

Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into Qualcomm's proposed acquisition of NXP

Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: “*We use our electronic devices every day – mobile phones or tablets. As semiconductors are used in practically every electronic device, we are dependent on them in those devices. With this investigation, we want to ensure that consumers will continue to benefit from secure and innovative products at competitive prices.*”

The proposed transaction involves the acquisition of the whole of NXP by Qualcomm and would combine two of the leading players in the semiconductor industry. More specifically, Qualcomm develops and supplies baseband chipsets (both standalone and integrated with an application processor) enabling cellular telecommunications standards such as UMTS and LTE. NXP is an important provider of semiconductors, in particular for the automotive industry. With respect to mobile devices, NXP is a leading provider of near-field communication (“NFC”) chips and secure elements (“SEs”).

The Commission's preliminary concerns

The Commission's initial market investigation raised several issues relating in particular to semiconductors used in mobile devices, such as smartphones, and in the automotive industry. The Commission is concerned that, following the transaction:

- The merged entity would hold strong market positions within both baseband chipsets and NFC/SEs chips, and would have the ability and incentive to exclude their rival suppliers from these markets through practices such as bundling or tying.
- The merged entity would have the ability and incentive to modify NXP's current intellectual property licensing practices, in particular in relation to NFC technology, including by bundling the acquired NFC intellectual property to Qualcomm's patent portfolio. The Commission will investigate whether such conduct could lead to anticompetitive effects, such as increased royalties for customers and/or exclusion of competitors
- The merger would remove competition between companies active in the markets for semiconductors used in the automotive sector and, in particular, in the emerging Vehicle-to-Everything (“V2X”) technology, which will play an important role in the future development of “connected cars”.

The transaction was notified to the Commission on 28 April 2017. The Commission now has 90 working days, until 17 October 2017, to take a decision. The opening of an in-depth investigation does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation.

Companies and products

Qualcomm is a leading semiconductors company, which develops and supplies integrated circuits for mobile devices, notably cellular baseband chips. Qualcomm also licenses the rights to its intellectual property portfolio, including rights to patents which are essential to the implementation within wireless production of cellular communication standards.

NXP Semiconductors manufactures and sells different categories of semiconductors, including semiconductors for the automotive sector and semiconductors for the mobile device sector, notably, NFC solutions.

Merger control rules and procedures

The Commission has the duty to assess mergers and acquisitions involving companies with a turnover above certain thresholds (see Article 1 of the Merger Regulation) and to prevent concentrations that would significantly impede effective competition in the EEA or any substantial part of it.

The vast majority of notified mergers do not pose competition problems and are cleared after a routine review. From the moment a transaction is notified, the Commission generally has a total of 25 working days to decide whether to grant approval (Phase I) or to start an in-depth investigation (Phase II).

More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.8306](#).

EU secures another important win in the WTO Boeing Dispute

The WTO ruling confirms that the United States has taken no appropriate action to comply with its obligation to withdraw subsidies declared illegal by the WTO's Appellate Body in 2012, or to remove their adverse effects.

Today's ruling backs the EU position, finding that the US has not only failed to remove the existing subsidies but has extended them and added significant new distorting subsidies, including incentives from South Carolina and a US Federal Aviation Administration R&D programme. The panel also found that US subsidies to Boeing continue to cause severe damage to Airbus in lost sales and market opportunities.

'Today's ruling is another victory for the EU, its industry and EU workers in this strategic sector. The panel agrees that the US has simply ignored existing WTO rulings and has continued to subsidise Boeing,' said EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström. 'We will continue to firmly defend our

industry to ensure we have a level-playing-field. EU companies must be able to compete on fair and equal terms. Today's panel report is an important step in that direction.'

In 2012, the WTO ruled that the United States had granted massive subsidies to Boeing in violation of WTO rules. Between 1989 and 2006 Boeing benefited from NASA, US Department of Defense and Washington State/Kansas subsidies totalling over \$5 billion. The subsidies allowed Boeing to sell its aircraft more cheaply, to the detriment of Airbus. The illegal subsidies include export support, direct grants, free access to facilities, technology transfer at no cost, and tax abatements.

