



TODAYS
News

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Commission appoints Director in the DG Regional and Urban Policy

Today the European Commission has appointed Ms Veronica Gaffey to the position of Director 'Budget and General Affairs' in the Directorate-General Regional and Urban Policy. Ms Gaffey, an Irish national, joined the Commission in 2000, after having worked in her national civil service. She has been part of DG Regional and Urban Policy throughout her career. She has been Head of Unit since 2005 and was last in charge of the 'Evaluation and European Semester' team. Ms Veronica Gaffey has holds a Certified Diploma in Accounting and Finance.

A new start for jobs and growth in Greece: Commission mobilises more than €35 billion from the EU budget

Two days after an agreement paving the way for a new support programme for Greece, today the European Commission revealed plans to help Greece maximise its use of EU funds. As [mandated by the Euro Summit on 12/13 July](#), this will help mobilise more than €35 billion up to 2020 to support the Greek economy, provided that the conditions agreed upon by the Euro Summit will be met. EU Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: "*Greece has already received more international financing than all of Europe did from the U.S. Marshall Plan after the Second World War. Following Monday's Euro Summit agreement, the European Commission is willing to step this up even further to help Greece unleash a significant economic rebound and to give the proposed reforms the best chance to work: these €35 billion can help make Greece an attractive location for investment and give hope to especially the younger generation. After at times painstaking months of negotiations, we now need to look to the future. This new start for jobs and growth is the Commission's contribution. I trust the European Parliament and Member States will play their part so we can unlock the money swiftly.*" The Jobs and Growth Plan will help to invest in people and companies in Greece. It is a continuation of the support the Commission has already provided to Greece throughout the crisis, both in terms of financial support and technical assistance. A press release is available [here](#).

Commission publishes the Climate and Energy Summer package

As part of the Energy Union strategy, today the Commission presents proposals to deliver a new deal for energy consumers, to launch a redesign of the European electricity market, to update energy efficiency labelling and to revise the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS). The package is an important step towards implementing the Energy Union strategy with a forward looking climate change policy, launched as one of the political priorities of the **Juncker** Commission in February 2015. Today's proposals give prominence to

the 'energy efficiency first' principle and put households and business consumers at the heart of the European energy market. The press release is available [online](#). Please also see the fact sheet on [ETS revision](#), fact sheet on [single energy label](#) and fact sheet on the [new market design](#).

Commissioner Mimica highlights EU's key contributions at the Third international Financing for Development Conference

The [Third UN International Financing for Development Conference](#) is now in its second day. Yesterday, in a [speech](#) delivered on behalf of the EU at the plenary session of the conference, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** said: *"To make the most of this opportunity, we need a new global partnership that transforms and strengthens the way in which the international community works together"*, adding that the new global partnership has a high level of ambition which *"is needed if we are to fulfil the noble objective we have set ourselves: the end of extreme poverty and a sustainable future for all"*. Commissioner **Mimica** also [participated in a roundtable discussion on a 'Global Partnership and the Three Dimensions of Sustainable Development'](#) as well as on ['Financing for Gender Equality – Placing Women at the Center of the Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\) in Africa'](#). In addition, a [Memorandum of Understanding \(MoU\)](#) was signed yesterday between the EU and the US, represented by Commissioner **Mimica** and US Treasury Secretary, Jack **Lew**, in order to strengthen coordination efforts by both the EU and the US to expand electricity access across sub-Saharan Africa for over 600 million people.

Antitrust: Commission fines cargo train operators €49 million for cartel

The European Commission has imposed fines of more than €49 million on Express Interfracht, part of the Austrian railway incumbent Österreichische Bundesbahnen ("ÖBB"), and Schenker, part of the German railway incumbent Deutsche Bahn ("DB"), for operating a cartel in breach of EU antitrust rules in the market for so-called cargo 'blocktrain' services. The three companies fixed prices and allocated customers for their "Balkantrain" and "Soptrain" services in Europe for nearly eight years. Kühne+Nagel of Switzerland, which is one of the largest transport and logistics companies in Europe, also took part in the cartel but was not fined as it was granted immunity for revealing the existence of the cartel. Express Interfracht and Schenker received reductions of their fines for cooperating with the investigation. The fines imposed were further reduced by 10% since all the companies agreed in settling the case. European Commissioner in charge of competition policy **Margrethe Vestager** said: *"I find it very disappointing that a project to enhance transport efficiency and promote environmentally friendly cargo transport was derailed into a cartel. The European Union needs rail cargo markets to function efficiently on the basis of effective competition and not to be hijacked by vested interests to the detriment of customers."* A full press release is available in [here](#). More information on this case will be available under the case number [40098](#) in the [public case register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website, once confidentiality issues have been dealt with. For more information on the Commission's action against cartels, see its [cartels](#) website.

