



Thursday, 22 September, 2016

Volkswagen commits to EU-wide action plan to address the diesel emissions issue pending validation

Commissioner **Jourová** met yesterday with Dr. Francisco Javier Garcia Sanz, Member of the Board of Management of the VW group, following her discussion with 31 consumer organisations in Brussels two weeks ago. Volkswagen committed to an EU-wide action plan to bring the affected cars back into conformity. Volkswagen agreed to inform the customers by end 2016 and to have all cars repaired by autumn 2017. Commissioner **Jourová** said: *"Volkswagen committed to an EU-wide action plan today, which is an important step towards a fair treatment of consumers in the EU. I will closely monitor this commitment and continue to work with consumer organisations, authorities and Volkswagen."* This is an important first step, which the Commission will be closely monitoring. Therefore it was agreed to have another meeting on the same level soon to take stock of the progress. Also the conference with consumer organisations next week in Brussels and the meeting with enforcement authorities in early October will be occasions to hold Volkswagen accountable to these commitments.

European Commission proposes Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement with Cuba

The Political Dialogue and Cooperation Agreement (PCDA) opens new avenues to support Cuba's process of economic and social modernisation, to foster sustainable development, democracy and human rights, as well as to seek common solutions to global challenges. At the same time, the High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** transmitted a proposal to the Council to formally repeal the EU's 1996 Common Position on Cuba. The adoption of both decisions by the Council and the implementation of the PCDA will be a turning point in EU-Cuba relations. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** said: *"The bilateral Agreement between the EU and Cuba is the result of a fruitful and constructive work the EU and Cuba have done together, and marks the turning point in our relations. This contractual arrangement creates a clear common framework for intensified political dialogue, increased cooperation across a wide range of policy areas, and a precious platform for developing joint action on regional and international issues."* Both proposals will now be reviewed by the Council, before their final adoption and the signature of the PCDA in coming months. A full press release is available [online](#).

EU at the UN General Assembly – Day 4

On Thursday, as the General Debate of the UN General Assembly in New York continues, the EU high-level delegation will have meetings on top policy issues, ongoing crises, humanitarian affairs, and

countering violent extremism. The EU representatives again had a dense programme on Wednesday. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** attended the General Debate of the General Assembly, which European Council President Donald Tusk addressed on behalf of the European Union. First Vice-President **Timmermans** addressed several high-level panels, among which the '*Global Alliance to eradicate forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking and child labour*', on the issue of achieving dignity for those furthest behind through partnerships. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** addressed the Global Counter Terrorism Forum, and gave a speech at the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) Ministerial meeting. She also spoke at the summit side event '*Large Movements of refugees and migrants: global challenge, regional responses, comprehensive strategy*'. She had a number of high-level bilateral meetings, including with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. Vice-President Kristalina **Georgieva**, Commissioner Johannes **Hahn** and Commissioner Christos **Stylianides** attended the high-level event on the Follow-up to the London Conference on Syria. Vice-President **Georgieva** also attended a high-level discussion on the Economic Cost of Violence against Women and a side event on leveraging innovative finance to address refugee crises in middle income countries. Commissioner **Hahn** participated in the event '*Business leads in Education in Emergencies: Driving Innovation and Partnership*'. Commissioner **Stylianides** participated in the side events on Yemen and Iraq. Commissioner Dimitris **Avramopoulos** had meetings with the President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) Peter Maurer and the US Department of Homeland Security. Commissioner Vytenis **Andriukaitis** addressed on behalf of the European Union the UN General Assembly high-level meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance, where he [reaffirmed the European Union's commitment](#) to fight antimicrobial resistance.

