



Tuesday, 24 May, 2016

Commission publishes further TTIP documents in ongoing transparency commitment

The European Commission is today publishing [a report](#) detailing the progress achieved during the 13th round of talks for a trade agreement with the United States, which took place in April 2016, together with its proposal on regulatory cooperation in pharmaceuticals, submitted to the US during this round. The publication of these documents from the ongoing negotiations on a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) is in line with the European Commission's commitment to enhanced transparency. The round report shows that negotiators made good progress in all three pillars of the negotiations, namely i) better access to markets for EU and US firms, ii) simplifying technical regulations without lowering standards and iii) global rules of trade, including sustainable development, labour and the environment and a dedicated chapter for smaller firms (SMEs). However, significant differences still remain, notably in the areas of services and public procurement. The [proposal for cooperation in the pharmaceuticals sector](#) aims to help regulators work more closely together to achieve better efficiency and thereby deliver benefits for patients. The cooperation would take place in three main areas: co-ordinating inspections of pharmaceutical facilities to avoid unnecessary duplication, reducing the need for medicines to undergo duplicate approval processes in both EU and the US, and supporting each other's work on developing regulations in new areas which could lead to faster and cheaper approval of medicines. The proposal clearly states that both the EU and the US reserve the full right to regulate to achieve public policy objectives and protect human and animal health, and the environment. Also today, Commissioner Malmström will deliver a keynote speech on the benefits of TTIP for the European business community, at a conference hosted by the EurActiv Institute in Brussels. The speech will be available on [the Commissioner's website](#). A factsheet on regulatory cooperation on pharmaceuticals [can be found here](#), and more EU proposals [are available here](#).

Preparation of the Eurogroup and informal ECOFIN Council meetings 24-25 May

Vice-President **Dombrovskis** and Commissioner **Moscovici** will represent the European Commission at the Eurogroup meeting, where the [agenda](#) includes a discussion on the implementation of the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) programme for Greece, an exchange of views on the economic situation and the outlook in the euro area. The meeting will be followed by a press conference. Vice-President **Dombrovskis**, Commissioner **Moscovici** and Commissioner **Hill** will represent the Commission at the working sessions of the ECOFIN meeting on Wednesday, where the focus will be [on corporate tax avoidance](#), VAT and the Banking Union. Ministers will try to come to an agreement on the way forward for new rules to tackle loopholes in our taxation systems which some multinational companies use to

avoid paying their fair share of tax. The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions confirming political support for the Commission's proposed process towards a common EU list of third countries who do not respect international tax good governance standards. On VAT, ministers will discuss the Commission's [VAT Action Plan](#) and adopt conclusions on VAT fraud (including the '[VAT Gap](#)'), the future definitive EU VAT system and ways to give Member States more flexibility on VAT rates. In the session devoted to Banking Union, the Commission will update ministers on the implementation of the various initiatives in this area. Finally, ministers will exchange views on the Country Reports that include the results of in-depth reviews and the analysis of the implementation of the 2015 country-specific recommendations. [A press conference](#) will take place at the end of the meeting.

Commission awards €25 million in emergency funding to the European Asylum Support Office for capacity building in Greece

The European Commission has awarded €25 million in emergency funding to the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) to enhance its capacity to further support the Greek authorities. These additional resources will be used to support the implementation of the EU-Turkey Statement and the EU emergency relocation scheme. The funding is provided under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) and will allow for the deployment of additional Member State experts and interpreters, and the set-up of mobile EASO offices in the hotspots to assist with processing asylum applications. Commissioner **Avramopoulos** said: *"EU Agencies are playing a crucial role in supporting the Greek authorities on the ground, providing practical expertise and operational support. The Commission is supporting these deployments through emergency EU funding. I call on Member States to quickly make available the necessary staff to help EASO deliver the planned support and give a boost to the EU relocation scheme. This is key to addressing the humanitarian situation on the ground."* The funding announced today is part of the emergency response plan developed together by the Commission, the Greek authorities and relevant stakeholders to address the ongoing humanitarian situation on the ground and implement the EU-Turkey Statement of 18 March. Since the beginning of 2015 the Commission has awarded €262 million in emergency assistance to support the Greek authorities as well as Union agencies, international organisations and NGOs operating in Greece. Emergency funding comes on top of the €509 million already allocated to Greece under the national programmes for 2014-2020 (€294.5 million from AMIF and €214.7 million from ISF). A factsheet on EU financial support to Greece is available [here](#).

