



TODAYS  
News

Friday, 27 November, 2015

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### **Antitrust: new Commission Guidelines on joint selling of olive oil, beef and veal, and arable crops**

The European Commission has adopted new Guidelines on how specific agricultural derogations from EU antitrust rules apply to the sale of certain agricultural products. The Guidelines aim to support European farmers by clarifying how they can, under certain conditions, cooperate to jointly sell olive oil, beef and veal, and arable crops without breaching EU competition rules. These markets are worth more than €80 billion annually. Margrethe **Vestager**, Commissioner in charge of competition policy, said: "*These Guidelines are a manual explaining to farmers how to organise themselves in order to be able to jointly sell olive oil, beef and veal, and arable crops, while still fully respecting EU competition rules. The objective is to ensure that European farmers can work together to remain competitive and benefit from bargaining power towards the buyers*". Phil **Hogan**, Commissioner for agriculture and rural development, said: "*The guidelines are about strengthening farmers' collective position in the food supply chain by setting out clear and practicable rules. They help farmers to counter-balance the effects of increasing concentration at the processing and retailing stages of the chain. This is an important step towards workable conditions of competition on agricultural markets and the full use of the available tools in the new CAP.*" The new Guidelines complement the [2013 Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\) Reform](#) that introduced a number of changes to the rules on how EU farmers can cooperate. A full [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available in all EU languages.

### **President Juncker at the United Nations climate change conference in Paris**

President **Juncker** will participate in the United Nations climate change conference in Paris ([COP21](#)). Along with other world leaders he will be one of the speakers when the conference starts on Monday. Ahead of the conference President **Juncker** reaffirmed the EU's commitment: "*The EU wants an ambitious and binding global deal in Paris. We were the first to table our climate pledge in March and it is still the most ambitious contribution. Our goal of holding global temperature rise below 2°C by the end of the century is still within reach. We are witnessing a global movement like never before. I hope this will translate into action during the negotiations next week. If the world delivers in Paris, the humanity will have an international regime to efficiently combat climate change.*" Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete**, the EU's chief negotiator, and other Members of the College will also be present throughout the conference and work for a comprehensive, durable and dynamic agreement that will accelerate the global shift to low-carbon, climate-resilient economies.

## **New Eurostat flagship publication: People in the EU**

Today, Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, publishes the flagship publication "[People in the EU: who are we and how do we live?](#)". Its seven chapters provide a detailed picture of the population, families, households and housing, which helps understand the demographic, social and economic situation of those living in the EU. As Marianne **Thyssen**, Commissioner responsible for employment, social affairs, skills and labour mobility, states in the foreword of the publication: "*Providing a better understanding of the different aspects of the lives of individuals and families will help the European Commission and the Member State governments in their joint efforts to create prosperity for everybody in Europe. This data will help us translate the 10 Juncker Commission priorities into targeted policies and concrete actions*". A Eurostat press release is available [here](#).

## **European Commission provides €5.4 million in funding for projects to prevent and combat all forms of intolerance**

As a direct follow-up to the [2015 Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights](#) hosted by First Vice-President **Timmermans** and Commissioner **Jourová**, and dedicated to "*Tolerance and respect: preventing and combating antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe*", today the European Commission publishes a call for proposals under the [Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme](#). The Commission will award €5.4 million to projects on: training and capacity building to strengthen criminal responses to hate crime and hate speech; exchanging best practices to prevent and combat all forms of intolerance; empowering and supporting victims of hate crime and hate speech. As a result of last year's [call for proposals](#), financial support has been awarded to a number of [projects](#) including "*Research, Report, Remove*" and "eMORE", which both focus on monitoring, mapping and the removal of online hate speech. More detail on the call for proposals can be found [here](#). The deadline for submitting proposals is 18 February 2016.

## **EU provides €100 million to support reform and economic development in Georgia**

The European Commission has adopted a new assistance package for [Georgia](#) totalling €100 million. The money will support reforms related to the [EU-Georgia Association Agreement \(AA\)](#) and agreements on mobility. Speaking from the Georgian capital Tbilisi today, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn** said "*With the Association Agreement, the EU-Georgia relations have moved to another level. The assistance package will support central elements in this ever closer relationship.*" The new package will support Georgia in meeting its reform objectives in the sectors of public administration, agriculture and rural development and will help promote an active civil society. It will also assist key Georgian institutions in implementing the Association Agreement and in advancing the visa liberalisation process with the EU. A [press release](#) is available.

