



Friday, 17 June, 2016

### President Juncker at the St Petersburg International Economic Forum

On 16 June, European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** delivered a [speech](#) at the opening ceremony of the 20<sup>th</sup> St Petersburg International Economic Forum. Underlining the reasons for his visit, President **Juncker** said: *"In the coming weeks, the European Union and its Member States will hold a number of important meetings. We will spend many hours talking about our relations with Russia. I take the view that we must also talk with Russia – its leadership, its people. For some this may be a radical idea, for me it is common sense."* The President highlighted the urgency of implementing the Minsk agreements as the first step towards better relations: *"Russia is party to the Minsk agreements. It has made commitments and put them on paper, as have the other signatories. Therefore, the next step is clear: full implementation of the agreements. No more, no less."* At the same time, he set out a vision for future relations between the EU and Russia: *"For the European Union and Russia, the prize, one day, could be great: a vast region governed by the rule of law, trading freely and working together on common projects. Of course, this will not happen overnight, but it is not a utopian vision. It is one which – with good will and ambition on both sides – would serve the best interests of our citizens."* President **Juncker** had the opportunity to reiterate these messages in a bilateral meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, which was held in a good atmosphere. President **Juncker** and President Putin agreed to stay in close contact.

### Agriculture: the Commission approves new Protected Designation of Origin from the United Kingdom

The Commission has approved today the addition of a new product from the United Kingdom to the quality register of Protected Designations of Origin (PDO). ['Conwy Mussels'](#) are wild mussels that grow naturally in the Conwy Estuary in North Wales. They are harvested using the ancient Welsh tradition of hand raking during the mussels fishing season running from 1 September to 30 April. 'Conwy Mussels', well-known by top chefs for their rich, salty taste and high meat content, are the 60th food name from the UK to be protected (Protected Geographical Indications, Protected Designations of Origins, and Traditional Speciality Guaranteed altogether). Geographic Indications increase the market value of the products by guaranteeing that they are distinguishable from other similar products or foodstuffs. In 2010, the sale of UK Geographical Indications (GI) products amounted to over €5 billion annually. The introduction of a GI has the potential to boost farmers' revenues, promote the rural economy and contribute to maintaining the population in rural areas. In addition, consumers will be able to make more informed choices on the basis of clear information on the specific characteristics of the products they buy. More information: webpages on [quality products](#) and [DOOR database](#) of protected products.

## Commission injects €6.7 billion into transport infrastructure to boost jobs and growth

Today the European Commission is firmly delivering on President **Juncker's** top priority of [creating jobs and boosting growth in the European Union](#), by unveiling [a list of 195 transport projects](#) that will receive €6.7 billion of funding under the [Connecting Europe Facility](#) (CEF). The selected projects will notably contribute to the digitalisation and decarbonisation of transport, in line with the broader political agenda of this Commission. The Member States eligible for the Cohesion Fund received almost €5.6 billion, which will help bridge the infrastructure disparities across the EU. Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"I am happy that the Commission is making yet another major contribution to investment in the transport sector which will lead to more jobs and generate economic growth in Europe. I would also like to use this opportunity to encourage all potential project promoters to explore possibilities under [the Investment Plan for Europe](#)."* [EU Commissioner for Transport Violeta Bulc](#) said: *"The total investment could create up to 100,000 jobs in the European economy by 2030. The projects will make European infrastructure safer, more sustainable and more efficient for passengers and business alike."* More information can be found in a [press release](#), in a [Q&A on CEF](#), in [individual country factsheets](#) and in a [MEMO on Transport Investment](#).

## European Commission launches new online Knowledge Centre to better manage information and data on migration and demography

Coinciding with World Refugee Day [on 20 June](#) the European Commission will set up a [new online in-house Knowledge Centre for Migration and Demography](#). This will bring together existing knowledge and conduct research and forward-looking analysis on future migration flows and population trends, studying amongst other aspects, their impact on health, welfare, education systems and the economy in Europe. Tibor **Navracsics**, European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, said: *"Migration is at the top of the EU political agenda. There is a great need to underpin policy decisions with sound evidence. The Knowledge Centre on Migration and Demography will help centralise, put into context and make comparable the relevant knowledge existing both within the Commission and outside it, in order to serve the different EU policies with the most appropriate information."* The Knowledge Centre will also develop strategic partnerships and networks across Europe and internationally to build the evidence base and conduct analysis. In doing so, it will involve all relevant stakeholders within the Commission, including the Directorates-General for Migration and Home Affairs, Research and Innovation, International Cooperation and Development, Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection, the European Political Strategy Centre, Eurostat and the Joint Research Centre, which will manage the collective knowledge. Kristalina **Georgieva**, Vice-President of the European Commission, Budget and Human Resources, Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sports, Christos **Stylianides**, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management, and Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, are expected to speak at the launch event in Brussels.