Joint Statement on the outcomes of the World Humanitarian Summit

On the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit on 23-24 May in Istanbul, Turkey, Kristalina **Georgieva**, Vice-President of the European Commission, Neven **Mimica**, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development and Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, have issued the following statement: *"Every day, thousands of innocent people are the victims of natural disasters and conflict. Over 125 million men, women and children depend on humanitarian assistance across the world, and the needs are constantly growing. At this critical juncture, the first-ever [World Humanitarian Summit](#) has brought together the international community to seek ways to prevent and end crises as well as to strengthen and reshape the way aid is delivered. We welcome the political communiqué endorsed on this occasion. The European Union pledged individual commitments at the summit concerning policies, programmes and funds it is responsible for and is committed to strong progress on each of the five core responsibility areas, for which [core commitments](#) have been formulated by the UN. The World Humanitarian Summit has come to an end today, but our work towards a new global partnership linking political action to prevent crises, development assistance and more effective and principled humanitarian aid has only just begun. The challenges we are facing are complex, and there is no simple solution. This is the moment to roll up our sleeves and transform the Summit commitments into concrete action. The European Union, as the world's largest donor of humanitarian aid, will play its full part in reshaping aid to better serve people in need and calls on all world leaders to do*

the same." The statement is available online [here](#). Audiovisual coverage from the Summit is also available on [EBS](#)

Micro-enterprises to benefit from first 'Employment and Social Innovation'-microfinance deal in Estonia

The [European Investment Fund \(EIF\)](#) and Estonian financial group AS LHV Pank (LHV) have signed a guarantee agreement aimed at supporting micro-enterprises in Estonia under the [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#). This new EaSI guarantee agreement with LHV will cover a loan portfolio of €12 million for over 700 micro-borrowers including young entrepreneurs establishing start-up businesses, ethnic minorities, and micro entrepreneurs with limited access to credit through the new loan product '[LHV Micro loan](#)'. The loan application process will be web-based, automatic and made as user-friendly for clients as possible. Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, said: *"With the help of EU funding, LHV is opening a completely new credit line for the microfinance segment. More than 700 micro entrepreneurs in Estonia, including young entrepreneurs and ethnic minorities, will be able to benefit from loans on preferential conditions. This shows again that the European Commission is fully committed to boosting employment in Europe and getting more people into jobs, with particular efforts directed towards the most vulnerable people on the labour market."* The EaSI Guarantee scheme was launched in June 2015 and is funded by the European Commission and managed by the European Investment Fund. More information can be found [here](#).

Natura 2000 Awards: Commission honours exemplary projects protecting nature across Europe

EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** announced in a ceremony in Brussels yesterday, the winners of the 2016 Natura 2000 Awards. Natura 2000 is a network aiming at protecting and enhancing the EU's natural heritage. The awards recognise exemplary projects that protect nature across Europe and raise awareness about these initiatives. The six winners awarded include projects from [Bulgaria](#), [Latvia](#), [Spain](#) and the [United Kingdom](#), as well as cross-border projects from [Belgium](#), [France](#), [Greece](#), [Bulgaria](#), [Hungary](#), [Finland](#), and [Norway](#). At the awards ceremony, Commissioner **Vella** said: *"I am honoured to recognise the fantastic work undertaken by the winners and all of the finalists in preserving the common natural heritage of Europe. These initiatives have gone a long way towards ensuring that nature's benefits keep flowing for many years to come. This year, over 37 000 people cast a vote for their favourite project to win the EU Citizens' Award, which is a 50 % increase from last year. This goes to show just how important these awards are for increasing awareness about Europe-wide efforts to promote biodiversity."* For more information and a full list of the winners, see today's [press release](#).