Commission assesses whether revised bank capital requirements have affected lending

The European Commission is launching a review on how bank lending has been affected by prudential rules introduced in the wake of the financial crisis. The public consultation looks at whether stricter EU rules on capital requirements have, for example, curbed lending to small businesses and financing of infrastructure projects, and whether the rules are in all cases proportionate (see questionnaire [here](#)). Jonathan **Hill**, EU Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"Bank funding is and will remain central to our economy; whether it is lending to small businesses, or long-term investment in infrastructure. The Capital Requirements Regulation and Directive have restored resilience, stability, and trust in the European banking sector. These are vitally important objectives which the legislation has helped to achieve — but it is right to ask whether the rules have unintended consequences. This is part of our commitment to Better Regulation, and helps us strike the best possible balance between managing risk and enabling growth."* As a follow-up to the consultation, the Commission will publish a feedback report and organise a public hearing on 27 November 2015, paving the way for the Commission's final report in 2016. A full press release is available in [here](#).

The Commission approves one new Protected Geographical Indication and two new Protected Designation of Origins

The Commission has today approved the addition of three new products to the register of Protected Geographical Indications (PGIs) and Protected Designation of Origin (PDOs). For Croatia, 'Ekstra djevičansko maslinovo ulje Cres' (PDO), an extra virgin olive oil obtained directly from the fruit of the olive tree (*Olea europaea*, L.) solely by mechanical means. Another for Croatia, 'Neretvanska mandarina' (PDO), a fruit of the mandarin orange tree belonging to the Unshiu-Satsuma Group (Citrus unshiu 'Marcovitch'). The 'Neretvanska mandarina' fruit is distinguishable by its thin, smooth rind that is easy to peel, its high juice content in the edible part of the fruit, and by being seedless with segments that separate easily. For The Netherlands, 'De Meerlander'(PGI), which is comprised of the tubers of the 'de Meerlander' variety of potato, and intended for human consumption. 'De Meerlander' is a potato that is resistant to disease and its tubers are not very susceptible to attack or to internal damage. These three denominations 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.

State aid: Commission opens two in-depth investigations into Hungary's food chain inspection fee and tax on tobacco sales

The European Commission has opened two separate in-depth investigations to further examine whether two recent Hungarian measures with steeply progressive rate structures are in line with EU state aid rules. The first measure concerns a food chain inspection fee and the second a tax on turnover from the production and trade of tobacco products. At this stage, the Commission has concerns in both cases that the progressivity of the rates based on turnover provides companies with a low turnover a selective advantage over their competitors, in breach of EU state aid rules. The Commission has also issued injunctions, prohibiting Hungary from applying the progressive rates of the food chain inspection fee and the tobacco tax until the Commission has concluded its assessment. The opening of in-depth investigations gives interested third parties the opportunity to comment on the measures under assessment. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigations. A full press release is available in [here](#).

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Portuguese Guarantee Scheme on European Investment Bank lending

The European Commission has approved, under EU state aid rules, a prolongation of a Portuguese guarantee scheme on European Investment Bank (EIB) lending until 31 December 2015. The scheme covers State guarantees to banks that guarantee EIB loans for companies in Portugal. It was initially [approved on 27 June 2013](#) and prolonged several times, last [in February 2015](#). The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme to be in line with its [guidelines on state aid to banks during the crisis](#) because it is well targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. The prolonged scheme will allow the continuation of funding provided by the EIB to the real economy and prevent disruption of the credit granted by the EIB through the banks participating in the scheme. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#), under the case number SA.42156.

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Aer Lingus by IAG, subject to conditions

The European Commission has cleared under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of Irish airline Aer Lingus by International Consolidated Airlines Group (IAG). IAG is the holding company of British Airways, Iberia and Vueling. The clearance is conditional upon commitments offered by the parties to address the Commission's concerns regarding the transaction as notified. The Commission had concerns that the merged entity would have faced insufficient competition on several routes. The Commission also found that the merged entity would prevent Aer Lingus from continuing to provide traffic to the long-haul flights of competing airlines on several routes. The commitments offered by the parties address the Commission's concerns. European Commissioner in charge of competition policy Margrethe **Vestager** said: *"By obtaining significant concessions from the airlines the Commission has ensured that air passengers will continue to have a choice of airlines at competitive prices after IAG's takeover of Aer Lingus. The five million passengers travelling each year from Dublin and Belfast to London will be able to choose among*

several strong carriers. And we are also protecting passengers travelling on connecting flights between Ireland and the rest of the world." The commitments offered by the Parties will be made available as of 16 July under the case number [M.7541](#). A full press release is available in [here](#). More information is available in the Commission's public [case registry](#) on the [competition](#) website.

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over EOS Commerce by Coop and Swisscom

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of the joint venture Eos Commerce, by Coop-Gruppe and Swisscom, all of Switzerland. Eos Commerce will develop, promote and operate an online-marketplace primarily for Swiss customers. Coop-Gruppe is operating supermarkets, convenience stores, restaurants, catering businesses and petrol stations as well as wholesale trade outside of Switzerland and also produces meat products, seafood and convenience-meals. Swisscom is a provider of fixed line and mobile telecommunications and information technology, internet and television services. The Commission concluded that Eos Commerce has no, or negligible, actual or foreseen activities within the territory of the European Economic Area (EEA) and that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns also because there are no overlaps between the companies' activities. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.7657](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Investment Plan for Europe: roadshow arrives in the UK

