

 TODAY'S  
News

Thursday, 26 March, 2015

Click on [blue](#) link to view full Press**President Juncker in Ukraine: first bilateral visit to a third country**

On Monday 30 March, European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** and High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** will travel to Kyiv on what will be the President's first bilateral visit to a third country since taking up office in November. President **Juncker** and High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will meet with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko and hold a joint press conference at the Presidential Administration (Bankova 3) at 14:00 (GMT+2). They will furthermore meet with Prime Minister Yatsenyuk, the Speaker of the Verkhovna Rada, Volodymyr Groysman, and the heads of the political groups. President **Juncker** has also been invited to preside the National Reform Council alongside President Poroshenko. The visit takes place only a few days after the [European Parliament approved the Commission's proposal](#) for an additional €1.8bn in macro-financial assistance ([MFA](#)) to Ukraine. This comes on top of [what the EU is already contributing](#). In 2014, the Commission disbursed €1.36bn under previous MFA programmes; the disbursement of a final tranche is expected this spring.

**The end of milk quotas: unlocking the economic potential of the EU dairy sector**

The EU milk quota regime will end on 31 March 2015. First introduced in 1984, at a time when EU production far outstripped demand, the quota regime was one of the tools introduced to overcome these structural surpluses. The final date to end quotas was first decided in 2003 and reconfirmed in 2008 with a range of measures aimed at achieving a "soft landing". Ending milk quotas will provide EU producers with more flexibility to respond to growing demand, especially on the world market. Successive reforms of the EU's [Common Agriculture Policy](#) have in parallel provided a range of other, more targeted instruments to help support producers. Speaking today at a press conference on the subject, Commissioner **Hogan** stated: *"The end of the milk quota regime is both a challenge and an opportunity for the Union. It is a challenge because an entire generation of dairy farmers will have to live under completely new circumstances and volatility will surely accompany them along the road. But it certainly is an opportunity in terms of growth and jobs. Through increased focus on valued added products as well as on ingredients for "functional" food, the dairy sector has the potential of being an economic driver for the EU. More vulnerable areas where the end of the quota system may be regarded as a threat can benefit from the pallet of rural development measures following the subsidiarity principle."* More details, including [Frequently Asked Questions](#), explicative graphs, market reports, and audio-visual material (including archived photos and footage) are [available online](#). Read the [press release](#).

## **Commission reports: Trade is a powerful engine for growth and jobs in Europe – the case of South Korea**

Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** presented today two reports highlighting the importance of trade agreements for the European economy. In a press conference in Brussels, Commissioner Malmström made a [discussion paper](#) public, which was presented earlier to Member States at the Informal Meeting of Trade Ministers in Riga, as well as the Annual Report on the implementation of the [EU-South Korea Free Trade Agreement](#). *“The EU-South Korea FTA is a great example of why we need free trade: it's given a boost to EU exports and created new business opportunities in the fast-growing East Asian market. This confirms that European companies and consumers are very well placed to benefit from increased international trade, since the EU is the world's largest exporter and importer”*, said Commissioner **Malmström**. In the European Union 31 million jobs – over 14% of total employment – depend on exports to third countries and each additional €1bn of exports supports 14,000 additional jobs across the EU. A [press release](#) is available online.

## **Competition: Commissioner Vestager announces proposal for e-commerce sector inquiry**

The European Commissioner in charge of competition policy Margrethe Vestager announced today at a [conference](#) in Berlin a forthcoming proposal to launch a competition inquiry in the e-commerce sector. This announcement comes one day after the College discussed the [Digital Single Market Strategy](#) to be unveiled in May 2015. European citizens are enthusiastic users of online services. In 2014, around half of all EU consumers shopped online. Yet, only around 15% of them bought online from a seller based in another EU Member State. This indicates that significant cross-border barriers to e-commerce still exist within the EU. Knowledge gained through the sector inquiry will not only contribute to enforcing competition law in the e-commerce sector but also to various legislative initiatives which the Commission plans to launch to boost the Digital Single Market. A full [press release](#) and the [speech](#) of Commissioner Vestager are available online.

## **Infringements decisions: Commission acts for full and proper implementation of European legislation**

The Commission has decided today to refer 6 Member States to the EU Court of Justice: Belgium, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Slovenia and the United Kingdom. The Commission will send 11 reasoned opinions to 8 countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy and Spain. The European Commission will also send a letter of formal notice to Bulgaria, Hungary, Lithuania and Slovakia. With a total of 98 decisions, the Commission aims at ensuring proper application of EU law for the benefit of citizens and businesses. A summary of the main decisions can be found in the [Fact Sheet](#). On the general infringement procedure, see [MEMO/12/12](#).