Today's findings add to another [WTO ruling of November 2016](#) in which – for the first time in the aircraft disputes – the WTO found the US guilty of providing prohibited subsidies to Boeing of around \$5.7 billion. These subsidies by Washington State were conditional on the use of domestic over imported goods. Under WTO rules, these are the worst kind of subsidies and they caused further severe harm to Airbus' market position.

For More Information

[History of the Boeing WTO case](#)

[WTO dispute resolution](#)

Speech by Federica Mogherini, High Representative/Vice-President

Check against delivery!

Thank you.

It is indeed a pleasure for me to be here and in particular – if I can – to take the floor just after Rose [Gottemoeller, Deputy Secretary General of NATO], a good friend. Indeed we have been working together for quite some time, on non-proliferation first – and indeed Prague is a symbolic but also politically very relevant place to remember that non-proliferation on nuclear issues is part of our security and defence – but also now in your new capacity, as the first woman Deputy Secretary General of NATO, in a moment when women in European defence are quite many. Let me welcome here the new Minister of Defence of France, a good friend, Sylvie Goulard, who will help us pushing forward also the European defence agenda.

But beyond personal ties, I am happy to take the floor just after Rose

[Gottemoeller] because this is truly an exceptional moment for cooperation between the European Union and NATO. You said it very well Rose [Gottemoeller], a strong European Union defence makes NATO strong and we are seeing this in our daily work, and a strong NATO makes the European defence strong; and to us, in the European Union, there is no doubt about that, it is self-evident.

There can be no competition between our institutions and this has been evident over the last year. The European Union has taken unprecedented steps in the field of our common security and defence so we have advanced the European Union defence. And at the very same time in parallel, we have signed – as many of you have mentioned – a EU-NATO Joint Declaration last year in Warsaw that would have been just unthinkable a few years ago. And the two things have managed to go hand in hand in parallel, perfectly well, last year and we are continuing.

This is not a declaration of intent. As Rose said, this is a practical plan for action with 42 specific fields of action – a plan that has already led to more information sharing between the European Union and NATO, more joint planning, more concrete cooperation and Jens Stoltenberg [Secretary General of NATO] and myself are already presenting in these days a joint report – also this, unthinkable a few years ago, probably a few months ago – to our respective Councils on our 42 joint actions. So, this is the time to get things done, and this is my main message today.

From our side, from the European Union side, the approach we have chosen in this last year for our work on security and defence is get things done. We have spent many years and decades with big ideological debate about the European defence – we have been discussing about the European Defence community for the past 60 years and this is the time now to get things done and moving, and today finally, I believe we are succeeding where all previous generations have failed.

Let me be very open about this. If we are heading towards a European Union of security and defence, this is not because the United-Kingdom is leaving the European Union – I understand that today there is another story around that – or because of shifts across the Atlantic. We are doing this because we need it and we want it.

First of all, the public support for a European Union security and defence cooperation that is stronger than today is clear all across Europe, from North to South, from East to West, across the political spectrum, there is one thing that European citizens say clear and loud, they want more European Union in defence and security.

Second, because we need to ensure the security of our citizens. In the past eight, nine, ten years, the main priority for European citizens was economy. It still is, but just after the Lisbon Treaty that offers us incredible tools on security and defence, the European public opinion and political decision-making were focused on economy, economy, economy. We let a little aside the work on security and defence, forgetting or refusing to use instruments that still were there. Now our citizens all across Europe put security among the

first, second priorities everywhere in Europe. So, we have a duty to deliver as Europeans.

And third, because we can do it and we need to do it the European way. Rose [Gotttemoeller] quoted me, it is probably not very elegant to quote her quoting me but it is true that we have a specific European way to security. Because we have the complexity that sometimes makes things difficult, but we know that there is no single threat in the world of today that can be tackled only with one instrument, being it military or others.

We have as European Union a unique mix of tools that no other actor on the global scene has and we have the unique experience of having built regional integration through cooperation. We have our history on our side; we have decided to create the European Union when we realised that making business together was much more convenient than making war. And this is a very powerful basis to work with our partners in the world on the basis of cooperation and partnership to build security and guarantee that there is an integrated approach to security.

And we understand perfectly well in the European Union that climate change is also part of security, that humanitarian aid is also part of security, that development is also part of security. So we need to work on security also because there is a specific European way, a European added-value that the world needs today, not only the European citizens.

