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## [Joint statement on the occasion of the European Immunisation Week by European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and WHO Regional Director for Europe Zsuzsanna Jakab](#)

### **Vaccination – we must not take the benefits for granted**

Vaccines have contributed to the health and wellbeing of everyone alive today in the European Union and the wider WHO European Region. In the last 60 years, immunisation has saved more children's lives than any other medical intervention.

The impact of this revolution in disease prevention over just a few decades is enormous. Smallpox, once one of the world's most devastating diseases, was declared eradicated in 1980 following a global immunisation campaign led by WHO.

Measles caused an estimated 2.6 million deaths each year, before widespread vaccination was put in place in 1980. Thanks to Maurice Hilleman's measles vaccine this highly contagious disease is now preventable.

It is a blessing and an achievement that these diseases are largely behind us. However, we cannot take the unprecedented good health of our population for granted. After a record low number of measles cases reported in Europe in 2016, an upsurge in cases reported so far in 2017 is affecting babies too young to be vaccinated as well as adults of all ages and health workers who have never been immunised.

Vaccines are one of the safest and most cost-effective ways to ensure public health and avoid preventable diseases. However, health system barriers still prevent some people from becoming fully immunised. Decreasing public trust in immunisation also poses a serious threat that cannot be ignored. Anti-

vaccination myths and lack of knowledge can lead to people refusing vaccines, which in turn might open the door to disease outbreaks.

Human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccines promise to drastically reduce the risk of cervical cancer and other diseases, but uptake among adolescent girls has fallen in some countries leaving them vulnerable to this common virus. Moreover, influenza and other vaccine-preventable diseases continue to threaten the health of pregnant women and older adults.

It is distressing that some public figures irresponsibly use their position to contribute to distrust of vaccines. Debunking myths, promoting science-based arguments and ensuring that individuals understand the importance of vaccines at every stage of life is as crucial as providing equitable access to the vaccines available to protect them.

Each year, European Immunisation Week celebrates the tremendous progress that has been made thanks to vaccines, and reminds us that our work is far from finished.

The benefits of vaccines are a matter of fact, not a matter of opinion. We must put an end to the growing scepticism towards immunisation which threatens to reverse the strides we have made in public health. To be successful, immunisation programmes need the commitment and support of the entire community.

Our joint resolve to protect the health and wellbeing of all of our communities now and in the future is stronger than ever. By endorsing the European Vaccine Action Plan, the European Health 2020 policy framework and most recently the Sustainable Development Goals, our Member States have signalled their strong commitment to promoting vaccination as a driving force for improved health in Europe and the wider world.

We invite everyone to join in their country's celebration of vaccines and in helping to spread the word that #VaccinesWork for us all.

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## **CALENDRIER du 24 avril au 30 avril** **2017**

*(Susceptible de modifications en cours de semaine)*

*Déplacements et visites*

**Lundi 24 avril 2017**

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Michael Ignatieff, President and Rector of

the Central European University (CEU).

Ms Federica **Mogherini** in Moscow, Russia: on official visit.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives Ms Sharon White, CEO of Ofcom – the independent regulator and competition authority for the UK communications industries.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** in Hannover, Germany (until 24/04): attends the opening ceremony of “[Hannover Trade Fair 2017](#)” together with Ms Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany and Ms Beata Szydło, Prime Minister of Poland; meets several exhibitors of the fair; and delivers a keynote speech at the Forum “Life needs Power”.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** and Ms Marianne **Thyssen** receive social partners for an exchange on the European Pillar of Social Rights.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** delivers the concluding remarks at the “[Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth](#)”, organised by the European Commission, in Brussels.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** in Bratislava, Slovakia: participates in the “[Conference of Speakers of Parliaments in the European Union](#)” and delivers a keynote speech on the Future of Europe; and participates in a working lunch with business associations on the Investment Plan for Europe and on the Future of Europe.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers a keynote address at an event on the circular economy in the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** participates in a working dinner with Ms Esa Pulkkinen, Director-General of the EU Military Staff, in Brussels.

Mr Günther H. **Oettinger** in Hannover, Germany (until 24/04): attends the “[Hannover Trade Fair 2017](#)”.

