



TODAYS  
News

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**State Aid: Commission launches sector inquiry into mechanisms to ensure electricity supplies**

The European Commission has launched a state aid sector inquiry into national measures to ensure that adequate capacity to produce electricity is available at all times to avoid black-outs (so-called "capacity mechanisms"). The inquiry will gather information on capacity mechanisms to examine, in particular, whether they ensure sufficient electricity supply without distorting competition or trade in the EU Single Market. It complements the Commission's Energy Union Strategy to create a connected, integrated and secure energy market in Europe. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Governments have a legitimate interest to ensure that there is sufficient electricity supply – households and industry should not face black-outs. My role is to safeguard that public measures to underpin investment in electricity supplies do not unduly favour particular producers or technologies, or create obstacles to trade across national borders. For example, in some cases it might be more efficient to invest in improving electricity grid connections between EU countries than to build new power stations."* She also said: *"This sector inquiry sends a clear signal to Member States to respect EU state aid rules when implementing capacity mechanisms, and contributes to the Commission's goal to build a true Energy Union in Europe."* A press release is available in [here](#) and all other EU languages. A fact sheet is available [here](#).

**State Aid: Commission gives guidance on local public support measures that can be granted without prior Commission approval**

The European Commission has concluded in relation to seven public support measures in the Czech Republic, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK that they do not involve state aid within the meaning of EU rules. These decisions show that if State support is granted to an activity which has a purely local impact, this may not amount to state aid because they do not affect trade between Member States. Thus, the decisions provide Member States and stakeholders with additional guidance to determine which cases do not need to be cleared by the Commission under EU state aid rules, which reduces the administrative burden for public authorities and companies, and focuses the Commission's resources on enforcing state aid rules in cases with the biggest impact on the Single Market. The decisions concern. A press release is available in [here](#).

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

The Commission has decided today to refer six Member States to the EU Court of Justice: France, Hungary, Italy, Poland, Romania and Slovenia. The Commission will send 38 reasoned opinions to 25 countries: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom. The European Commission will also send a letter of formal notice to Latvia. With a total of 120 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](#) and [MEMO/15/4871](#)

## **Plant Health: Member States endorse reinforced measures at EU level to prevent the spread of Xylella Fastidiosa**

EU Member States experts in the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed endorsed reinforced measures, proposed by the Commission, to prevent further introduction and spread within the EU of the plant disease Xylella Fastidiosa. The bacterium, affecting olive production in the Apulian Region (Puglia) is a quarantine organism harmful to olive trees and potentially dangerous for a broad range of other plants. The new EU measures require Member States to notify new outbreaks in the EU and to promptly demarcate infested areas. Strict eradication measures in such areas are put in place. The measures allow Italy to apply containment measures in the whole province of Lecce, where eradication is no longer possible. Imports and movement within the EU of specified plants known to be susceptible to Xylella Fastidiosa worldwide will be subject to strict conditions and a specific ban is put in place on the import of coffee plants originating in Honduras and Costa Rica. A press is available [online](#) and more information on plant health and biosecurity in the EU is available [here](#).

## **EU proposes new Joint Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy**

Human rights will remain the compass in the EU's foreign policy and its relations with other institutions and civil society. This week the European Commission and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs Security Policy adopted a [joint Communication on an EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#) which will cover the period 2015-2019. The proposed Action Plan addresses key areas of human rights policy and focuses on priorities where enhanced commitment is required, capitalising on the achievements of the previous Action Plan (2012-2014). A press release is available [here](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of six hotels by Starwood Capital Group and Melia Hotels International**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over six hotels located in Spain by Starwood Capital Group (SCG) of the United States and Melia Hotels International (Melia) of Spain. The hotels bought are six 3-4 stars hotels located in holiday destinations in Spain (Costa del Sol, Fuerteventura, Lanzarote, Mallorca and Ibiza). SCG is an investment company focusing on global real estate. Melia is the largest hotel chain in Spain. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of its limited impact on the market structure. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7516](#).

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Vice-President Dombrovskis discusses European Semester with Belgian partners**

Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, will meet Belgian authorities and social partners on 30 April to discuss the [European Semester](#) and the reforms underway in the country. He

will meet the federal, regional and community Ministers of Finance and the Budget, the new Governor of the National Bank of Belgium, Mr **Jan Smets**, and social partners represented in the National Labour Council and the Central Economic Council. The Vice-President will have lunch with Belgian economists and will visit carmaker Audi Brussels in the presence of the Minister-President and the Budget Minister of the Brussels Capital Region, Mr Rudi Vervoort and Mr. Guy Vanhengel. Vice-President **Dombrovskis** is visiting Member States as part of the Commission's outreach on the European Semester of economic policy coordination. This takes place on the basis of the Commission's assessment of Member States' economic and social developments, or [Country Reports](#), published in February, and in view of the country-specific policy recommendations, which will be published by the Commission in May. During these visits, the Vice-President engages national authorities and social partners in a constructive discussion on the issues raised in the reports. After Belgium, Vice-President's next country visit will be to Malta, on 6-8 May.

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Find out [here](#) what will be discussed next week in the European Commission, European Council and the European Parliament.