We do it for us, we do it also for our friends and yes, things are moving fast today. Take only this week: on Wednesday, we launched the European Defence Fund and yesterday the first command centre for our military training missions was established in Brussels. And many believed and told me – you cannot imagine how many and how many times – that it would have proven to be impossible for us to have a first command centre in Brussels for our military and training missions or that it would take us years, decades to do it. It took us a few weeks. And we decided it together, still at 28, and we did it.

The European defence is the field where we are proving that the level of unity and speed of our decision making in the European Union is more than good, it is excellent. Some ask even if we are not going too fast – well, I am fine with that. Normally we are accused of being slow and disunited, divided. I think we are showing that the European Union can be united and deliver.

But it is true that we laid down the groundworks for these achievements a couple of years ago. When we start out mandate, I remember very well Jean-Claude [Juncker, President of the European Commission]'s address to the European Parliament in 2014 was pointing at this objective clearly. I remember as if it was yesterday in my hearing in the European Parliament. We were discussing with the Members of the European Parliament the need to use all the potential that the treaties give us in the field of security and defence. So it was really the very first days of our mandate.

Jean-Claude [Juncker, President of the European Commission] has mentioned the failure of the European Defence Community back in the 1950s, and the long-

lasting scar that it has left. But in the course of the last two years, many of us, many of us, have believed that change could happen in our generation and I would say even in our mandate which is less than a generation. And, today, not in a faraway future.

And change is happening in spite of all the prophecies about an inevitable decline of the project of European integration. A little bit more than one year ago, many commentators were saying that it was the beginning of the end for the European Union. Well, I think we are far from that.

We have come to this point thanks to a broad, collective process and also because of the stubbornness of a few of us, because stubbornness sometimes is a good thing. Our Global Strategy for foreign and security policy is the product of a continent-wide consultations with governments, with parliaments, with think-tanks, students, public opinion at large and well beyond Europe with our partners and friends from East Asia to Latin America. Because the European Union is already today a global player and a global security provider.

And let me tell you that sometimes I think that in Europe we realise it much less than our partners in the world do. Our partners in the world value and need the European Union as their global partner. And throughout this process of consultations last year, we all realised very clearly that the time was ripe for bold steps forward, on European security and defence.

First, because our citizens need more security – each terrorist attack in our cities is a tragic reminder of this simple truth. And our citizens realise very well that their security requires a stronger European Union, in a world of giants, where size matters and global threats have no borders. I often say Member States are of two kinds: the small ones and the ones that have not yet realised that they are small. This is the world we are living in. We need the size of our continent, of our Union, to be efficient on security and demand for more integration and defence has topped the Eurobarometer survey for years now, well before the British referendum and the current US administration.

We also realise that events outside of our borders are increasingly affecting our own security. The link is there. Every European citizen realises that what happens outside of Europe has an impact on our own security. I can tell you an example: just on Monday I was in the Sahel again, for my tenth visits to sub-Saharan Africa. And instability in that region inevitably brings instability to the Mediterranean which means also to Europe. And our partners there need our support to confront terrorist groups, criminal networks and gangs of traffickers of all kinds, including of human beings.

And the best way we have to support them is first of all together, as a Union, as we are doing already with three military and civilian missions in Mali and Niger, and as we have decided to do even more now. I was proud on Sunday to visit our men and women in uniforms serving in Mali under the European Union flag of so many different Member States. And I was particularly proud in Bamako to announce on Monday that the European Union is going to provide the first support to the G5 Sahel joint force to fight

terrorists and criminal networks with €50 million. And I hope, I am sure others, including Member-States, will follow quickly.

A safer European Union is one that can engage outside our borders, supporting our partners in this manner or through humanitarian aid, through our development policies, and also with military means when necessary.

In over one year of consultations, we agreed on a shared vision for our external action with the Global Strategy – including the need to head towards a European Union of security and defence. It is now one year since I presented the Global Strategy [for foreign and security policies] to the European Council. Let me go back to that moment for one second.