Mr Johannes **Hahn** receives Mr Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Washington, the United States (until 25/04): participates in a reception to receive the “Women of the Year Award” by the Association of Women in International Trade (WIIT); meets Mr Wilbur Ross, Secretary of Commerce of the USA; and participates in discussions with trade experts and academics.

Mr Neven **Mimica** receives Ms Abou-Zeid Amani, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy.

Mr Neven **Mimica** co-hosts together with Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** a high-level roundtable on renewable energy investments in Africa with CEOs of European renewable energy companies, in Brussels.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Alberto Núñez Feijóo, President of the Xunta of Galicia, Spain.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** receives Mr Daniel Oh, President and CEO of Renewable Energy Group (REG).

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Ms Susi Pudjiastuti, Minister for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** and Ms Violeta **Bulc** deliver a keynote speech at the conference [“Noise in Europe”](#), in Brussels.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** meets Mr Christián Samper, President and CEO of the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), in Brussels.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Ms Thorgerdur Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture of Iceland.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives representatives of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Mr Bruno Giuffra Monteverde, Minister for Production of Peru.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** delivers a keynote opening speech at the [“Annual Convention for Inclusive Growth”](#), organised by the European Commission, in Brussels.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France: participe à une [“Conférence sur l’avenir de l’Europe”](#) organisée par l’Association du Master Affaires européennes de Paris IV et la Maison Heinrich Heine.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** receives Mr Jamie McGoldrick, United Nations Resident Coordinator/Humanitarian Coordinator and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative for the Republic of Yemen.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Ireland: delivers a speech at the Irish Farmers’ Association event; and a keynote speech about “Agricultural Policy in Europe” at the [Annual conference](#) of Agricultural Economics Society.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** in Hannover, Germany: attends [“Hannover Trade Fair”](#); and meets Ms Beata Szydło, Prime Minister of Poland.

Ms Věra **Jourová** delivers a keynote speech at the International Film festival of documentary films on Human rights [“One World”](#), in Brussels.

Mr Tibor **Navracsics** receives Mr Michael Ignatieff, President and Rector of the Central European University (CEU)

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Luxembourg: meets Mr Vazil Hudák, Vice-President of the European Investment Bank (EIB); Mr Klaus-Heiner Lehne, President of the European Court of Auditors; and Ms Iliana Ivanova, Member of the European Court of Auditors.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** receives Mr Ryszard Petru, Member of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) and leader of “Nowoczesna” political party.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Mr Michael Ignatieff, President and Rector of the Central European University (CEU)

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives representatives of the European Group of Ethics.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Mr Alberto Núñez Feijóo, President of the Xunta of Galicia, Spain.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Peter Grauer, Chairman of Bloomberg LP.

## **Mardi 25 avril 2017**

General Affairs Council

25-26/04 Informal meeting of environment ministers

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr Ryszard Petru, Member of the Polish Parliament (Sejm) and leader of “Nowoczesna” political party.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** receives representatives of EU28 Cybersecurity agencies.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives a delegation from the European Distribution System Operators’ Association (EDSO) for Smart Grids.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** takes part in a high-level panel debate on the North Sea cooperation, in Brussels.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Bruges, Belgium: delivers a keynote speech at the “[8th Bruges European Business Conference](#)”, organised by the College of Europe and Deloitte.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers a keynote address at the event “[How to strengthen the European defence market](#),” organised by the Centre for European Reform and Kreab, in Brussels.

Mr Günther H. **Oettinger** in Hannover, Germany: visits the stands at [Hannover Trade Fair 2017](#) together with Ms Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany, and Ms Beata Szydło, Prime Minister of Poland; delivers a keynote speech “The Future of Europe” at the stand of German Electrical and Electronic Manufacturers’ Association (ZVEI); and participates in a discussion on what the EU means to SMEs organised by the Association of German Machine and Plant Engineering (VDMA).

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Washington, the United States: meets Mr John Cornyn, Senate Majority Whip and Member of the Senate Finance Committee; Mr Orrin Hatch, Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee; and Mr Ron Wyden, Ranking Member of the Senate Finance Committee.

Mr Neven **Mimica** receives Mr Charles Huber, Member of the German *Bundestag*.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** in Malta (until 27/04): participates in the Informal meeting of environment ministers.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives representatives of the International Platform of Insects for Food and Feed (IPIFF).

