



Thursday, 09 June, 2016

Commissioner Phil Hogan visits Portugal

The Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mr Phil **Hogan**, today visits Portugal, where he will open the first water connection from the Alqueva Irrigation Global System in the small town of Ervidel. He will also deliver a keynote speech at the International Conference "The Grand Challenges for Innovation in Agriculture" at the National Agriculture Fair in Santarém. On the occasion of his visit, Commissioner **Hogan** held bilateral meetings this morning with Mr Luís Capoulas Santos, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development of Portugal and with Mr Vasco Cordeiro, President of the Regional Government of the Azores. From 2014-2020, the CAP will invest more than €8 billion in the Portuguese farming sector, including €4 billion for projects benefiting rural areas. More information about the CAP in Portugal can be found [here](#).

Investment Plan for Europe: Financial close reached for widening of A6 motorway in the Netherlands

Financial close has been reached for the widening of the A6 motorway near Almere on 8 June 2016. The project, commissioned by The Dutch Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (Rijkswaterstaat), has a total worth of EUR 300 million. The European Investment Bank provided nearly EUR 80 million, fully guaranteed under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). The EFSI-backed project includes the design, construction, financing and 20 years of management and maintenance of the A6 Almere highway. The project will enhance an important link in the traffic system in the Schiphol – Amsterdam – Almere (SAA) corridor, part of the core TEN-T network. Violeta **Bulc**, EU Commissioner for Transport, said: "*Infrastructure investment is essential to complete the Trans-European Transport network, which will in turn offer seamless travel to citizens and businesses. Today the Investment Plan for Europe is further delivering on this objective. Widening the A6 motorway in the Netherlands will improve congestion in the region, as well as boost employment.*" (For more information see [here](#))

Final adoption of new rules to cut red tape on citizens' public documents

Today the European Parliament has adopted the Regulation, proposed by the Commission, to cut costs and formalities for citizens who need to present a public document in another EU country. Costs and

formalities that citizens had to face to prove that their public documents (such as a birth, marriage or death certificate) are authentic will no longer be required. With the new regulation, public documents have to be accepted as authentic in every Member State, and multilingual standard forms can be used to avoid translation requirements. Věra **Jourová**, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, said: *"We have good news for people who move to another EU country, for example to study or work. These citizens often need to go through costly and time-consuming bureaucratic procedures to present a public document to get married or obtain a job in the country they live in. Today, we put an end to this red tape and help people move easily across the European Union."* Member States now have two years and a half to adopt all necessary measures to allow for the smooth application of the Regulation. A full press release is available [online](#), as well as a [factsheet](#).

EU support for transition in Tunisia

In the immediate wake of the 2011 Revolution, the EU pledged to support the Tunisian people's transition toward greater democracy, freedom and social justice. In this new environment, the EU and Tunisia — natural partners given their geographical, cultural and commercial ties — established a 'Privileged Partnership' in 2012. A full press release is available [online](#)

TAIEX: 20 years of successfully sharing EU expertise

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the European Commission's Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument (**TAIEX**), one of its most successful support instruments for countries wanting to join or reinforce their cooperation with the European Union. Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, said: *"The 20th anniversary of the launch of TAIEX is an occasion not only to celebrate, but to reflect on our past experience and future perspectives. Over the course of the past 20 years, TAIEX has proven to be a great success: since its launch, joint achievements have translated into over 40,000 activities, almost 8 events organised per working day. EU Member States have worked hand in hand with partner countries providing guidance when it comes to EU values and legislation to foster stability, security and prosperity throughout the Neighbourhood and enlargement regions."* A full press release is [available online](#). A video of Commissioner **Hahn** addressing a key note speech in the occasion of the TAIEX's 20th anniversary is also [available](#).

Antitrust: Commission welcomes entry into force of new rules to boost card payment transparency

The European Commission welcomes the entry into force today of new rules to make the costs of payments with debit or credit cards more transparent to retailers and consumers and allow them to make efficient choices. In particular, for "co-badged" payment cards (cards with multiple brands) retailers can now promote their preferred, more cost-efficient brand in their payment terminals and consumers will have the final say which brand is used. Consumers will also be able to ask their banks to co-badge a single card with all payment types that the bank issues to the consumer. Finally, the rules introduce transparency for bank fees to process card payments and include measures to ensure consumers are better informed. All elements of the Interchange Fee Regulation are now fully applicable. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Many consumers use payment cards every day when they buy in shops or online. For years, the fees charged by the banks for these card payments were largely kept in the dark even though the costs are ultimately paid by consumers. The Interchange Fee Regulation has capped these fees and made card payments more transparent. This means lower costs to the benefits of millions of European consumers and retailers."* Commissioner for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, Jonathan **Hill** said: *"It is good news that the remaining provisions of the Interchange Fee Regulation have now come into force. It will benefit consumers and service providers alike by setting transparent and clear ground rules for the EU payment card market. Last year, the Interchange Fee Regulation set caps on the main component of the charges merchants pay for accepting card payment."*

This has resulted in significantly lower costs on card payments for retailers and should lead to increased card acceptance in the EU. Under the rules it is possible to almost eliminate surcharging on consumer card payments. So, this regulation will bring some direct benefits to European consumers." A press release is available online in [here](#). There is also a [Factsheet](#) explaining the benefits and provisions of the Interchange Fee Regulation.