Some predicted back then that the [Global] Strategy [for foreign and security policies] would stay in a drawer, as all the attention shifted at that time towards the outcome of the British referendum. I will not comment on the perspectives of Brexit – especially not today. But in one year, it is clear that in the European Union the vision laid out by the Global Strategy [for foreign and security policies] has already been translated into concrete action to a level that no one would have bet on back then.

The European Union is often accused to be too slow or bureaucratic. Forgive me if I make the comparison, but yesterday our British friends have gone to the polls. One year after the referendum, we still do not know the British position in the negotiations on Brexit and it seems difficult to predict when we will, because democracy often requires time, and I very much respect that – it is a complex process. But, what I know for sure is that in the same amount of time – in one year, in less than one year – on the European Union side we have managed to defy the sceptics again and again, moving fast and with very concrete steps towards a European Union of security and defence.

We can go fast, we can go together, we can go united in the right direction – and it is not impossible, on the contrary if the direction is right, if there is a strong determination – we can make it and we are making it. Sometimes I believe we need to be a little bit more self-confident about our potential.

So, let me just mention to conclude a few, four concrete steps we have already agreed on, on security and defence and that we are doing already.

First, that we will invest together and we are setting up a coordinated annual review of national defence budgets. This is going to start this autumn and this is potentially revolutionary for the way in which Member States can spend their money on defence.

Second, we will research, produce and buy together – thanks to the European Defence Fund we have decided to establish just on Wednesday – and I would like to thank here both Elżbieta Bieńkowska [European Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs] and Jyrki Katainen [Vice-President of European Commission, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness] for the excellent work we have done together with our teams to get to this point. This is a real game-changer for the European defence industry, including the small and medium enterprises.

Third, we will train our troops together – yesterday I was in Zaragoza, in Spain, at the inauguration of a new European Airlift Training Centre and just let me tell you this: until a few years ago, our aircrews had to be trained in the United States [of America], now we have built that capability here in Europe, for all our Member States. I see that some of our partners that are not in Europe are starting to look at this also as a very attractive service and this is thanks to the remarkable work of our European Defence Agency.

And fourth, and last, we will steer our missions together – with the new command centre for military training missions, which has been established just yesterday in Brussels.

The European Union Member States, taken collectively, have the second largest defence budget in the world. Are we not a superpower? If we are together, we are. But these investments, as President Juncker said, are dispersed and fragmented in too many different directions. With coordination, joint programming, economies of scale, our defence spending can achieve much much more. What we have to work on is especially the output gap – for one euro invested how much we get out of that – and that is something we can achieve with the economy of scale with our size. This is something we all realise today. All of us, all 28 Member States, all European institutions.

Jean-Claude [Juncker, President of the European Commission] spoke of a time when only a few “believers” wanted to push towards a common European defence. Things change. This is the good news of today. Every decision we have taken on security and defence this year, every decision we are implementing including a cooperation with NATO has been the result of a decision taken by all 28 governments – still 28, united.

We have worked on this together, with the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Ministers of Defence, the Ministers of Development, in all Council formations including in the European Council with the Heads of State and Government – and I would like here to publicly thank the Czech Republic, the Prime Minister [of the Czech Republic, Bohuslav Sobotka], the Foreign Minister [of the Czech Republic, Lubomir Zaoralek], the Defence Minister [Martin Stropnický], for the excellent support that the Czech Republic has always given to this process.

We have worked on this together, all together. And also the framework for a Permanent Structured Cooperation – the sleeping beauty as Jean-Claude [Juncker, President of the European Commission] called it – on Defence is being agreed in these weeks, at 28, including those that might decide not to take part in that. Not only the Council, the Commission has provided a strong political support and the concrete, concrete instrument with the new Defence Fund. And the European Defence Agency and the EU Military staff are contributing enormously with their professionalism and expertise. And the [European] Parliament. It has discussed, endorsed and encouraged every dingle step of this work. Every single step.

The work we are doing belongs to all – to all Member States, to all institutions and to all European citizens. We always say we are divided – let me tell you, for sure not on European security and defence.

Today, thanks to this determination, thanks to this sense of ownership and unity, today, a European Union of security and defence is finally taking shape. Our citizens need it, our partners ask for it, and we are delivering on it. Change in the European Union is possible – I think this an overall message we can take back home – and it is a matter of political will. We have it, we are bringing change, for our European Union and for our world that – let me tell you – desperately needs a reliable, strong, credible, cooperative, effective, smart, global player as the European Union is.