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** receives Ms Susi Pudjiastuti, Minister for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** en Suisse: à Berne, rencontre M. Ueli Maurer, Conseiller fédéral, Chef du Département fédéral des finances de la Suisse; et M. Alain Berset, Conseiller Fédéral, Chef du Département fédéral de l'intérieur de la Suisse; à Fribourg, participe à la ["Conférence sur l'Intégration européenne"](#) organisée par l'Université de Fribourg.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** in Geneva, Switzerland: participates in a ["High-Level Pledging Event for the Humanitarian Crisis in Yemen"](#), co-hosted by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Swedish and the Swiss governments.

Mr Phil **Hogan** receives Ms Thorgerdur Katrín Gunnarsdóttir, Minister for Fisheries and Agriculture of Iceland.

Ms Violeta **Bulc** delivers a keynote speech at the ["Sustainable, Safe, Smart Mobility" policy debate and annual reception](#) of CLEPA – the European Association of Automotive Suppliers, in Brussels.

Ms Violeta **Bulc** receives Mr Rüdiger Grube, former CEO of Deutsche Bahn.

Ms Věra **Jourová** in Luxembourg: delivers a speech at the ["Law Enforcement Challenges in the Online Context"](#) conference, organised by the University of Luxembourg; meets Mr Félix Braz, Minister for Justice of Luxembourg; and Mr Koen Geens, Minister for Justice of Belgium.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Luxembourg: meets Mr Paschal Donohoe, Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform of Ireland.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Mr Jean-Louis Chaussade, CEO of Suez Environnement.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** receives Mr Jarosław Gowin, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Science and Higher Education of Poland.

Mr Julian **King** receives Mr Volker Bouffier, Minister-President of the German state of Hessen.

## **Mercredi 26 avril 2017**

College meeting

26-27/04 Informal meeting of defence ministers

26-27/04 European Parliament plenary session in Brussels

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** meets Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, for a working lunch.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** in London, the United Kingdom: meets Ms Theresa May, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives Mr Jörg Leichtfried, Minister for Transport, Innovation and Technology of Austria.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** participates in a roundtable discussion on boosting EU infrastructure investments, organised by E3PO – European PPP Operating Companies in Infrastructures and Services, in Brussels.

Mr Neven **Mimica** participates in a lunch event on “Remembering Rana Plaza – how can we create fair and sustainable supply chains in the garment sector?”, organised by the European Parliament and the European Commission, at the European Parliament, in Brussels.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** in Malta (until 27/04): participates in the Informal meeting of environment ministers.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Spain (until 28/04): in Madrid, meets Ms Dolors Montserrat, Minister for Health, Social Services and Equality of Spain; and members of the parliamentary committees for the EU and for Health and Social Services.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** receives Mr Ioannis Kasoulides, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Cyprus.

Mr Dimitris **Avramopoulos** receives Mr Sándor Pintér, Minister for the Interior of Hungary; and Mr László Trócsányi, Minister for Justice.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** participe au [dialogue citoyen “Quelles perspectives pour l'économie européenne?”](#) organisé par l'Université Saint-Louis, à Bruxelles.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** receives Mr John Chave, Director-General of Cosmetics Europe.

## **Jeudi 27 avril 2017**

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** receives Mr José María Aznar, former Prime Minister of Spain

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** exchanges views at the European and Economic Social Committee (EESC) Plenary session on objectives of the Energy Union and benefits of the Clean Energy Package for the Europeans, in Brussels.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives CEOs of Transmission System Operators: Mr Marco Alverà, Snam; Mr Pascal De Buck, Fluxys; and Mr Marcelino Oreja Arburua, Enagás.

Mr Valdis **Dombrovskis** in Frankfurt am Main, Germany: attends the [monetary policy meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank \(ECB\)](#).