## **State aid: Commission approves amended restructuring plans for Alpha Bank and Eurobank**

The European Commission welcomes that capital to meet the shortfalls identified by the Single Supervisory Mechanism's comprehensive assessment for Alpha Bank and Eurobank has been fully raised from private investors. As a result, no state capital injections will be necessary. The Commission has also found the amended restructuring plans of Alpha Bank and Eurobank to be in line with EU state aid rules. It concluded that the measures already implemented as part of the two banks' existing restructuring plans, in addition to those envisaged in the amended plans, will enable Alpha Bank and Eurobank to return to viability in line with EU state aid rules. EU Commissioner in charge of competition policy, Margrethe **Vestager**, said: "*This is an important step in the right direction for the economic recovery of Greece. The fully private capital raising for both Alpha Bank and Eurobank is a clear signal of strengthened trust in the viability of the two*

*banks and the Greek banking system."* More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [SA.34823](#). The full press release in [here](#)

### **State aid: Commission clears Portuguese investment aid for Volkswagen Autoeuropa**

After an [in-depth investigation](#), the European Commission has found around €36 million regional aid granted by Portugal in favour of Volkswagen Autoeuropa to invest in a new production technology to be in line with EU state aid rules. The technology will be used for new car types in its existing factory in Palmela (Setubal region, Portugal), in particular for the assembly of car parts. The total cost of the project is €673 million and production will start at the earliest in 2016. Palmela is located in a disadvantaged region of Portugal which, at the time of granting the aid, had a GDP per capita below the national average. The area is therefore entitled to benefit from aid to encourage investments, under the Portuguese regional aid map applicable at the time of granting the aid. The Commission's assessment showed that the aid was necessary for the project to go ahead in Palmela and there is a limited effect on competition, because the aid merely compensated the company for the extra costs incurred by carrying out the project in Palmela and not in an alternative location. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number SA.38831.

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Hotel Atrium by Griffin, Skanska and Starwood**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Hotel Atrium sp. z o.o. of Poland, by GT Netherlands IV B.V. ("Griffin"), Skanska Central Europe Holding B.V., both of the Netherlands, together with Starwood EAME License and Services Company BVBA of Belgium. Hotel Atrium owns a property in Warsaw, currently operated as a hotel under the Westin brand. Griffin operates on the real estate market in Central and Eastern Europe. Skanska is active in the project development, construction services and other services related to real estate. Starwood is a worldwide hotel and leisure operator. Its brands includes, among others, Sheraton and Westin. Starwood currently manages Hotel Atrium. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because Hotel Atrium has and will have negligible activities in 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.7542](#).

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of DEA UK by INEOS**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of DEA UK E&P Holdings Limited of the United Kingdom by INEOS AG of Switzerland. INEOS primarily supplies petrochemical products at wholesale level worldwide. DEA UK explores and produces crude oil and natural gas in the Southern North Sea. Both companies are active in the exploration of crude oil and natural gas and for the wholesale supply of natural gas. Moreover, crude oil sold by DEA UK can be used as input for INEOS' activities of crude oil refining and ex-refinery sales of refined fuel products. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies' moderate positions on all relevant markets and the presence of a number of strong competitors. 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.7828](#).

### **Eurostat publishes latest indicators for early detection of macroeconomic imbalances**

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, publishes today the indicators of the Macroeconomic Imbalances Procedure (MIP) Scoreboard. The MIP is part of the Six-Pack regulation on economic governance adopted by the European Parliament and Council in November 2011. The MIP Scoreboard provides the statistical support to the annual Alert Mechanism Report released by the European Commission at the start of the European Semester 2016. The Alert Mechanism Report identifies those Member States for which in-depth analyses are required on the basis of an economic reading of the scoreboard indicators. The MIP Scoreboard consists of fourteen indicators relevant for the early detection of existing or emerging macroeconomic imbalances at Member State level. The full data series are available on a regularly updated dedicated section of the Eurostat website. A press release is available [here](#).

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Commissioner Andriukaitis visits US

EU Health and Food Safety Commissioner Vytenis **Andriukaitis** will be on an official visit to the United States from 30 November to 4 December 2015 to discuss health and food safety issues that are a priority on both sides of the Atlantic. During his visit he will meet several US authorities, including Ms Sylvia Burwell, Secretary of Health and Human Services, Mr. Tom Vilsack, Secretary of Agriculture, Mr. Michael Froman, US Trade Representative, Mr Stephen Ostroff, acting Commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration and Mr. Tom Frieden, Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Commissioner will also visit the Universities of Harvard and Georgetown. Topics to be discussed include: joint EU-US efforts on antimicrobial resistance, global health security Ebola follow-up, chronic diseases, food-borne diseases and surveillance networks and health and food safety issues included in the TTIP.

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

