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News

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Antitrust: Commission accepts commitments by SkyTeam members Air France/KLM, Alitalia and Delta on three transatlantic routes

The European Commission has adopted a decision that renders legally binding commitments offered by Air France/KLM, Alitalia and Delta, members of the SkyTeam airline alliance, to lower barriers to entry or expansion on three transatlantic routes. The Commission had concerns that the cooperation between these airlines may harm competition for all passengers on the Amsterdam-New York and Rome-New York routes and for premium passengers on the Paris-New York route, in breach of EU antitrust rules. After [market testing commitments offered](#) by Air France/KLM, Alitalia and Delta, the Commission is satisfied that in their final form they address its concerns. It has therefore decided to make them legally binding on these airlines for a period of ten years. Commissioner in charge of competition policy, Margrethe **Vestager**, said: *"Airlines can cooperate to enlarge their network if it makes them more efficient and allows them to better serve their passengers. With today's decision I want to ensure that passengers flying from Paris, Amsterdam or Rome to New York continue to benefit from competitive prices and choice. We have now concluded our reviews of the three major worldwide airline alliances – and are one step closer to a genuine level playing field in transatlantic aviation markets."* The press release is available in [here](#).

EU and Turkey announce modernisation of Custom Union

Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** met today with the Minister of Economy of Turkey Mr Nihat Zeybekci to agree to modernise the [20-year-old Customs Union Agreement](#) and to enhance EU-Turkey bilateral trade relations. On this occasion Commissioner **Malmström** said: *"We need to modernise our Custom Union with Turkey and bring it into the 21st century. This initiative will boost EU-Turkey commercial relations."* This result has been achieved under the joint leadership of Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** and Commissioner Johannes **Hahn** in charge of Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations. It follows technical discussions held over the last 12 months that allowed both sides to understand each other's expectations and ambitions for new preferential bilateral trade relations. Both sides will now undertake their respective internal procedures to adopt this initiative and to seek the corresponding negotiating mandates. Turkey is a candidate country, and accession negotiations to the EU are ongoing. The enhancement of bilateral trade relations is not an alternative to the accession negotiations of Turkey, but complementary to it. [Turkey](#) is also a very important trading partner for the EU: Turkey is the EU's sixth biggest trading partner, whereas the EU is Turkey's biggest trading partner. There is huge

potential, however, to further develop these trade relations and this is precisely what the new commercial framework will make possible.

The Commission approves one new Protected Geographical Indication from the Netherlands

The Commission has approved the addition of one new product from the Netherlands to the register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs). This is '[Hollandse geitenkaas](#)', a semi-hard, natural or foil-ripened cheese made from goat milk. The cheese is produced in the Netherlands using milk of the Dutch White Goat or cross-breeds of the Dutch White with other typical breeds of dairy goat. This denomination will be added to the list of over 1,200 products already protected. More information: webpages on [quality products](#) and [DOOR database](#) of protected products.

The Bologna Process: higher education reforms among participating countries still too uneven

Tomorrow, Education Ministers of the 47-country [European Higher Education Area](#) will meet in Yerevan for a 2 day conference to discuss progress in improving higher education systems and enabling students to move more freely across national borders under the so called Bologna process. The latest [Bologna Implementation report](#) published today shows that much work remains to be done. On average, only 7 of 10 students finish their higher education programme, while half of the countries' completion rates are as low as 30-50%. The report also finds that funding and knowledge of languages are considered the biggest barriers to student mobility. Ahead of the conference, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport Tibor **Navracics** said: *"We cannot afford this loss of talent. All governments that are part of this effort must step up the pace of reforms in higher education to improve the success of our students. We will provide evidence to help them put these reforms into practice."* The Ministerial Conference will also give a renewed push for the next stage of the Bologna Process. Building on the achievements of the past 15 years, the new priorities will focus on increasing international mobility, the use of digital technologies in learning and improving the skills sought by employers.

EUROSTAT: EU Member States granted protection to more than 185 000 asylum seekers in 2014

The 27 EU Member States for which data are available granted protection status to 185 000 asylum seekers in 2014, up by almost 50% compared with 2013. Since 2008, more than 750 000 asylum seekers have been granted protection status in the EU. The complete press release can be found [here](#).

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