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** in Madrid, Spain: delivers a keynote address at the Investment Plan for Europe event “An opportunity for growth for Spain,” organised by the European Commission representation in Spain and the European Investment Bank (EIB); and participates in the meeting of the Joint Committee for the EU and the Competitiveness Committee of the Spanish Parliament on the Investment Plan for Europe.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Copenhagen, Denmark: meets Mr Kristian Jensen, Minister for Finance of Denmark; speaks about “The state of play of EU trade policy” at a meeting with members of the Parliamentary Committee for European Affairs; delivers a speech and participates in a panel discussion at the “Conference on Globalisation – Making it work for all”; and speaks at a roundtable co-hosted by the Confederation of Danish Industries and the Danish Agriculture and Food Council.

Ms Cecilia **Malmström** in Malmö, Sweden: participates in a [Citizens’ Dialogue](#) on the Future of Europe and EU trade.

Mr Neven **Mimica** in Rome, Italy: participates in the high-level conference “60 years and beyond: contributing to development cooperation”; meets Mr Mario Giro, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy; participates in a joint hearing with the committees for Foreign Affairs of the Italian Senate and Chamber of Deputies; and meets the leaders of the community of Sant’ Egidio.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** in Malta: delivers a speech at the [5<sup>th</sup> WEEE Forum](#) (Assembly of the European Association of Electrical and Electronic Waste take back systems); participates in the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Ministerial Meeting on Water; and delivers the opening speech at the [“Developing Urban Rail Transport: Environment Performances and Financing Solutions”](#) conference.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Madrid, Spain: participates in a working breakfast at the Nueva Economía Forum; meets Ms Isabel García Tejerina, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, Food and the Environment; Mr Jesús Fernández Crespo, Director of Carlos III Health Institute; and representatives of the football club Real Madrid; and visits the National Centre for Cardiovascular Research (CNIC) and the Agency of Evaluation of Sanitary Technologies for Rare Diseases.

Ms Marianne **Thyssen** in Berlin, Germany: participates in a [Citizens’ Dialogue](#); and visits the German *Bundestag*.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** reçoit M. José María Aznar, ancien Premier ministre d’Espagne.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** receives Mr Ian Lesser, Vice-President, Foreign Policy and Executive Director, Transatlantic Center of the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in the United States (until 28/04): in Washington, meets Mr Sonny Perdue, Secretary of Agriculture of the USA; Mr Zippy Duvall, President of the American Farm Bureau Federation; Ms Debbie Stabenow, US Senator and Ranking Member of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee; Mr Pat Roberts, US Senator and Chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee; Mr Jim Costa, Ranking Member of the Senate Livestock and Foreign Agriculture Subcommittee; and Mr Juergen Voegelé, Senior Director of the World Bank's Agriculture Global Practice.

Ms Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** in Valetta, Malta: participates in the Informal meeting of defence ministers; and delivers a keynote speech at the EU Global Strategy Conference.

Ms Věra **Jourová** receives Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations.

Ms Corina **Crețu** in Zagreb, Croatia: meets Mr Gordan Jandroković, Deputy Speaker of the Croatian Parliament, along with Presidents and Members of several Parliamentary Committees; Mr Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia; and Ms Gabrijela Žalac, Minister for Regional Development and EU Funds; participates in the signing ceremony of contracts on grants from EU funds; in the "Week of the EU Projects" event, together with Ms Gabrijela Žalac; and in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) .

## **Vendredi 28 avril 2017**

28-29/04 Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** meets Mr Antonio Tajani, President of the European Parliament, for a working lunch.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** receives Mr George Soros, Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations.

Mr Frans **Timmermans** meets representatives of Civil Society Europe – European network of organised civil society organisations, to exchange views on the rule of law, in Brussels.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** in Bucharest, Romania: delivers a speech at the opening plenary of the [5th edition of Eurosfat](#) – the largest annual forum on European affairs in Romania.

Mr Andrus **Ansip** in Bucharest, Romania: meets Mr Sorin Grindeanu, Prime Minister of Romania; participates in a government roundtable; meets representatives of the ITC and European Affairs parliamentary committees; and representatives of startups; visits the Innovation Labs project; and delivers a speech at the opening plenary of [5th edition of Eurosfat](#), the largest annual forum on European affairs in Romania.

Mr Maroš **Šefčovič** receives Mr Ralf Speth, CEO of Jaguar Land Rover.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** participates in a working breakfast with Mr George Soros,

Founder and Chairman of the Open Society Foundations, in Brussels.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** receives Mr Christian Thimann, Chairman of the EU High-level Group on Sustainable Finance.

