



Wednesday, 02 March, 2016

Climate Action: Europe readies next steps to implement the Paris Agreement

Today, the European Commission presented an assessment of the implications for the European Union of the new global climate agreement adopted in Paris in December 2015. The assessment looks at the next steps in the process and how the Paris Agreement will be implemented in the EU. The assessment is also accompanied by a proposal for the European Union to sign the Paris Agreement. Vice-President for the Energy Union Maroš Šefčovič said: *"The Paris Agreement sends a strong signal that the world is moving towards a global clean energy transition. We want to maintain the first mover advantage, notably in renewable energy and energy efficiency. Under the Energy Union strategy we want to create an environment that allows investors and businesses to fully seize these new opportunities, and consequently be able to generate new jobs and growth. There are also significant opportunities for our cities. After all, it is in urban areas where an important part of the transition will actually happen. We will speed up our work in this field."* EU Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias Cañete said: *"We have the deal. Now we need to make it real. For the EU, this means completing the 2030 climate and energy legislation without delay, signing and ratifying the Agreement as soon as possible, and continuing our leadership in the global transition to a low-carbon future. Through our climate diplomacy, the EU will push to keep climate change at the top of the international political agenda. We have a lot of work ahead of us, but as we did in Paris, we will persevere and succeed."* The Agreement will be open for signatures on 22 April 2016 in New York, and enter into force when at least 55 Parties representing at least 55% of global emissions have ratified. Furthermore, the Commission will present during the next 12 months key remaining legislative proposals to implement the 2030 framework. See the [press release](#) for the main conclusions of the assessment. Find more information about the Commission's climate action and energy priorities on the [Energy Union website](#).

Commission goes ahead with 17 Member States to clarify the applicable property rights for Europe's international couples

The European Commission adopted today proposals to clarify the property rights for international married couples or registered partnerships. These proposals will establish clear rules on the applicable law in cases of divorce or separation and bring an end to parallel and possibly conflicting proceedings in various Member States, for instance on property or bank accounts. In short, it will bring more legal clarity for international couples. Since it was not possible to reach unanimity among 28 Member States on a proposal originally brought forward in 2011, the Commission is now going ahead with 17 Member States willing to join this initiative through an enhanced cooperation. First Vice-President Timmermans said: *"This is*

about giving certainty to thousands of European couples – whether married or in registered partnerships – about what happens to them and their families if their dream of a life together does not work out. I wish we had been able to take this forward with all Member States as the Commission had proposed, but today's proposals mean we can help at least some of the people concerned to manage at the most difficult times." Vera **Jourová**, EU Justice Commissioner said: *"In case of divorce or death of a partner, the lives of 16 million international couples can become even more difficult through burdensome administrative procedures and unclear legal situations. (...)The new proposed rules will bring legal clarity and ease the complicated process of dividing up joint assets no matter where they are located."* Press release available [here](#).

Public hearing on retail financial services

The European Commission is today gathering the views of the public as part of its efforts to create a stronger European market for consumer financial services. The public hearing is part of a broad consultation with consumers and retail service providers. The Retail Finance Green Paper, which is open for comment until 18 March 2016, aims to boost competition, transparency and choice for European consumers. The Green Paper identifies issues that hinder the development and further integration of the retail financial services market in the EU, and encourages consumers and businesses to share their experiences in the market and to suggest ways that these barriers could be tackled. During the hearing, participants will be given an opportunity to exchange views about next steps that the Commission could take. The hearing is structured into four sessions: consumers' access to financial services across the EU, pan-European retail financial products, innovation in retail financial services and consumers' attitudes towards products from abroad. A live stream of the hearings is [available online](#).

