



Thursday, 04 February, 2016

### Promotion of EU agricultural products – new calls for proposals published

The first calls for promotion campaigns for EU agricultural products under new EU promotion rules have been opened by the Commission today.

Under the new policy, applicable since 1 December 2015, EU funds are available to co-finance multi-annual projects aimed at finding new markets and promoting EU agricultural products not only within the EU, but also on third country markets – with different rates of co-funding applicable. Some €111 million is available for promotion under the EU budget in 2016. Speaking today, EU Commissioner Phil Hogan, responsible for Agriculture & Rural Development, said: "I am pleased to confirm that the first calls for proposals under the new promotion rules has been launched. I recall that this year's programmes include €30 million which is ring-fenced for the troubled milk and pigmeat sectors. Europe's agri-food produce is second to none in the global marketplace. With a budget of €111 million this year, and a simpler application system, I am optimistic that these measures can boost our exports and thereby create jobs and growth in rural areas across Europe. As a further push to promote EU agricultural products, I shall myself be making a series of visits to third countries. Next week I am travelling to Columbia and Mexico accompanied by a delegation of European producers." More information is available [here](#)

### Winter 2016 Economic Forecast: Weathering new challenges

Commissioner Pierre Moscovici has presented the [Winter 2016 Economic Forecast](#). The European economy is now entering its fourth year of recovery and growth continues at a moderate rate, driven mainly by consumption. At the same time, much of the world economy is grappling with major challenges and risks to European growth are therefore increasing. In the euro area, growth is projected to increase to 1.7% this year from 1.6% last year, and to climb to 1.9% in 2017. EU economic growth is forecast to remain stable at 1.9% this year and rise to 2.0% next year. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, said: "Europe is continuing its recovery, with growth broadly in line with our previous forecast in autumn. We have to remain attentive. Europe's moderate growth is facing increasing headwinds, from slower growth in emerging markets such as China, to weak global

trade and geopolitical tensions in Europe's neighbourhood. It is important to continue structural reforms that can help our economies grow, withstand shocks in the future, and improve job opportunities for our population." Pierre **Moscovici**, Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, Taxation and Customs, said: "The European economy is successfully weathering new challenges this winter, supported by cheap oil, the euro rate and low interest rates. Nonetheless, the weaker global environment poses a risk and means we must be doubly vigilant. There is more work to do to strengthen investment, enhance our competitiveness in a smart way and complete the job of fixing our public finances." A [press release](#) is available in all EU languages. Commissioner Moscovici's presentation (including the [slides](#)) is available online. For further information, please consult the [European Economic forecast webpage](#).

## **Commission welcomes Member State agreement on Refugee Facility for Turkey**

The Commission [welcomed yesterday](#) the agreement by Member States on the details of the €3 billion Refugee Facility for Turkey, which the Commission proposed on 24 November in the context of our cooperation with Turkey on tackling the refugee crisis. The Commission has agreed to increase the contribution from the EU budget to €1 billion, compared to the €500 million originally proposed in November. The EU will now be able to swiftly deliver substantial new financial resources to support Turkey in coping with the presence of Syrian refugees under temporary protection and host communities in Turkey. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: "I welcome the agreement by the Member States on the details of the Refugee Facility for Turkey. This is what we agreed at the meeting of EU heads of state or government with Turkey on 29 November. The money we are putting on the table will directly benefit Syrian refugees in Turkey, helping to improve their access to education and healthcare in particular. I also welcome the measures already taken by the Turkish authorities to give Syrian refugees access to the labour market and to reduce the flows. The step taken today will help ensure better prospects for Syrians in Turkey and advance on the implementation of our Joint Action Plan. We must work together to achieve results, in particular when it comes to stemming the influx of irregular migrants." Commissioner Johannes **Hahn**, added: "Turkey now hosts one of the world's largest refugee communities and has committed to significantly reducing the numbers of migrants crossing into the EU. The Facility for Refugees in Turkey will go straight to the refugees, providing them with education, health and food. The improvement of living-conditions and the offering of a positive perspective will allow refugees to stay closer to their homes." The Facility will provide a joint coordination mechanism for actions financed by the EU budget and national contributions made by the Member States, designed to ensure that the needs of refugees and host communities are addressed in a comprehensive and coordinated manner.