Mergers: Commission clears joint venture between Investindustrial and Catelli

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over the Italian company Artsana by Investindustrial of the UK and Catelli of Italy. Artsana is currently solely controlled by Catelli and sells baby care, health and beauty products. Investindustrial invests in medium-sized companies predominantly based in Southern Europe. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the overlaps between the activities of Artsana and the portfolio companies of Investindustrial are very limited. 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. 8027.

Eurostat: Avoidable deaths in 2013-One death out of three in the EU could have been avoided in the light of current medical knowledge and technology-Heart diseases main category

In the **European Union** (EU), 1.7 million persons aged less than 75 died in 2013. Among them, around 577 500 deaths (or 33.7% of total deaths) could be considered as premature, as they could have been avoided in the light of medical knowledge and technology. Heart attacks (184 800 deaths) and strokes (almost 94 000 deaths) accounted together for almost half (48%) of these total avoidable causes of death of people aged less than 75. Full EUROSTAT text available [here](#)

STATEMENTS

Joint Statement by Commissioner Avramopoulos and Canadian Minister for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship John McCallum following their meeting in Toronto on 23 May

"Our meeting was constructive and productive and reaffirmed the strong bonds of friendship between the European Union and Canada. We discussed a broad array of issues of central importance to the European Union and Canada, including the challenges of the current migratory crisis and visa issues. We exchanged views on the unprecedented global migratory crisis and the concerted efforts required of the international community to face up to the task. We discussed the exemplary efforts exerted by Canada to resettle Syrians in need of international protection, and the need for other countries to show equal leadership in this respect. Solidarity and responsibility should be our guiding moral, legal and political principles in this respect. We exchanged views on how to ensure better legal channels, not only for those who need protection, but also those that can contribute economically and financially. Our economies need talent from abroad and we can learn from each other. During our meeting we also addressed the issue of visa reciprocity between the European Union and Canada. We pledged to continue working together to resolve remaining issues in this area and we reaffirmed our commitment to take tangible steps on both sides to improve the current state of play. Canada and the EU are historical key partners, not only on migration and mobility, and are committed in continuing this strategic friendship and relationship in the future." You can also find the statement [here](#).

Commissioner Bulc outlines her vision for Transport Investment

Appearing in front of the [European Parliament's Committee on Transport and Tourism](#) (TRAN), EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta **Bulc** presented her vision for transport investment and updated Members on the progress made so far. Commissioner **Bulc** said *"Overall, between the Connecting Europe Facility and EFSI, over €40 billion of investment has, or is soon to be, triggered in the transport sector, allowing us to estimate that it will potentially support about half a million temporary or permanent jobs in the coming years. We are working to develop a pipeline [of projects] that delivers big contributions to society, with a substantial economic return, and significant impact on jobs and growth (...). We need a strategic plan to support Member States and project promoters to transition from a publicly financed approach towards the use of new financial instruments. This in principle means to create a new investment culture in the EU. I am more and more convinced that the "blending" of grants with EFSI instruments is an effective way forward"*. Her full speech is available [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vice-President Šefčovič and Commissioner Bulc encourage cities to accelerate investment in sustainable energy and transport solutions

