agenda. Yes, Europe is open for business. But there must be reciprocity. We have to get what we give. Trade is not something abstract. Trade is about jobs, creating new opportunities for Europe’s businesses big and small. Every additional €1 billion in exports supports 14,000 extra jobs in Europe. Trade is about exporting our standards, be they social or environmental standards, data protection or food safety requirements.”*

Following the State of the Union speech by President Jean-Claude **Juncker**, the Commission has today unveiled a weighty package of trade and investment proposals for a progressive and ambitious trade agenda. The proposals include the creation of a **European screening framework** to ensure that foreign direct investment does not compromise the EU’s strategic interests when it comes to security and public order, as well as **draft mandates to open trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand**. In a move to make the EU’s trade policy the most transparent and inclusive in the world, the Commission has decided to set up an **Advisory Group on EU trade agreements** and to publish as of today any new proposal for negotiating mandates. Finally, today’s proposals include a draft mandate to start negotiations towards the creation of a **multilateral investment court**.

First Vice-President of the European Commission Frans **Timmermans** said: *“For free and fair trade we need to balance the opening of markets for trade and investment as key driver of our prosperity with international rules that uphold our high standards and common values and protect our interests. This is why we propose as part of the trade package a permanent multilateral investment court that is fair and impartial. Such a court system will enable us to get the right balance between the interests of states and investors and*

the necessary democratic legitimacy by ensuring independence, accountability and transparency."

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** said: *"Global trade needs to be proactively shaped and managed to ensure it is fair, projects values and remains firmly anchored in a rules-based system. With the rising threat of protectionism and weakened commitment of large players to global trade governance, the EU must step up to take the lead. Our approach is balanced and responsible: we open markets, but we also set high rules and standards to govern globalisation, and we make sure there is a level playing-field. Trade enables EU's industry to thrive, it creates opportunities for SMEs to export and allows them to create jobs."*

Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** said: *"The world needs leaders in trade. The EU continues to champion free and fair trade, at the forefront of a group of like-minded countries. Today's package of proposals shows this leadership in action. It also demonstrates our determination to develop EU trade policy in a way that's as open and inclusive as possible. And in the coming weeks I will be working closely with the European Parliament and EU governments, through the Council of the EU, to move these proposals forward as quickly as possible."*

The key elements of the package are:

- **A proposal for a European framework to screen foreign direct investment.** It will ensure that foreign investment remains a major source of growth in the EU while protecting the EU's essential interests. The legislative proposal is accompanied by a set of further measures that take immediate effect. These are detailed in a dedicated Communication outlining the strategic need for such a screening.
- **Recommendations to the Council to open negotiations for trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand.** These agreements would build on the recent successful agreements with Canada, Vietnam, Singapore as well as Japan among others, expanding the alliance of partners committed to progressive rules for global trade.
- **A recommendation to the Council to open negotiations to establish a multilateral court for the settlement of investment disputes.** This major innovation in global governance would be yet another step towards a more transparent, coherent and fair approach to deal with company complaints under investment protection agreements.
- **Unprecedented transparency:** With the publication of the draft mandates for bilateral trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand, and for a multilateral agreement on investment dispute settlement, the Commission has decided to **publish as of now all its recommendations for negotiating directives for trade agreements** (known as negotiating mandates). When they are submitted to the European Parliament and the Council, those documents will in parallel be sent automatically to all national Parliaments and will be made available to the general public. This should allow for a wide and inclusive debate on the planned agreements from the start. The Commission asks Member States to ensure the involvement of the relevant national and regional stakeholders in trade talks at the earliest possible stage.

- **The creation of an Advisory Group on EU trade agreements.** The group will allow the Commission to engage with civil society and gather more easily different perspectives and insights from a wide and balanced group of stakeholders, ranging from trade unions, employers' organisations, consumer groups and other non-governmental organisations. The creation of this Group is a continuation of the Commissions' efforts to make trade policy even more transparent and inclusive.