Thank you very much.

12th European Union-Thailand Senior Officials' Meeting

The 12th EU-Thailand Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) took place at the European External Action Service in Brussels on 9 June 2017. The EU side was chaired by Mr Gunnar Wiegand, Managing Director, Asia and the Pacific, European External Action Service. The Thai side was chaired by Mr Songphol Sukchan, Director-General of the Department of European Affairs, Royal Thai Foreign Ministry.

It was the first SOM since 2012. The EU and Thai senior officials held an open and friendly exchange on a broad range of issues of mutual interest with regard to the development of their relations. Prior to the SOM, the EU-Thailand Working Group on Trade and Investment was also convened.

The discussions included political, security, economic, trade, development cooperation, environmental as well as human rights issues in Thailand and the EU, together with regional and international matters. ASEAN integration and Thailand's role as ASEAN coordinator for the EU figured prominently in the meeting. The EU and Thailand remain committed to the global efforts against climate change and the implementation of the Paris Agreement.

The meeting provided an opportunity to discuss, in particular, the on-going substantial and intense dialogues concerning illegal fishing (IUU), labour issues and prevention of human trafficking, as well as air safety and to underline the need to complete the implementation of the ongoing reforms. Both sides welcomed that Thailand and the European Union will hold the first negotiation round for a Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) on Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) to strengthen cooperation on tackling illegal logging of timber and related trade later this month. Bilateral cooperation was also discussed on sustainable development, and science, technology and innovation.

Legislative preparations are being made for Thailand's general election which, with all the required processes being met in accordance with the

timeline under the Constitution, could take place by the end of 2018. Against this background the two sides discussed not only the current cooperation, but also prospects for closer ties. The co-chairs concurred that the SOM was a significant step for facilitating future strengthened engagement and closer cooperation between the European Union and Thailand.

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In defence of Europe: President Juncker makes strong call for greater EU cooperation on defence

President **Juncker** is in Prague where today he is attending the high-level conference on defence and security. He delivered a keynote speech on European defence this morning in which underlined that feeling safe and secure in your own home "*is the most basic and universal of rights*". The European Union has "*promoted peace, universal values and inclusive growth right around the world*", President **Juncker** said, "*but it is time to go further*". In today's world, a strong NAT0, a strong European Union and a strong relationship between the two, "*are more important than they ever have been before*"

President **Juncker** said, adding that by stepping up their efforts on defence, and by doing so together, the Member States of the Union will strengthen the ties that bind the Allies within NAT0. "*The protection of Europe can no longer be outsourced*" President **Juncker** said, "*Europe has no other choice than to defend our own interests in the Middle East, in climate change and in our trade agreements*". This is why the European Commission has proposed a European Defence Fund, to improve the efficiency of European defence spending, and it is why the Commission has proposed that the Union use the legal means at its disposal to move away from the current patchwork of bilateral and multilateral military cooperation to more efficient forms of defence integration. "*I am talking about permanent structured cooperation, the Sleeping Beauty of the Lisbon Treaty [...] The time to make use of this possibility is now*", President **Juncker** said, concluding that Europeans are in favour of a common security and defence policy, "*they want their Union to do more to protect them from threats old and new, and it is time we listened*".

The full speech is available [online](#). The press conference by President **Juncker**, Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and NAT0 deputy Secretary-General Rose Gottemoeller can be watched on [EbS](#). Today's conference is taking place days after the Commission published a series of proposals on the future of European Defence, including a [proposal for the establishment of a European Defence Fund](#), as well as a [reflection paper](#) on the future of European defence by 2025. The High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini**, Vice-President **Katainen** and Commissioner **Bienkowska** are also in Prague attending the conference today. Re-watch the press conference with High Representative **Mogherini** and Vice-President **Katainen** on [EbS](#). (For more information: Mina Andreeva – Tel.: +32 229 91382; Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456)

Commission seeks a mandate from Member States to negotiate with Russia an agreement on Nord Stream 2