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **More than € 1 billion pledged in support of Guinea-Bissau**

Pledges amounting to over €1 billion were announced yesterday, Wednesday 25 March, at the International Conference in support of [Guinea-Bissau](#) in Brussels, which the European Union hosted together with the Government of Guinea-Bissau and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). The pledges, finalised last night, came from more than 70 delegations from all over the world. They include €160 million that will be provided by the EU. *“This significant pledge shows that the international community is committed to help Guinea-Bissau make a fresh start. I hope that the massive support will encourage the government to pursue its ambitions for reform and deliver on its strategic vision Horizon 2025 - for the sake of the people of the country and the stability of the whole region,”* said Neven **Mimica**, the European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development. A [press release](#) is available online.

## **Mergers: Commission clears joint venture between Wärtsilä and China State Shipbuilding Corporation**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture between Wärtsilä Corporation of Finland and China Shipbuilding Power Engineering Institute (CSPI), a subsidiary of the China State Shipbuilding Corporation (CSSC) ultimately controlled by the Chinese State. The joint venture would be based in Shanghai and operate under the name CSSC Wärtsilä Engine. It will produce 4-stroke medium speed diesel engines based on Wärtsilä's technology in China. CSSC is the parent company of one of the largest shipbuilding conglomerates in China that, among other activities, manufactures marine-related equipment. Wärtsilä is a provider of power solutions for the marine and energy markets. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would not raise competition concerns, because the joint venture has no actual or foreseen activities within the European Economic area (EEA). 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.7501](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Lion Adventure by PAI Partners**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Lion Adventure Coöperatief U.A ("Lion Adventure") of the Netherlands by PAI Partners SAS ("PAI") of France. Lion Adventure is active in the retailing of outdoor sporting equipment, clothing, footwear and fashion. PAI is a private equity firm which manages and advises funds and it is active in a variety of business sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because the activities of PAI's controlled portfolio companies and the activities of Lion Adventure do not overlap. 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.7553](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of South African retailer Pepkor by rival Steinhoff**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Pepkor International by Steinhoff International Holdings, both of South Africa. Both Steinhoff and Pepkor operate retail stores in Europe which – among other products – sell household goods, products for home decoration and small electrical appliances. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns because there are only limited overlaps between the activities of Steinhoff and Pepkor. 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.7521](#).

## **EUROSTAT: Environment in the EU: Each person in the EU generated 481 kg of municipal waste in 2013; 43% was recycled or composted**

In the European Union (EU), the amount of municipal waste generated per person in 2013 amounted to 481 kg, down by 8.7% compared with its peak of 527 kg per person in 2002. Since 2007, the generation of municipal waste per person has constantly decreased in the EU to below its mid-1990s level. Of the 481 kg of municipal waste generated per person in the EU in 2013, 470 kg per person were treated. This treatment followed different methods: 31% was landfilled, 28% recycled, 26% incinerated and 15% composted. The share of municipal waste recycled or composted in the EU has steadily increased over the time period, from 18% in 1995 to 43% in 2013. Read [EUROSTAT press release](#).

## **STATEMENTS**

### **Speech by President Juncker at the BusinessEurope Day event**

Speaking at the BusinessEurope Day event, President **Juncker** said: *"My true ambition is to create a Europe that is not distant and directive. Not a Europe that tells citizens how to be, or business how to operate. But a*

Europe engaged in dialogue and debate, working with and for Europeans for a better future." The [full speech](#) is available online.

## **Maritime stakeholders confirm joint efforts for Blue Growth in Baltic Sea Region**

A stakeholder-driven, cross-Baltic joined effort for Blue Growth that could bring more jobs and innovation in the region. This is the main goal of the [conference](#) of Maritime Stakeholders Platform in the Baltic Sea Region in Kiel today, which brings together all key maritime stakeholders from business, academia and the public sector across the Baltic Sea region to discuss smart specialisation, maritime technologies and skills and employment. The conference represents the first step of the European Commission's "[Sustainable Blue Growth Agenda for the Baltic Sea Region](#)" adopted in May 2014. Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, Karmenu **Vella**, said at the opening of the Conference: "*The Baltic Sea area is a hotbed of technological development and progressive thinking. In sectors such as offshore wind, cruise tourism and aquaculture the region has seen annual growth rates of over 10% in recent years. I am proud to be part of an event that aims to promote stronger cross-regional cooperation between maritime technology innovators and operators*". The speech will be available on Commissioner **Vella's** [website](#).