## New EU rules to promote high-quality audits take effect

New EU statutory audit rules become applicable today, which will contribute to boosting confidence in the financial sector. This new regime will help promote high-quality audits throughout the EU and will enhance investor trust in the financial information of companies, thereby supporting the conditions for cross-border investment and economic growth in the Union. These rules consist of an amended Directive setting out the framework for all statutory audits and a Regulation setting out specific requirements for statutory audits of public-interest entities (PIEs), such as listed companies, banks and insurance undertakings. The European Parliament and Council already adopted the new rules in April 2014. In the last two years, the Commission has worked closely with Member States, national audit supervisors and stakeholders to smooth the path to implementation and facilitate the transition to the new regime. Additional information can be found in the [press release](#) and the updated [memo](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears joint venture between INCJ, Sumitomo and Sekisui**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture by Innovation Network Corporation of Japan (INCJ), Sumitomo and Sekisui, all of Japan. INCJ is a Japanese public-private partnership providing financial, technological and management support in order to promote the creation of business in the areas of clean energy, electronics, IT and biotechnology and infrastructure-related sectors. Sumitomo manufactures and sells a wide array of chemical products, including petrochemicals, plastics, IT-related chemicals, pharmaceuticals and others. Sekisui manufactures and sells high performance plastics, environmental products and others. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as the newly created joint venture would not have any activities in the European Economic Area. 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.8037](#).

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Volker Wessels Offshore by Boskalis**

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Volker Wessels Offshore by Boskalis, both of the Netherlands. Volker Wessels Offshore comprises three businesses, namely Stemat Holding B.V., Volker Stevin International Holding B.V., and VBMS Holding B.V. These provide global maritime services including renting and leasing of commodity vessels, installation, maintenance and replacement services of subsea power cables and offshore construction services. Boskalis is a global maritime services company, active in dredging, offshore installation, offshore transport, towage and salvage as well as inland infrastructure. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because it would not significantly change the market structure. 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.8045](#).

## **EUROSTAT: Annual growth in labour costs up to 1.7% in euro area Down to 1.7% in EU28**

Hourly labour costs rose by 1.7% in both the euro area (EA19) and the EU28 in the first quarter of 2016, compared with the same quarter of the previous year. In the fourth quarter of 2015, hourly labour costs increased by 1.3% and 2.0% respectively. These figures are published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. Read EUROSTAT Press Release [here](#)

## **EUROSTAT: EU28 current account surplus €13.4 bn €10.9 bn surplus for trade in services**

The EU28 seasonally adjusted current account of the balance of payments recorded a surplus of €13.4 bn in April 2016, compared with surpluses of €17.6 bn in March 2016 and €13.0 bn in April 2015, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union.

In April 2016, compared with March 2016, based on seasonally adjusted data, the surplus of the goods account decreased (+€12.1 bn compared with +€15.5 bn), as did the surplus of the services account (+€10.9 bn compared with +€12.1), and the deficit of the secondary income account increased (-€8.4 bn compared with -€7.9 bn). The deficit of the primary income account decreased (-€1.2 bn compared with -€2.2 bn).

The 12-month cumulated current account for the period ending in April 2016 recorded a surplus of €177.1 bn, compared with €136.8 bn for the 12 months to April 2015. The surplus of the goods account for the same period increased (+€124.6 bn compared with +€50.7 bn), while the surplus of the services account fell

slightly (+€154.3 bn compared with +€157.0 bn). The deficit of the secondary income account increased (-€85.8 bn compared with €76.8 bn) and the surplus of the primary income account moved into deficit (-€16.0 bn compared with +€5.9 bn). Read EUROSTAT Press Release [here](#)