The European Commission has today adopted a request for the Council of the European Union for a mandate to negotiate with the Russian Federation the key principles for the operation of the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project. The Commission seeks to ensure that, if built, Nord Stream 2 operates in a transparent and non-discriminatory way with an appropriate degree of regulatory oversight, in line with key principles of international and EU energy law. The Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič said: *“Creating a well-diversified and competitive gas market is a priority of the EU’s energy security and Energy Union strategy. As we have stated already several times, Nord Stream 2 does not contribute to the Energy Union’s objectives. If the pipeline is nevertheless built, the least we have to do is to make sure that it will be operated in a transparent manner and in line with the main EU energy market rules.”* Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete added: *“As any other infrastructure project in the EU, Nord Stream 2 cannot and should not operate in a legal void or according to a third country’s energy laws only. We are seeking to obtain a Council mandate to negotiate with Russia a specific regime which will apply key principles of EU energy law to Nord Stream 2 to preserve the functioning of the European internal energy market”*. The Commission is committed to the Energy Union objectives, including energy security. The priority is to create a well-diversified and competitive gas market. The work to consequently dismantle barriers to trade and supporting critical gas infrastructure is ongoing. The full press release is available online in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

The Commission imposes import duties to counter Chinese subsidies on steel

The Commission decided today to impose [definitive anti-subsidy duties](#) of up to 35.9% on Chinese hot-rolled flat steel used in shipbuilding, gas containers, pressure vessels, tubes and energy pipelines. Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said: *“We are continuing to act, when necessary, against unfair trading conditions in the steel sector, and against foreign dumping. With today’s decision we take another instrument from our trade defence toolbox, to shield our industry from damaging effects of unfair foreign subsidies. I hope our decision and the discussions in the Global Forum dedicated to the problem of steel overcapacity will eventually convince China to remove its unfair schemes to ensure a level playing field for all steel producers”*. As confirmed by the Commission’s investigation, the Chinese industry benefits from preferential lending, tax rebates and other substantial financial injections that allow it to export to the EU at artificially low prices. This creates a threat of imminent economic damage to EU producers, whose profitability sharply decreased. The today’s anti-subsidy measure comes on top of over 40 anti-dumping decisions taken so far by the Commission to re-establish a playing-level field for European steel

producers, including [anti-dumping duties](#) imposed on the same product in the beginning of April. The Commission runs also an anti-dumping investigation on imports of hot-rolled steel from [Brazil, Iran, Russia, Serbia and Ukraine](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: + 32 229 93265; Kinga Malinowska- Tel.: +32 229 51383)

Commission welcomes Member States' agreement to make cross border parcel delivery services in the EU cheaper

The Commission welcomes the agreement reached today on its legislative proposal to ensure that consumers and retailers can benefit from affordable parcel deliveries and convenient return options even to and from peripheral regions in the EU. High delivery and return shipping costs are the most common reasons for not buying online from another EU country – only 18% of consumers do so. Prices charged by postal operators to deliver a small parcel to another Member State are often up to 5 times higher than domestic prices, without a clear correlation to the actual costs. [Proposed by the Commission in May 2016](#) as part of a wider effort to give e-commerce a much needed boost, the new rules will foster competition by increasing price transparency, and give national postal regulators the tools to monitor cross-border markets and check the affordability of prices. Vice-President for the [Digital Single Market](#) Andrus Ansip said: "*I warmly thank the Maltese Presidency for the progress made on our proposals to create a Digital Single Market. Thanks to more transparent and affordable delivery prices, more consumers will shop online across borders, more small companies will sell to other EU countries. It's excellent news for e-commerce in the EU. I hope we can reach a final agreement on this proposal with the European Parliament under Estonia's upcoming EU Presidency.*" Commissioner Elżbieta Biénkowska, responsible for Internal Market and Industry, added: "*High tariffs for parcel delivery and inconvenient return options stop consumers from buying online from other Member States. Tackling these issues is vital in helping consumers and companies, especially SMEs, make the most of the EU Single Market.*" The Commission's [proposal for a Regulation on cross-border parcel delivery services](#) complements initiatives to improve cross-border parcel delivery services taken by postal operators and by e-retail associations, as well as a proposal for new standards in the parcel sector that include quality of service measurements. During today's meeting in Luxembourg, the Council of Ministers in charge of telecommunications also discussed the [proposal for a European Electronic Communications Code](#) as well as the review of the [e-privacy Directive](#). This afternoon, the Commission will give a state of play of the Digital Single Market strategy, cybersecurity initiatives and the Estonian delegation will present the digital priorities of the Estonian Presidency of the Council starting on 1 July. See also [this factsheet](#) and [MEMO/16/1896](#) on e-commerce. (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel.: + 32 229 56182; Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: + 32 229 67083; Mirna Talko – Tel.: +32 229 8727; Inga Hoglund – Tel.: + 32 229 50698)