European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, is travelling to London tonight as part the roadshow to promote the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). Together with Commissioner Jonathan **Hill**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, they will speak at a roundtable with the financial services industry to discuss how The City of London can contribute to the Investment Plan for Europe. Vice-President **Katainen** will also meet with Chief Secretary to the Treasury Greg Hands, Commercial Secretary to the Treasury Jim O'Neill and Secretary of State for Business, Innovations and Skills Sajid Javid and will take part in discussions on investments in the House of Lords and in an event at Chatham house. Ahead of the visit, Vice-President **Katainen** also welcomed the signing of the agreement between the European Investment Fund (EIF) and Santander UK to increase lending to innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the UK, with up to £100 million (€140 million) in new EIF loans over the next two years. This is the first transaction in the UK to benefit from the support of the [European Fund for Strategic Investments](#) (EFSI), which is at the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe, in which the EIF is the Commission's strategic partner. On the occasion, Vice-President **Katainen** said: *"Whether it is with government Ministers in Whitehall or SMEs in Leicester, I look forward to discussing how British companies and investors can benefit from the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). I believe the UK can play a leading role in the success of the Investment Plan for Europe. And just earlier today, the European Investment Fund signed an agreement with backing from the EFSI to lend £100 million to small, innovative companies in the UK over the next two years, so money is already starting to flow and I am sure much more will come shortly."*

Commissioner Avramopoulos opens negotiations for an EU-Mexico Passenger Name Records (PNR) agreement

Yesterday, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** was in Mexico City to formally launch the negotiations for a future EU-Mexico PNR agreement, together with Aristoteles Nuñez, Head of the Mexican Tax and Customs Authority (SAT). Last week, preparatory technical discussions between the Commission services and the SAT took place in Mexico City. A [joint statement](#) was released between the European Commission and the Mexican Authorities. A PNR agreement between the EU and Mexico will regulate the transfer of PNR data to Mexico and the conditions for the processing of

that data by the Mexican authorities. On 23 June, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate a PNR agreement with Mexico. Mexican legislation obliges airlines to transfer PNR data to SAT, since 2012. However, when it comes to EU-related data, airlines may only transfer such data if these transfers are regulated by EU law. The EU has concluded PNR agreements with the US and Australia. The Commission has negotiated a similar agreement with Canada. The European Parliament has not voted on this draft agreement yet because it has requested the opinion of the European Court of Justice. Any draft PNR agreement with Mexico will need to take into account the content of this opinion. Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Mexico is a strategic partner of the European Union. Our partnership is essential in addressing today's global security challenges, especially in the areas of terrorism and transnational organised crime. Launching together the negotiations on PNR underlines the commitment and determination to strengthen of our already close partnership."*

President Juncker appoints Luc Van den Brande as Special Adviser for the outreach towards citizens

Today, President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, appointed **Luc Van den Brande** as Special Adviser for the outreach towards citizens. As a special adviser to the President, Mr **Van den Brande** will be working closely with various Members of the Juncker Commission on how to further strengthen the dialogue with EU citizens. Mr **Van den Brande** will not be remunerated for his role. Mr **Van den Brande**, Minister-President of Flanders between 1992 and 1999, has been a Member of the Committee of the Regions since 1994. He was Vice-President of the institution between 2006 and 2008 and President from 2008 to 2010. Between 2011 and 2014, he was a Special Adviser to Commissioner Johannes **Hahn**. His full CV is available [online](#).

Energy Union Vice-President Šefčovič for climate talks in Africa

From 15 to 21 July, Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič** in charge of Energy Union will conduct a climate change outreach tour to three African countries, in view of facilitating a rapprochement between the EU and Africa on core issues in the lead up to the climate conference in Paris in December 2015. The Vice-President will visit South Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Senegal and meet with political leaders as well as civil society and the business community. In Senegal he will be joined by the French Energy Minister Ségolène Royal. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for only 4-5 % of global greenhouse gas emissions, but is highly vulnerable to climate change. On the other hand, African countries are becoming more and more interested in climate-resilient, low-emission development. Access to finance for renewable energy is getting easier, given high economic growth rates. Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *"The EU and Africa are very strong partners on climate change. We have the same interest in a strong, legally-binding Paris Agreement, that will allow to limit global warming to maximum two degrees. I am eager to personally engage with our African interlocutors on climate and energy issues and to find out how we can mutually support each other before and in Paris."*

Climate diplomacy: Commissioner Arias Cañete reaches out to partners in run-up to global deal

Between 16 and 23 July, Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** is meeting with key international partners as preparations intensify for a new global climate agreement to be adopted in Paris this December. On 16 and 20 July, respectively, he will meet with US climate envoy Todd Stern and his Chinese counterpart Xie Zhenhua. On 18–19 July, he will co-chair the Major Economies Forum on Energy and Climate (MEF), a meeting convened by the US where ministers from major developed and developing economies will seek convergence of views on key issues in the climate negotiations. Many of the same issues will be on the agenda of an informal ministerial meeting convened by the incoming French presidency of the Paris conference, on 20–21 July in Paris. At EU level, preparations for the new global climate agreement will be discussed at an informal Environment Council on 22–23 July, with a particular focus on climate finance.



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