Commission launches consultation on the supplementary supervision of financial conglomerates

The European Commission is launching a public consultation to gather evidence on whether existing EU rules relating to the supplementary supervision of entities in a financial conglomerate are fit for purpose and working as intended. The Directive on the supplementary supervision of credit institutions, insurance undertakings and investment firms in a financial conglomerate, known as FICOD, was first adopted in 2002. Financial conglomerates are large financial groups which provide services and products in the banking/investment and insurance sectors. FICOD aims to identify and manage risks that are inherent to these groups active in several financial sectors to ensure financial stability. FICOD does not replace the existing supervision of the different, regulated financial conglomerate sectors (banking, investment and insurance) but it introduces a layer of supplementary supervision of the regulated entities in the conglomerate. This allows supervisors to look across sectors and address any potential blind spots in the sectoral legislation. There have been many changes in both the market and in the EU policy and legislative framework since FICOD was adopted. Therefore, the Commission services decided last year that FICOD should be evaluated to assess whether it is proportionate and fit for purpose, and delivering as expected. Today's consultation is part of the Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme ("REFIT"). Through this consultation, Commission services are actively seeking the opinions of interested and affected groups on the performance of FICOD; the results of this consultation will feed into the final evaluation. The public consultation runs from 9 June 2016 to 20 September 2016

Have your say on the safety of apps

Today the European Commission is launching a public consultation on the safety of applications (apps) and other non-embedded software to determine whether the EU should take action to strengthen consumer protection in this area. The Commission wants to hear from all those who develop and use apps and software that are not embedded in a physical object at the time of their placement in the market. This is the case for apps that users download on their smartphones and which cover a wide range of areas (from counting the number of steps during a day, to helping find the cheapest flight online, to editing pictures and videos, and many more). For example, the Commission asks users if they have encountered any problems (e.g. the app has given users wrong information about their health), and if a solution was found. Commissioner **Oettinger**, in charge of the Digital Economy and Society, said: *"Whenever a person downloads an app or software, they need to be sure that it won't cause any damage, especially when it comes to health advice. I invite everyone to participate in this public consultation and share their experience to see how far the app sector takes care of consumers' safety"* (see also his blog post on [e-health](#) about trust and standards). The views of consumers, organisations, public bodies, and businesses across all sectors – from telecommunications to transport, from health to finance – will help to define any further action to be taken at EU level. This consultation looks into the safety of apps and other non-embedded software which is not already addressed and foreseen by the [Medical Devices Directives](#) and the [Radio Equipment Directive](#) which include provisions on safety ensuring that equipment within their scope is safe. The consultation is open until 15 September. More details are available [here](#).

Mergers: Commission approves Sysco's acquisition of Brakes

The European Commission has cleared under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of Brakes, the largest UK food distributor, by Sysco, the largest US food distributor. The Commission found that the takeover would not adversely affect competition in Europe. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Consumers, hospitals, schools and other food-service customers must be able to rely on competition to deliver affordable prices and good service. Our investigation has confirmed that this would be the case also after the merger, so I am pleased that the Commission has been able to clear the takeover quickly."* Both companies are full range distributors, delivering a broad variety of chilled, frozen and ambient food across all product categories and across all sectors of the foodservice industry. The Commission examined the effects of the merger in the areas of "delivered wholesale" distribution by full range suppliers to national and independent customers in the island of Ireland and concluded that the acquisition would raise no competition concerns. A full press release is available in [here](#). The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.7986](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control of INOVYN by INEOS

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of sole control over INOVYN Limited of the UK by INEOS AG of Switzerland. INOVYN is active in the production and the supply of PVC and is currently jointly controlled by INEOS AG and Solvay. INEOS is active in the production and the supply of various chemicals which are upstream or downstream of the production of PVC. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies' market shares are moderate and other suppliers will continue to be active on the markets concerned by 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.8003](#). In 2014, the Commission approved, subject to conditions, the creation of INOVYN, a joint venture between INEOS and SOLVAY in case [M.6905](#).