## STATEMENTS

### **Joint statement on the International Day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict**

On the first International Day for the elimination of sexual violence in conflict, 19 June 2016, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** and Commissioners **Hahn**, **Mimica**, **Stylianides** and **Jourová** reaffirm the EU's strong support for zero tolerance of any form of sexual violence. Sexual violence in conflicts has been and continues to be used as a tactic of war and terror. Many victims do not report these crimes: it is estimated that for every case of rape reported in conflict zones, there are ten to twenty cases that remain undocumented. The High Representative/Vice-President and the Commissioners said: *"We want to see practical steps to tackle impunity for the use of rape as a weapon of war and to begin to change global attitudes to these crimes. Fighting the banalisation of sexual violence and raising awareness of women's and girls' rights, as well as the existence of sexual violence against men and boys, are extremely important."* The full statement can be found [here](#).

### **Statement of Vice-President Kristalina Georgieva following Council decision to ratify the FCTC Protocol against tobacco smuggling**

EU Member States have today in the Council given the final green light that will allow the EU to ratify the WHO Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products ([FCTC Protocol](#)). Vice-President Kristalina **Georgieva** welcomed the decision: *"The illicit tobacco trade threatens our citizens' health and drains our budgets, so I welcome this landmark decision in the fight against smuggling. The EU will now proceed with the ratification and I call on partner countries around the world to accede to the FCTC protocol and join forces with the EU in this battle."* The decision comes less than ten days after the the European Parliament's consent on 7 June 2016. The EU's instruments of ratification can now be deposited at the United Nations headquarters in New York. EU Member States will also be invited to join the Protocol in parallel, at national level. The EU [signed](#) the FCTC Protocol on 20 December 2013, which is the first step towards the EU becoming a party to the agreement.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Vice-President Dombrovskis, Commissioners Thyssen and Navracsics participate in launch event of the New Skills Agenda for Europe**

On Monday 20 June, the launch event of the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#) – presented on 10 June and aimed at boosting employability, a better use of Europe's human capital and competitiveness – will take place in Brussels. The event will gather an audience from a wide spectrum of employment and education stakeholders and will feature high-level speakers from European and international institutions. It will be a highly interactive event offering opportunities to network and build partnerships for skills. On this occasion, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will give a keynote speech presenting the Skills Agenda, which will be available [here](#). Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will then open the interactive session on "Working together to strengthen human capital, employability and competitiveness". To conclude, Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, will address how the Skills Agenda will help to boost jobs, growth

and investment in Europe. The entire event will be [live streamed](#). The programme of the event can be found [here](#).

### **Commissioner Jourová on official visit to China**

Commissioner Věra **Jourová** will visit China from 18 to 22 June. She will be the first Justice Commissioner to visit the country. On this occasion, the Commissioner will announce the launch of the EU-China Legal Affairs Dialogue (LAD), which was one of the commitments of the last EU-China Summit. This high-level dialogue aims to improve understanding of the respective legal systems and to enhance EU-China cooperation. This first meeting will focus on e-commerce and consumer protection online. The Commissioner will raise awareness of the Legal Affairs Dialogue through a lecture to the students of the China-EU School of Law (CESL). She will also participate in the EU-US-China Trilateral Product Safety Summit, which will be dedicated to the new challenges e-commerce poses to consumer protection, as some products are sold directly to consumers with no quality controls by the authorities. Commissioner **Jourová** will go to Hangzhou to visit the Alibaba Headquarters as well as a laboratory testing toy safety and to discuss product safety issues with the local authorities and political leaders in charge of controlling product quality. In addition, she will have bilateral meetings with Chinese interlocutors, also covering gender equality topics.

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### **Upcoming Events.**

**30 June-Friday 1 July:** [College travels to Bratislava to meet with the Slovak Presidency of the Council of the EU](#) On 30 June and 1 July, the College of Commissioners is travelling to Bratislava for its traditional visit to the incoming Presidency of the Council of the European Union, which in the second semester of 2016 will be held by the Slovak Republic. President Juncker and the Commission Members will discuss the priorities of the Slovak Presidency during a plenary session with the Slovak government. Before participating in a plenary meeting of the National Council – the Slovak Parliament – the College will engage in four cluster meetings with members of the Slovak government, grouped around the themes: external relations, security, migration and justice; energy and climate policy, transport and natural resources; growth, competitiveness and internal market; and the EU Budget, Economic and Monetary Union, and the social agenda



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