Commission launches a new online tool to exchange information on companies

The European Commission launched today a single platform to access company information in the EU. Linking national business registers will facilitate cross-border trade and increase confidence and transparency in the EU Single

Market. With an increasing number of cross-border businesses using the opportunities offered by the single market, the demand for access to information on companies with businesses in different Member States has increased. Before the introduction of this new platform, information on companies had to be requested separately from the diverse national registers through often lengthy and costly procedures. Commissioner Věra Jourová explains: *"When working together with other companies, businesses, consumers, investors and authorities want to quickly check whether these companies really exist, whether they are trustworthy and who is legally representing the company. The interconnection of business registers will contribute to a more transparent and trustworthy environment for making business in the Single Market."* Thanks to this new system, citizens, businesses and national authorities will be able to search for information filed by companies in the national registers. In addition, the new system will improve the communication between registers by allowing them to exchange trustworthy information on companies between each other. The service has been set up in close cooperation between the Commission and the Member States under the [Directive on interconnection of EU business registers](#) (BRIS). The business register search is available [here](#). (For more info: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Mélanie Voin – Tel.: +32 229 58659)

First Employment and Social Innovation agreement in Montenegro

The [European Investment Fund \(EIF\)](#) and [Crnogorska Komercijalna Banka AD \(CKB\)](#) have signed the first transaction in Montenegro under the [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation](#) (EaSI). The EaSI guarantee agreement with CKB will allow up to 700 Montenegrin micro-borrowers to benefit from €5 million worth of financing over the next five years. Thanks to the joint backing of EIF and the European Commission, CKB will be able to reach out to micro-borrowers country-wide, including in rural and remote areas. Commenting on the transaction, Marianne Thyssen, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *"Thanks to our EaSI guarantee, CKB will be able to provide loans at reduced interest rates to 700 micro-entrepreneurs who are excluded from commercial bank funding. The European Commission is fully committed to promoting inclusive entrepreneurship in the fight against social and financial exclusion. I therefore warmly welcome today's agreement with CKB, which marks the first of its kind in Montenegro under the EaSI programme."* More information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: +32 229 67094)

Better Regulation policy simplifies environmental reporting: more information for citizens, less administrative burden

Today the European Commission adopted an [Action Plan](#) to improve citizens' access to high quality information on environmental issues whilst cutting administrative burdens for industry and public authorities in EU Member States. Europe's citizens have the right to know how EU policies are improving air and water quality, waste management or nature protection. The Action Plan adopted today will ensure that high quality information is widely available and accessible at the local level. Businesses involved in reporting and regulatory monitoring will face simpler procedures and policy makers will

have access to higher quality information to underpin decisions. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, responsible for Better Regulation said, “*This action plan is about simplifying environmental reporting and informing citizens better. It's a good example of how better regulation helps us uphold our high environmental standards and meet our evidence-based policy objectives.*” Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: “*Two weeks ago we adopted the new [Bathing Water Report](#) which is of huge interest to anyone who uses Europe's beaches; last year the information was accessed and searched directly more than a million times. This underlines the desire from citizens for useful information that can be processed, understood and shared quickly. Our ambition is to replicate this positive experience for all environmental reporting.*” More details [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

La Belgique se joint à la coopération européenne sur le calcul à haute performance