Mergers: Commission clears proposed acquisition of Banco BPI by CaixaBank

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of Banco BPI, S.A of Portugal by CaixaBank, S.A. of Spain. Banco BPI is a Portuguese public company, active in the banking and insurance sector, mainly in Portugal. CaixaBank is an integrated Spanish financial group with a banking business, insurance and investments activity, listed on several stock exchanges. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies' combined market shares are very low. 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.8063](#). The Commission already approved a transaction between these two banks in 2015 but this was not finalised, because CaixaBank ultimately withdrew its public bid (case [M.7570](#)).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of GloHealth and Aviva Health by Irish Life

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of GloHealth Financial Services Limited and Aviva Health Insurance Ireland Limited, both of Ireland, by Irish Life Group Limited of Ireland, a wholly owned indirect subsidiary of Great-West Lifeco Inc. of Canada. GloHealth and Aviva Health provide health insurance products. Irish Life provides life insurance, pensions, retirement savings and management services. Great-West Lifeco is an international financial services holding company with interests in life and health insurance, retirement and investment services, asset management, and reinsurance businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition

would raise no competition concerns, given the companies' moderate combined market positions resulting from the proposed transaction and the presence of a number of strong players providing health insurance to consumer and business customers in Ireland. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8010](#).

State aid: Commission publishes non-confidential version of decision that selective tax advantages for Fiat in Luxembourg are illegal under EU state aid rules

Today, the Commission has published the non-confidential version of the decision taken [on 21 October 2015](#) that Luxembourg has granted selective tax advantages to Fiat Finance and Trade. These are illegal under EU state aid rules. The decision is available online under the case number [SA.38375](#).

EUROSTAT: International trade in services - EU trade in services continued to rise strongly in 2015... .. but total surplus down for a second consecutive year

The international trade in services of the **European Union** (EU) has increased steadily and significantly over the last six years. EU exports of services to the rest of the world rose by 42%, from €569.5 billion in 2010 to €811.2 bn in 2015, while imports grew slightly more rapidly (+43%) from €461.6 bn to €660.5 bn. As a consequence, the EU trade surplus in services, which had steadily increased between 2010 and 2013, has decreased for the second consecutive year in 2015 to €150.7 bn. Read EUROSTAT statement [here](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioners Avramopoulos and Jourová represent the Commission at the Justice and Home Affairs Council on 9 and 10 July 2016

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship, Dimitris **Avramopoulos** and Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra **Jourová** represent the European Commission at the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting today and tomorrow in Luxembourg. Today, Commissioner **Jourová** welcomed good progress on the future European Public Prosecutor's Office (**EPPO**) under the Dutch Presidency. Justice Ministers have backed the Commission's proposal authorising enhanced cooperation between 18 Member States on property regimes of international couples, covering both marriages and registered partnerships. Ministers also discussed progress on the extension of the European criminal records information system (**ECRIS**) to non-EU citizens, the fight against fraud to the Union's financial interests by means of criminal law (PIF) and the Digital Contracts [proposal](#). The afternoon will be dedicated to the issue of criminal justice in the digital age and Commissioner Jourová will update Ministers on the recently agreed code of conduct against illegal [online hate speech](#) and the [signature](#) of the EU-US data protection [Umbrella Agreement](#). Tomorrow, Ministers are expected to reach a general approach on the [EU Firearms Directive](#) which will allow for the start of interinstitutional discussions with the European Parliament. The Council is also expected to endorse a roadmap to enhance information exchange and information management in the Area of Freedom, Security and Justice and to discuss the feeding and consultation of security databases. Ministers will also exchange views on the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement and on external aspects of migration, including on challenges in the Central Mediterranean, and discuss the progress on the proposal for a European Border and Coast Guard. Furthermore, the Council will discuss visa liberalisation following the Commission proposals for the lifting of visa requirements for Georgia, Ukraine, Kosovo and Turkey. Press conferences will take place and will be streamed live around 17:00 today and tomorrow at 13:15 and 18:45.

Commissioner Jonathan Hill in London

Jonathan **Hill**, European Commissioner for Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, will be in London on Thursday and Friday. He will meet Sadiq Khan, the new Mayor of London, to exchange views on the importance of the Single Market for the City. He will also give a speech at Chatham House, where he will set out his plans to deepen the single market for financial services, in particular for a Capital Markets Union across Europe, and explain how the financial sector can take full advantage of the new opportunities it will offer. He will also meet Andrea Rossi, CEO of AXA Investment Managers and participate in a lunch hosted by InnovateFinance to discuss the new opportunities offered by the growing FinTech industry.

Upcoming Events.

10 June: [Commission presents the New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) The European Commission will present the New Skills Agenda for Europe. The aim of this Agenda is to ensure that people develop a broad set of skills from early on in life and to make the most of Europe's...

15 June: [10th edition of the European Development Days European](#) The tenth edition of the European Development Days will take place in Brussels on 15-16 June. The background: The European Development Days is Europe's leading forum on international cooperation and development

16 June: [The Commission adopts its monthly infringements package](#) 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.

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