The details of today's trade package are outlined in the Communication on "A Progressive Trade Policy to Harness Globalisation". It is accompanied by a progress report on the EU trade policy strategy "Trade for All" looking at its implementation two years on.

Background

Global trade is a key contributor to a competitive and prosperous European Union, with more than 30 million jobs supported by European exports to the rest of the world. 90% of future global growth will happen outside Europe's borders. A globally integrated economy therefore continues to benefit both large and small or medium-sized European companies, as well as European citizens, workers and consumers.

In October 2015 the Commission proposed a new trade and investment strategy for the European Union, entitled "Trade for All: Towards a more responsible trade and investment policy". Today's Communication and the five initiatives are intended to build on this strategy in the context of the Commission's broader Reflection Paper on Harnessing Globalisation from May 2017.

For More Information

[Communication: A balanced and progressive trade policy to harness globalisation](#)

["Trade for all" implementation report](#)

[Press release on investment screening](#)

[Factsheet on investment screening](#)

[Draft mandate for negotiations with Australia](#)

[Draft mandate for negotiations with New Zealand](#)

[Factsheet on future negotiations with Australia and New Zealand](#)

[Draft mandate for negotiations to create a multilateral investment court](#)

[Factsheet on future negotiations for a multilateral investment court](#)

[Factsheet on transparency](#)

[PRESIDENT JEAN-CLAUDE JUNCKER'S State of the Union Address 2017](#)

98/2017 : 14 September 2017 – Opinion of the Advocate General in the case C-372/16

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Ombudsman welcomes proposals to strengthen Commissioner ethics and transparency rules

The European Ombudsman, **Emily O'Reilly**, welcomes the College of Commissioners' decision to strengthen the ethics and transparency rules governing Commissioners' activities, while in office and after they leave.

The measures, which include a much more detailed Code of Conduct for Commissioners and publishing the Independent Ethical Committee's opinions on Commissioners' post-mandate jobs, have previously been called for by the Ombudsman.

Ms O'Reilly said: *"EU politicians and public officials must be held to the highest transparency and ethical standards. It is important that the public sees that the checks and balances the Commission has in place are working."*

"Extending the cooling-off period during which former Commissioners and Commission Presidents must inform the Commission of their intention to take up a new post and tightening the rules on the declaration of interests should positively contribute to this impression."

Moves to make more information available about Commissioners' travel expenses are also encouraging as this has led to complaints to the Ombudsman in the past.

"I will examine the proposed changes in detail, in particular to verify that the new rules satisfactorily address issues that have been raised with my office," said the Ombudsman.

Background

The European Ombudsman has one on-going [case](#) concerning the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee. As part of the case, Ms O'Reilly asked nine questions about the role of the Ad Hoc Ethical Committee and how the Commission deals with the

post-mandate activities of Commissioners, including its President. Among the changes proposed by the Ombudsman were giving the Committee a stronger base and the routine publication of its opinions.

In an inquiry [Decision](#) from December 2013 on the work of the Ethics Committee, the Ombudsman looked into whether the Commission should reform the Committee, with a broader and better defined mandate.

In a [case](#) – closed in 2016 – concerning a former Commissioner, the Ombudsman suggested ways of strengthening the Code of Conduct governing Commissioners.

The Ombudsman has an ongoing case concerning Commissioners' travel expenses. Proposed transparency changes in this area will feed into the Ombudsman's final analysis in this inquiry.

The Ombudsman investigates complaints about maladministration in the EU institutions, agencies and bodies. Any EU citizen, resident, or an enterprise or association in the EU, can lodge a complaint with the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's powers include the right to inspect EU documents, call officials to testify, and to open strategic inquiries on her own initiative. For more information: www.ombudsman.europa.eu

For press inquiries: Ms Gundi Gadesmann, Head of Communication, tel.: +32 2 284 26 09, Twitter: [@EUombudsman](#)