La Belgique est le huitième État membre de l'Union européenne à signer la déclaration européenne sur le [calcul à haute performance](#). La Belgique participera aux efforts conjoints pour construire la prochaine génération de superordinateurs en Europe. Le vice-président de la Commission européenne Andrus **Ansip** a déclaré : “*Je suis ravi que la Belgique fasse désormais partie de ce projet ambitieux. Les superordinateurs conduisent à de nombreuses applications avec des bénéfices directs pour les citoyens. Mais les pays européens, seuls, ne sont pas capables de construire et d'entretenir une telle infrastructure. C'est pourquoi nous devons unir nos forces, et j'invite encore plus de pays à se joindre à cette initiative*”. La [déclaration sur le calcul à haute performance](#) a été lancée et signée à Rome en mars 2017 par l'Allemagne, la France, l'Italie, le Luxembourg, les Pays-Bas, le Portugal et l'Espagne. Plus d'information [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 2 296 70 83 ; Inga Höglund – Tel: +32 2 295 06 98)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of DWS by Goldman Sachs and Eurazeo

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control of Dominion Web Solutions, LLC ('DWS') by Goldman Sachs, both of the US and Eurazeo, of France. DWS provides online marketplaces and related digital marketing solutions in the US for the sale of vehicles and equipment. Goldman Sachs is active in global investment banking, securities and investment management services, and Eurazeo is a financial investor. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because DWS has no, or negligible, actual or foreseen activities in the European Economic Area. 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.8503](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Federica Mogherini at Kulturanta talks in Finland

On Sunday, High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will visit Finland to participate at Kulturanta talks under the auspices of Mr Sauli Niinistö, President of Finland. She will be attending a panel focussing on the European security issues and foreign policy challenges, together with Børge Brende, Foreign Minister of Norway and Rose Gottemoeller, Deputy Secretary General of NATO. HRVP **Mogherini** will also hold a bilateral meeting with President Niinistö. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Esther Osorio – Tel.: +32 229 62076)

Vice-President Šefčovič in Astana for the opening of the EXPO 2017 “Future Energy”

On 10-12 June Vice-President for Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** will be travelling to Kazakhstan to visit the World Universal Exhibition EXPO 2017 “Future Energy” in Astana. 115 countries and 20 international organizations will participate in the EXPO 2017. In this context, Vice-President **Šefčovič** will give a keynote speech at the 8th International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development, held under the auspices of the EXPO. The Forum will focus on energy security, trade and infrastructure, the energy-climate and food nexus, and the development of renewable energy in a regional context. During his visit, he will hold bilateral meetings with Kazakh Prime Minister Sagintayev and Kazakh Energy Minister Bozumbayev and also a series of meetings with Energy Ministers of participating countries. Ahead of the visit, Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *“I welcome the determination of Kazakh authorities in pursuing the clean energy transition. This commitment is manifested in the three months World Universal Exhibition which aims at promoting high-technologies for achieving a sustainable and low-carbon energy mix. Kazakhstan has embarked on an ambitious path towards achieving its energy transition. The country also continues to remain a major energy supplier and contributor towards diversification of energy sources for the EU markets. The external dimension of the [Energy Union](#) is key as we strive to work with our partners and neighbours to enhance security of supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and ensure affordable energy”*. See the full Energy Ministerial program in Astana [online](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

Commissioners Arias Cañete, Vella in Bologna for G7 Environment Ministers’ Meeting

On 11-12 June, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** and Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** will be in Bologna to participate in a Group of 7 (G7) Environment Ministers’ Meeting, chaired by Italian Minister of Environment, Land and Sea Gian Luca Galletti. Taking place under the Italian presidency of the G7, the meeting will focus on implementation of the Paris Agreement on climate change, the 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals, resource efficiency, marine litter as well as [financing sustainability](#) to trigger investments for the clean and modern economy supporting jobs and growth. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** will attend the sessions on 11 June and Commissioner **Vella** will attend the sessions and the closing press conference on 12 June. Both Commissioners

will conduct bilateral discussions in the margins with the participants from other G7 countries. The G7 comprises Canada (with Minister of the Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna), France (with Minister of Ecological and Solidary Transition Nicolas Hulot), Germany (with Minister for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety Barbara Hendricks), Italy (with Minister for the Environment Gianluca Galletti), Japan (with Minister of the Environment Koichi Yamamoto), the United Kingdom (with Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Andrea Leadsom) and the United States (with the United States Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt). The EU is represented at this G7 meeting by the European Commission. Information on the G7 Environment Ministers' Meeting is available [here](#). (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.:+32 229 52589)

[Calendar](#)

The Commissioners' weekly activities

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