## **Commissioner Bieńkowska speech on parcel delivery, sharing economy and other priorities for the EU Single Market**

Speaking this morning at the [Single Market Forum](#) in Riga, *Elżbieta Bieńkowska*, Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, highlighted parcel delivery and the sharing economy as two priority areas for her in the coming months. Parcel delivery has been identified as one of the areas where improvement is needed to create a true Digital Single Market. The Commissioner said: "*Retailers want seamless, affordable and convenient cross-border parcel delivery. So do consumers. As part of this, last year CEOs of postal companies promised to sort this out. I have invited them back next month to see where we are. We need to make progress. And we need to focus on affordability. We are looking at options for how to deliver this.*" On the trend towards peer-to-peer platforms, she announced: "*We are looking at how we can encourage innovative businesses without favouring one business model over another. A key aspect of this is the sharing economy. Properly managed, the sharing economy could create additional growth and jobs. It is already benefitting consumers by offering them social interaction and cheaper alternatives to services and goods. But there are concerns over consumer protection, taxes and other obligations. We need to consider these carefully. I want to have an open debate with industry, consumers and national authorities on how best to do this.*" The full speech is available [online](#).

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini to visit Belgrade and Pristina**

Federica **Mogherini**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, will visit Pristina and Belgrade on 26 and 27 March 2015. This will be her first visit to [Serbia](#) and [Kosovo](#) since she has taken over her post. "*I am looking forward to visiting Pristina and Belgrade to discuss the next steps in Serbia's and Kosovo's European path and the implementation of the agreements reached in the [EU-facilitated dialogue](#) for normalisation of relations between them,*" said the HRVP ahead of her visit. Federica **Mogherini** will be in Kosovo on 26 March. She will meet President Atifete Jahjaga, Prime Minister Isa Mustafa, Foreign Minister Hashim Thaçi as well as the representatives of Serb Community in Kosovo. She will deliver a speech at the National Library. On 27 March HRVP **Mogherini** will visit Serbia. She will meet President Tomislav Nikolić, Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić and Foreign Minister Ivica Dačić. She will also deliver a speech at the Belgrade University. A press release is [available online](#).

### **Commissioner Avramopoulos in Malta: visits national authorities and European Asylum Support Office (EASO)**



Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** is in Malta today to meet with the national authorities and to visit the [European Asylum Support Office](#) (EASO). In Valetta, Commissioner **Avramopoulos** met with Interior Minister Carmelo Abela, Minister of Foreign Affairs George Vella, and EASO Director Robert Visser, and later today he will meet with Prime Minister Joseph Muscat. In a joint press point following the visit of EASO's offices, Commissioner **Avramopoulos** and Mr Visser presented the findings of two EASO actions: the pilot project on information gathering on migrant smuggling in Malta and Italy and the EASO pilot project on joint processing activities in the field of asylum. The Commissioner's speech is available [here](#) and a [video](#) of the visit and press point will be online on EbS shortly.

### **Commissioner Hill visits Berlin to promote Capital Markets Union (26-27 March)**

Jonathan **Hill**, Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union is in Berlin on 26 and 27 March. On 26 March, he will meet German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and will give a speech at Deutsche Bank's "Momentum" Conference on the [Capital Markets Union](#). The following day, Commissioner **Hill** will speak at the Bundestag's Financial Affairs Committee. He is meeting Georg Fahrenschon, President of the German Savings Banks Association, and Peter Altmaier, the Head of the Chancellor's office. He is also meeting German Justice Minister, Heiko Maas, on the same day. Commissioner Hill's speeches will be available online.

### **Commissioner Crețu in Slovakia to promote a better implementation of EU Cohesion Policy**

On 26 and 27 March, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** is in Slovakia; she will meet Prime Minister Robert Fico, Deputy Prime Minister Lubomír Vážny and representatives of the Managing Authorities dealing with EU funds. Slovakia is part of the eight Member States involved in the [Task Force on Better Implementation](#), as the country is lagging behind in terms of absorption of EU funds from the 2007-2013 period. The purpose of the Task Force is to lend a helping hand to make sure the available investments are being directed on the right projects and priorities and to reduce the risk of decommitments by the end of 2015. *"I would like to congratulate the Slovak authorities on their active involvement in the work of the Task Force; the success of this initiative depends largely on the commitment of the Slovak authorities to deliver the actions outlined. And for that the Commission is here to help"*, the Commissioner said ahead of her visit. Slovakia benefits from 14 billion euro from Cohesion Policy funds for 2014-2020. Structural funds and national co-financing represented 86% of public investment in 2011-13, the highest of all Member States. More information on [Cohesion Policy and Slovakia](#) is available online.

MEX/15/4692



See what will be discussed in the European Commission, European Council and the European Parliament [here](#)