## **Investment Plan for Europe: first deal in Hungary worth €97 million to support over 1500 small businesses**

The European Investment Fund (EIF) and [K&H Bank](#) have signed the first [COSME](#) agreement in Hungary to provide HUF 30 billion (around €97 million) to over 1500 small businesses in Hungary. This transaction benefits from the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). EU Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: "Helping to boost economic growth by triggering new investment is the Commission's top political priority. That is why I welcome today's announcement that K&H will provide fresh loans worth nearly €100 million to small businesses in Hungary with support from the EIF and the Investment Plan. I encourage Hungarian SMEs to contact K&H with their business proposals to make the most of the opportunities opened up by this new deal." For more information see [here](#)

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of mobile network operator BASE by Liberty Global, subject to conditions**

Following an [in-depth investigation](#), the European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of BASE, a Belgian mobile network operator, by Liberty Global. The approval is conditional upon the implementation of commitments to ensure effective competition in the Belgian retail mobile market. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, stated: "*We have made sure that Liberty Global's merger with BASE will not reverse the trend of declining mobile prices in Belgium in recent years. To maintain healthy competition in the Belgian mobile market, Liberty Global and BASE will sell part of their customer base to a new virtual mobile operator.*" The agreed remedies adequately address the Commission's concerns since they ensure that a new mobile virtual network operator will enter the retail mobile market, to compensate for the loss of competition resulting from the exit of Telenet as an independent mobile virtual network operator. The full press release is available in [EN](#), [FR](#), [DE](#) and [NL](#). More information on this case is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7637](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Dundrum Assets by Hammerson and Allianz**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of several real estate assets, together "the Dundrum Assets", all located in Dublin, Ireland, by Hammerson plc of the United Kingdom and Allianz SE of Germany. The Dundrum Assets comprise the Dundrum Town Centre and the Dundrum Phase II & Village projects. Hammerson is active in real estate development and owns and manages shopping centres primarily in the United Kingdom and France. Allianz is active in the insurance sector and asset management for both private and corporate customers in more than 70 countries. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of its very 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.7905](#).

## **Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Northgate by Goldman Sachs**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of Northgate Information Solutions Limited of the UK by The Goldman Sachs Group, Inc. of the US. Northgate develops and provides integrated software, outsourcing and IT technology solutions and services for payroll and HR management. Goldman Sachs is active in investment banking, securities and investment management. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, in particular because of the limited overlaps between the companies' activities resulting from the transaction. 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.7926](#).

## **Eurostat: The EU was dependent on energy imports for slightly over half of its consumption in 2014**

The energy dependency of the European Union (EU) stood in 2014 at 53.4%, meaning that the EU needed to import just over half of the energy it consumed in 2014. Energy dependency in the EU was higher in 2014 than in 1990, but slightly lower than its highest point recorded in 2008. The evolution of

EU energy dependency has not been constant between 1990 and 2014, however, it has continuously stood above 50% since 2004. Energy dependency varies widely across Member States, with half of them relying mainly on imports for their energy consumption in 2014, while for the other half, energy dependency rate stood below 50%. A Eurostat press release is available [here](#).

#### **Eurostat: Still 1 in 4 deaths caused by cancer in the EU**

In the European Union (EU), cancer was the cause of death for almost 1.3 million persons in 2013, responsible for just over a quarter (26%) of all deaths. Men (726 500 deaths due to cancer) were more affected than women (570 300). In addition, fatal cancer represented more than a third (37%) of all deaths for the EU population aged less than 65, while this level was below a quarter (23%) for the older population (those aged 65 years and over). A Eurostat press release is available [here](#).

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