Vice President for the Energy Union Maroš **Šefčovič** and Transport Commissioner Violeta **Bulc** today attend and deliver keynote speeches to [the General Assembly of the European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities](#) in Eindhoven. The General Assembly is jointly organised by the European Commission, the Dutch Presidency and the city of Eindhoven and brings together more than 500 participants, including Mayors, CEOs and high-level speakers from across Europe to discuss and explore future finance and investment opportunities for smart cities. Ahead of the trip Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *"Mayors experience first-hand that new disruptive technologies are blurring the boundaries between the worlds of energy, transport, digital and the circular economy. Cities is where the rubber meets the road, it's where traditional policy silos are broken first. An Initiative such as the European Innovation partnership on Smart Cities and Communities is there to help them doing that"*. Commissioner **Bulc** added, *"Cleaner air, safer transport networks, reducing congestion – these are just some of the reasons why smart city development is so important. A key priority of this Commission is to simplify and broaden access to finance. We want more money to flow into good projects that can be replicated in cities across Europe and then exported"*. The European Innovation Partnership on Smart Cities and Communities helps 4700 partners from European cities, companies, research organisations and other partners thrive in this global market. Smart Cities and Communities play an important role in the energy transition in Europe. A key aim is to better align efforts of both public and private partners in the roll-out of mature innovative solutions at larger scale, especially looking for solutions at the interface of transport, energy and ICT. More information on Smart Cities is available [here](#) and on [DG MOVE website](#).

Commissioner Vella at UN Environment Assembly in Kenya, 25 - 27 May

EU Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries Karmenu **Vella** will lead the EU Delegation at the second meeting of the [UN Environment Assembly](#) (UNEA) taking place at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi on 25-27 May, the biggest global gathering of environment ministers of all UN Member States. Commissioner Vella will promote proposals on oceans, chemicals and waste, climate, sustainable production and consumption but also support action proposed by others, for instance on wildlife and marine litter. The overarching theme of UNEA is "delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development". Commissioner **Vella** said: *"I hope that when we leave Kenya at the end of this week, we have reconfirmed our commitment to the environmental dimension of sustainable development and have given ourselves an agenda for action for the years to come."* In the margins of the Assembly, the Commissioner will also visit Kenya's Wildlife Service on their work in the fight against wildlife trafficking. More information [here](#).

Commissioner Thyssen participates in first Leaders' Meeting of European Pact for Youth

Today Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, is participating, together with Viscount Etienne Davignon - French Minister of State and President of CSR Europe - in the first Leaders' meeting of the [European Pact for Youth](#) in Brussels. The Pact was launched in November 2015 involving particularly CEOs of companies, aiming to boost business-education partnerships to foster youth employability and inclusion. The Pact has set itself some ambitious aims: to achieve 100,000 new traineeships, apprenticeships or entry-level jobs; and to put in place 10,000 business-education partnerships. On the occasion of the first leaders' meeting of the European Pact for Youth, the

first results will be discussed. This complements the Commission's [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#) initiative, which has so far resulted in 250,000 training and job opportunities for youth across Europe. For more information on the latest pledges, a press release will shortly be available. Ahead of the meeting, Commissioner **Thyssen** commented: *"I firmly believe that companies in general and business-education partnerships in particular play an essential role in reducing youth unemployment. This is why the upcoming Skills Agenda will also seek closer engagement with the business community, with a view to providing young people with the skills they need to succeed on today's labour market."* Commissioner **Thyssen's** speech can be found [here](#). The final conclusions of the meeting will be presented at a business-education summit in November 2017.

Upcoming Events

[Thursday 26 May: The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package](#) Thursday 26 May 2016, the European Commission will adopt its monthly infringements package. These decisions seek to enforce EU law across Europe so that citizens and businesses can benefit fully from the internal market.

[26-27 May: The EU at the G7 summit in Japan](#) The 42nd edition of the G7 will take place from 26 to 27 May in Ise-Shima, in the Mie Prefecture (Japan), under Japanese presidency. The European Union, who is a full member of the G7 (and the G20), will be jointly represented by by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, and the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk.

[30 May–3 June: Green Week 2016 - Investing for a greener future](#) The Commission will host Green Week, the biggest annual occasion to discuss European environment policy, taking place from Monday, 30 May to Friday, 3 June 2016. This year's theme is on "Investing for a greener future": how investment should integrate economic opportunity with...

MEX/16/1899



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