Commission proposes new Emergency Assistance instrument for faster crisis response within the EU

Today the European Commission has proposed an Emergency Assistance instrument to be used within the European Union to provide a faster, more targeted response to major crises, including helping Member States cope with large numbers of refugees. The initiative comes as the refugee crisis reaches an unprecedented scale with the need to provide immediate emergency support in several Member States hosting large amounts of refugees on their territories. From the outset the Commission has been committed to supporting its Member States through all means possible and the proposal is a direct follow up to the European Council of 18-19 February, when governments called on the Commission to develop the capacity to provide emergency assistance internally. European Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** said: *"With this proposal, we will be able to deliver emergency assistance for crises much faster than before, inside the European Union. Right now, there's no doubt that this will be particularly needed to support refugees. No time can be lost in deploying all means possible to prevent humanitarian suffering within our own borders. Today's proposal will make €700 million available to provide help where it is most needed. I now look to European governments and the European Parliament to quickly back the proposal."* Member States whose own response capacities are overwhelmed by urgent and exceptional circumstances, such as the sudden influx of refugees or other major disruptions could benefit from this new instrument. The provision of emergency assistance will be based on Article 122(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. This will allow for support to be provided in the fastest and broadest possible way, in a spirit of solidarity between Member States. Emergency assistance would be provided in close coordination with Member States and organisations such as UN agencies, non-governmental organisations and international organisations, and include the provision of basic necessities such as food, shelter and medicine to the large numbers of children, women and men currently arriving in EU countries. A [press release](#), [factsheet Q/A](#) and [factsheet](#) are available.

Managing the Refugee Crisis: Stepping up return procedures to Turkey

The Commission is today able to confirm that Greece is in the process of returning 308 irregular migrants to Turkey, as the European Union steps up its efforts to ensure those who do not qualify for international protection in Europe will be quickly and effectively returned to their countries of origin or transit. The return of irregular migrants who have no right to stay in the EU to their home countries or to countries they transited through, in full respect of fundamental rights and the principle of non-refoulement, is an essential part of the EU's comprehensive efforts to address migration and in particular to reduce irregular migration. Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"Under the EU-Turkey joint action plan we agreed to accelerate return and readmission procedures with Turkey. The European Commission has reinforced its support for cooperation on return between EU Member States and Turkey and today's transfers of returnees from Greece to Turkey show that our efforts are starting to bear fruit. If we want to address the challenges of the refugee crisis successfully we need to get back to an orderly management of the migration flows: We have to make sure that those who are in need of protection will receive it, but it has to be clear as well that those who have no right to stay in the EU will be quickly and effectively returned."* A press release is available [here](#).

The SME Initiative comes to Bulgaria: new opportunities for economic growth and creating jobs

Today, the European Commission welcomes the signature of the funding agreement between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Bulgarian government to implement the [SME Initiative in Bulgaria](#). This innovative instrument will unlock between 400 and 600 million euro of lending for Bulgarian small businesses. Corina **Crețu**, Commissioner for Regional Policy, said: *"The SME initiative is a concrete example of how ESI Fund programmes contribute to growth and jobs creation. The SME Initiative does not require co-financing from national resources."* More information on the [SME initiative](#) and on [ESI Funds in Bulgaria](#) is available online.

Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Webhelp by KKR

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of Webhelp SAS of France by KKR & CO. L.P. of the US. Webhelp is an IT services provider active primarily in the provision of business process outsourcing services. KKR is a global investment firm offering a broad range of alternative asset management services and providing capital markets solutions. 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.7914](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of the L Companies by Catterton

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of L Capital Asia Advisors of Mauritius, L Real Estate S.A. of Luxembourg, L Capital Management S.A.S. and L Real Estate Advisors S.A.S., both of France, and L Real Estate Advisors Limited and L Development & Management Limited, both of Hong Kong (together the "L Companies") by Catterton L.P. of the US. The L Companies manage private equity funds active in areas such as clothing, dining, food retail and jewellery, as well as funds that hold, operate and develop real estate. Catterton is a consumer-focused

private equity firm specialised in leveraged buyouts, recapitalisations, and growth capital investments. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because the companies' combined market positions are very limited. 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.7938](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control over Roth Agrarhandel by Hauptgenossenschaft Nord

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control over Roth Agrarhandel GmbH by Hauptgenossenschaft Nord AG, both of Germany. Hauptgenossenschaft Nord, which is controlled by the Danish cooperative Dansk Landbrugs Grovvarereselskab a.m.b.a., is active in the wholesale and trade of agricultural commodities, including grains, seeds, animal feed and fertilisers. Roth Agrarhandel is a retailer of agricultural products. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because prior to the present transaction Hauptgenossenschaft Nord had already joint control over Roth Agrarhandel together with other shareholders. The operation was assessed under the simplified merger procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7948](#).