Mr Miguel **Arias Cañete** in Tehran, Iran (until 30/04): opens the first Iran-EU Business Forum on Sustainable Energy and High-Level Conference on Climate Change; meets Mr Ali Akbar Salehi, Vice-President of Iran and Head of the Atomic Energy Organisation of Iran; Ms Masoumeh Ebtekar, Vice-President of Iran and Head of Environmental Protection Organisation; Mr Bijan Zanganeh, Oil Minister of Iran; and Mr Hamid Chitchian, Minister for Energy of Iran.

Mr Karmenu **Vella** receives Mr Jean Bizet, Senator and Chairman of the European Affairs Committee of the French Senate; and representatives of the French fisheries sector.

Mr Vytenis **Andriukaitis** in Sevilla, Spain: participates in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#); visits the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC); meets Mr Aquilino Alonso Miranda, Minister for Health of the Regional Government of Andalusia; visits the Hospital Virgen del Rocío; and the most prominent reserve of Andalusian Horses "Yeguada de la Cartuja – Hierro del Bocado", in Jerez de la Frontera.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** participe au dialogue européen ["Europe: Rewriting the Rules for Shared Prosperity"](#), organisé par l'Institut syndical européen, à Bruxelles.

M. Pierre **Moscovici** à Paris, France: participe au colloque ["Les 60 ans des traités de Rome"](#) à la Cour de Cassation.

Mr Christos **Stylianides** receives Ms Ayoade Alakija, Chief Humanitarian Coordinator of Nigeria.

Mr Phil **Hogan** in Chicago, the United States: meets Mr Bryan Durkin, President of the Chicago Mercantile Exchange Group (CME); Mr Tim Andriesen, Managing Director of Agricultural and Alternative Investment Products at CME; and Mr Dave Lehman, Managing Director of Commodity Research and Product Development at CME.

Ms Margrethe **Vestager** in Copenhagen, Denmark: speaks to the students of the Ingrid Jespersen gymnasium, at the Innovation Day; meets Mr Kristian Jensen, Minister for Finance of Denmark; and Ms Mette Frederiksen, leader of the Danish Social Democrats Party, to discuss current European affairs.

Mr Carlos **Moedas** in Beja, Portugal (until 29/04): delivers an opening speech at the "Valorisation of the agro-food industry" Conference at the Instituto Politecnico.

**Samedi 29 avril 2017**

Special European Council (Article 50)

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** and Mr Jyrki **Katainen** participate in the European People's Party (EPP) Summit ahead of the Special European Council (Article 50), in Brussels.

President Jean-Claude **Juncker** participates in the Special European Council (Article 50), in Brussels.

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** participates in the meeting of the Presidency of the European People's Party (EPP), in Brussels.

#### **Dimanche 30 avril 2017**

Mr Jyrki **Katainen** delivers a speech at an [event](#) on the occasion of Finnish May Day Eve celebration, organised by the Finnish Association in Belgium, in Brussels.

#### **Prévisions du mois d'avril:**

25/04 General Affairs Council

25-26/04 Informal meeting of environment ministers

26-27/04 Informal meeting of defence ministers

26-27/04 European Parliament plenary session in Brussels

28-29/04 Informal meeting of foreign affairs ministers

29/04 Special European Council (Article 50)

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## **[Daily News 24 / 04 / 2017](#)**

### **Energy Union: EU invests €22.1 million supporting synergies between transport and energy sectors**

Today, EU Member States approved the Commission's proposal to invest €22.1 million in [seven actions](#) that will help develop sustainable and efficient transport and energy infrastructure. They will receive funding from the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) (CEF), one of the key funding instruments of the

EU's [Energy Union](#) strategy to promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level. Transport Commissioner Violeta **Bulc** said: *"European Transport still depends on oil for 94% of its energy needs. That is why the EU is investing in seven projects to speed up the deployment of alternative energy sources, with a special focus on electrification and multimodal transport."* Climate Action and Energy Commissioner Miguel **Arias Cañete** added: *"Enabling synergies between the transport and energy sectors will enhance the effectiveness of EU funding and will contribute to the further integration of the internal energy market. The successful conclusion of the first CEF synergy call is yet another milestone in the achievement of our long-term decarbonisation objectives"*. Four of the selected actions refer to the transport priorities "motorways of the sea", "maritime ports" and "multimodal transport modes" with emphasis on the gas sector (EU funding of €8.8 million), two are in the electricity sector addressing roads and multimodal transport modes (EU funding of €12.3 million) and one relates to smart grids, focusing on railway transport (EU funding of €1 million). More information is available [here](#) as well as the [list of selected actions](#). More information about Connecting Europe Facility via the [Innovation & Networks Executive Agency \(INEA\)](#) (For more information: Anna-Kaisa Itkonen – Tel.: +32 229 56186; Alexis Perier – Tel.: +32 229 69143; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

### **Commission awards the Seal of Excellence to 2300 researchers**

The Commission has today awarded, for the first time, Seal of Excellence certificates to more than 2300 researchers in recognition of their high-quality research proposals under the [Marie-Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) (MSCA). These are being awarded to all researchers whose 2016 MSCA Individual Fellowship proposals reached a score of 85% or above but could not be funded due to the highly-competitive nature of the MSCA programme. This endorsement provides applicants with recognition for the quality of their work, which they can use to further develop their careers and to support their search for alternative funding at regional or national level. Cyprus and the Czech Republic have drawn on the [European Social Fund](#) to introduce funding schemes in support of recipients of the Seal. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"I am delighted to award Seals of Excellence to more than 2300 leading researchers who just missed out on funding for the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellowships in 2016. I very much welcome the initiatives of Cyprus and the Czech Republic to introduce new funding schemes for these excellent scientists and I would strongly encourage other countries to do the same."* Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, Carlos **Moedas**, said: *"I am pleased to welcome MSCA applicants into the Seal of Excellence community. The Seal of Excellence is a simple concept with a big impact. This quality label can help individual researchers find funding for their project."* National funding bodies in Croatia, Slovenia and Poland also have initiatives in the pipeline. Some other countries have opted not to introduce a specific funding scheme but are instead encouraging recipients of the Seal to apply to existing schemes. For further information, including national funding initiatives, please see [here](#). For information on MSCA see [factsheet](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 2 29 67083; Lucía Caudet – Tel.: +32 229 56182; Inga Höglund – Tel.: +32 229

50698; Maud Noyon – Tel.: +32 229 80379)

### **State aid: Commission clears support for renewable and cogeneration plants in Latvia**

The European Commission has found support granted to renewable energy and cogeneration power plants built in Latvia between 2007 and 2012 to be in line with EU state aid rules. The Commission concluded that the measure helps Latvia to achieve its 2020 energy and climate objectives without unduly distorting competition. Latvia notified the existing support scheme to the Commission in 2015 for reasons of legal certainty. Latvia reviewed the support mechanism to ensure that beneficiaries are not overcompensated and aid is limited to the minimum necessary to achieve the schemes' objectives. The Commission's assessment showed that the support scheme promoted the deployment of renewable power generation and cogeneration without unduly distorting the market, in line with the relevant state aid Guidelines. The support scheme is financed by all final electricity users in Latvia with a levy on electricity consumption. In order to remedy any possible past discrimination against foreign green electricity stemming from the financing of the support scheme, Latvia has committed to invest in projects favouring integration with the European electricity market. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.43140 in the [State Aid Register](#) on the Commission's [Competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Ficosa International by Panasonic**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Ficosa International of Spain, by Panasonic of Japan. Ficosa International develops, manufactures and commercialises systems and components for different types of vehicles. Panasonic is active in the development and engineering of electronic technologies and solutions across various sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns as Panasonic already has joint control over Ficosa International, which will change to sole control following the transaction. 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.8312](#). *(For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Travelopia by KKR**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Travelopia Holdings Limited and Travelopia USA Inc. (together "Travelopia"), both of the United Kingdom, by KKR & Co. L.P., of the US. Travelopia is a specialist travel operator active primarily in the USA, the United Kingdom and Australia. KKR is a global investment firm active in a variety of sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its limited impact in the market. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review

procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8417](#). (For more information: *Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526*)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Capsugel by Lonza**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Capsugel (Luxembourg) by Lonza (Switzerland). Lonza is active worldwide in the supply of services to the pharmaceutical, healthcare and life science industries, including contract development and manufacturing organisation services for biologics, fine chemicals, advanced intermediates and active pharmaceutical ingredients and manufacturing, development and commercialisation of active ingredients for use in consumer care, agriculture, water treatment, and coatings and composites. Capsugel is active globally in the design, development and manufacture of a range of dosage forms for the biopharmaceutical and health and nutrition industries, including solid oral dosage delivery products such as hard gelatine, soft gelatine, liquid-filled and alternative polymer capsules. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns given that the activities of the two companies are not overlapping, and that the merged entity will continue facing competition from other market players. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8362](#). (For more information: *Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526*)

### **Eurostat: Déficit public de la zone euro et de l'UE28 respectivement de 1,5% et 1,7% du PIB**

Le déficit ainsi que la dette publique se sont réduits en termes relatifs en 2016 par rapport à 2015, tant dans la zone euro (ZE19) que dans l'UE28. Le ratio du déficit public par rapport au PIB a baissé dans la zone euro, passant de 2,1% en 2015 à 1,5% en 2016, ainsi que dans l'UE28, de 2,4% à 1,7%. Le ratio de la dette publique par rapport au PIB a reculé dans la zone euro, passant de 90,3% à la fin de l'année 2015 à 89,2% à la fin de l'année 2016, ainsi que dans l'UE28, de 84,9% à 83,5%. Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: *Vanessa Mock – Tél.: +32 229 64976; Juliana Dahl – Tél: +32 229 59914*)

## **STATEMENTS**

### **European Immunisation Week: Statement by Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and the WHO Regional Director for Europe Zsuzsanna Jakab**

Today, the European Commission and the World Health Organisation (WHO) have issued a joint statement on the crucial importance of vaccination for immunisation and disease prevention in the European Union and the wider WHO European Region. The statement highlights the strong contribution of vaccines to public health: *"Vaccines have contributed to the health and wellbeing of everyone alive today in the European Union and the wider WHO European Region.*

*In the last 60 years, immunisation has saved more children's lives than any other medical intervention. The impact of this revolution in disease prevention over just a few decades is enormous. Measles caused an estimated 2.6 million deaths each year, before widespread vaccination was put in place in 1980. Thanks to Maurice Hilleman's measles vaccine this highly contagious disease is now preventable. It is a blessing and an achievement that these diseases are largely behind us."* Each year, the European Immunisation Week celebrates the tremendous progress made thanks to vaccines. Furthermore, it provides an occasion to take stock of the tasks still lying ahead to secure public health such as reducing health system barriers and ensure public trust in immunisation. Member States have shown a strong commitment to this issue by endorsing the [European Vaccine Action Plan](#), the [European Health 2020 policy framework](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#). Read the full statement [here](#) and spread the word that #VaccinesWork for us all. (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Prolonged exposure to excessive noise from construction and transport can affect the health of more than 100 million Europeans. This was the main theme of [a high-level conference](#) organised by the Commission, and supported by the World Health Organisation (WHO), today in Brussels. Karmenu Vella, Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, said: *"Environmental noise is a very real problem for millions of citizens. We have rules to protect them from excessive noise from construction and transport, but Member States need to intensify their efforts to implement them to bring noise levels down towards recommended levels. We will help facilitate this through the new [Environmental Implementation Review](#). Today's conference is the starting point for a broader dialogue with all stakeholders to ensure we strike the right balance between the transport and construction we all depend on, and the healthy lives we want"*. Based on the latest data of the European Environmental Agency (EEA), including a new [Commission report](#), conference participants will look at the root causes of noise and its effects. Together with Member States and stakeholders, the Commission will examine how to help improve the implementation of the [Environmental Noise Directive](#) and other instruments to tackle noise pollution. Speech and more information available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: + 32 229 93321)

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

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# Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) to convene on 25 April in Vienna

A regular meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will take place in Vienna on 25 April 2017.

The Joint Commission will be chaired on behalf of EU High Representative Federica Mogherini, by EEAS Secretary General Helga Maria Schmid and will be attended by the E3+3 (China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom, United States) and Iran.

The meeting will offer an opportunity to address the implementation of the JCPOA as far as nuclear and sanctions related issues are concerned.