EUROSTAT: January 2016 compared with December 2015 - Industrial producer prices down by 1.0% in both euro area and EU28

In January 2016, compared with December 2015, industrial producer prices fell by 1.0% in both the euro area (EA19) and the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In December 2015 prices decreased by 0.8% in both zones. In January 2016, compared with January 2015, industrial producer prices fell by 2.9% in both the euro area and the EU28. A full press release is [available online](#).

European Commission appoints Director-General to the Regulatory Scrutiny Board and Five Deputy Directors-General

Today, the European Commission appointed Ms Anne Bucher as Chair of its Regulatory Scrutiny Board – a vital function that assures the quality and relevance of all new legislative proposals. The Commission also appointed five Deputy Directors-General - Ms María de los Angeles Benitez Salas to its Directorate-General (DG) for Agriculture and Rural Development; Mr Carles Esteve Mosso to its DG Competition; Ms Joanna Drake to DG Environment; Ms Irmfried Schwimann to DG Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs (DG GROW) and Ms Sabine Weyand to DG Trade. Commenting on the appointments, Vice-President Kristalina **Georgieva**, in charge of Budget and Human Resources, said: "*At a time when the European Union is dealing with multiple crises, we need the best talent in the right jobs at the European Commission. The appointments today strengthen our senior management team and are an important step towards achieving our target of 40% women in management by 2019.*" More information about today's top management appointments is available [here](#).

European Commission appoints Director in its Directorate-General Informatics

The European Commission decided today to appoint Mr Philippe Van Damme to the position of Director “Digital Infrastructure Solutions” in its Directorate-General Informatics (DG DIGIT). Mr Van Damme, a Franco-Belgian national, joined the European Commission in 2000 to work on the Commission's Human Resource Management system. He became Head of Unit in 2009 and has been Acting Director in charge of Digital Infrastructure Solutions since 2014.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Malmström will meet Economic Ministers of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** will attend tomorrow the annual ASEAN Economic Ministers (AEM) – EU Trade Commissioner Consultations that will take place in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Commissioner **Malmström** will discuss with her ASEAN counterparts how to strengthen the EU-ASEAN trade and investment relations and exchange views on global issues, notably on how to enhance partnership in multilateral fora. As part of her ASEAN programme, Commissioner **Malmström** will also meet members of the EU-ASEAN Business Council, composed of representatives of European Chambers of Commerce in the region and corporate members. The Commissioner will also have individual meetings with ASEAN ministers from Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia and Singapore to discuss bilateral trade issues. ASEAN was established on 8 August 1967 and represents the EU's 3rd largest trading partner outside Europe (after the US and China) with more than €235 billion of trade in goods and services in 2013. Its members are Brunei Darussalam, Myanmar/Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

International aviation: Statement by Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc following her meetings in Washington D.C.

EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** was in Washington D.C. to discuss the ongoing negotiations within the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) in view of the adoption of a global market-based measure to curb aviation emissions. She also promoted the new [Aviation Strategy](#) and took stock of the implementation of the [2010 EU-US Open Skies Agreement](#). Commissioner **Bulc** said, *"Transatlantic cooperation has so far been very positive for our respective aviation industries (...), but on both sides of the Atlantic, the sector is facing new challenges (...) and we need to make sure that [it] can stay ahead of the curve. My message today was therefore very clear: we will need more transatlantic cooperation. We need a united EU-US front to decarbonise aviation and allow our respective companies to grow sustainably and tap into new emerging markets. Such united front shall however not be put at risk by the failure of the US authorities to take a decision on Norwegian Air International."* Her full statement is available [here](#).

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