At the UN General Assembly: Commissioner Stylianides pledges additional €30 million humanitarian aid for Iraq

At the UN General Assembly in New York, on Wednesday the European Union co-organised a high-level event on the humanitarian crisis in Iraq. The event discussed the steps that need to be taken to ensure civilians are protected and assistance is delivered in accordance with international humanitarian law and humanitarian principles during all military campaigns in [Iraq](#), and specifically the Mosul campaign. Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides** pledged additional urgent humanitarian assistance of 30 million euros for the country from the EU's budget. "*The ongoing fighting in Iraq has created a humanitarian tragedy, which the EU and the international community cannot ignore. The needs are unprecedented. I saw this on the ground, in my four visits to the country, since the beginning of my mandate. I saw the catastrophic impact of the conflict on Iraqi civilians. The EU is committed to supporting the Iraqi people in need and the latest funding brings our overall humanitarian support to €134 million in 2016*" said Commissioner **Stylianides**. Watch the [video](#) and read the remarks [here](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Vattenfall Europe Generation and Vattenfall Europe Mining by EPH and PPF Investments

The European Commission has cleared the proposed acquisition of Vattenfall Europe Generation and Vattenfall Europe Mining by Energetický a Průmyslový Holding (EPH) and PPF Investments (PPF). Vattenfall Europe Generation is active in electricity generation. Vattenfall Europe Mining is active in the mining of raw lignite in the Lusatia region of Eastern Germany and the supply of the excavated lignite to intra-group power plants and refinement plants. Both companies are wholly-owned by Vattenfall GmbH, a holding company incorporated under German law. EPH is a holding company incorporated in the Czech Republic engaged in coal extraction, electricity and heat distribution and production, from conventional and renewable sources, as well as gas distribution and supply. PPF is an international private equity group with limited liability under the jurisdiction of the Island of Jersey. The Commission has assessed the

impact of the proposed acquisition on competition in the markets for (i) the excavation and supply of lignite, (ii) the supply of pulverised lignite in Germany and (iii) generation and wholesale supply of electricity. The Commission found the deal would not adversely affect competition in the relevant markets. The transaction was notified to the Commission on 18 August 2016. A full press release is available in [here](#)

EUROSTAT: Number of first time asylum seekers slightly up to almost 306 000 in the second quarter of 2016

During the second quarter of 2016 (from April to June 2016), 305 700 first time asylum seekers applied for international protection in the Member States of the European Union (EU), up by 6% compared with the first quarter of 2016 (when 287 100 first time applicants were registered). A press release is available [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Tibor Navracsics in Slovenia to discuss Erasmus+ and hold Citizens' Dialogue

Today, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, leaves for a visit to Ljubljana and Lendava, Slovenia. On arrival he will meet Culture Minister Anton Peršak to discuss cultural heritage and the implementation of the [Creative Europe programme](#). He will also meet the Minister for Education, Science and Sport, Maja Makovec Brenčič, for an exchange on skills and higher education reforms. Tomorrow, the Commissioner will take part in a conference on the [Erasmus+ programme](#) to take stock of the progress made since its launch and to discuss ways of further increasing its impact. Ahead of his trip, Commissioner **Navracsics** said: *"As we approach the 30th anniversary of Erasmus in 2017, I am travelling to Slovenia with some excellent news. Whilst the budget of Erasmus+ is due to rise by 10% per year until 2020, the European Commission proposed last week to increase it by an additional € 200 million for the period 2017-2020. I am working to ensure that more people from a wider range of backgrounds benefit from this EU flagship programme."* While in Slovenia, the Commissioner will also give the welcome address at a conference on the role of language learning in the integration of migrants in kindergartens and schools. He will then leave Ljubljana and travel to Lendava, where he will hold a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) alongside Minister Makovec Brenčič. The Dialogue will focus on education and its role in fostering job creation and economic growth; how education and culture can drive regional development; and the future of the EU.

Commissioner Crețu in Madeira for the annual conference of the Presidents of the EU's Outermost Regions

Today and tomorrow, Commissioner for Regional Policy, Corina **Crețu**, is visiting Madeira for the annual conference of the Presidents of [the EU's Outermost Regions](#). She will meet with the Minister for Overseas France, Ms Ericka Bareigts, with the Portuguese State Secretary of European Affairs, Ms Margarida Marques, and participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) at the University of Madeira. *"The Conference will give us the opportunity to reflect on the upcoming review of the EU Strategy for the Outermost Regions – to see how their specific needs can be best addressed, and their best assets best employed,"* Commissioner **Crețu** said. *"We will focus on what is crucial for their future: accessibility, through maritime and air transport, and regional integration with neighbouring countries. We will tackle unemployment, and turn the regions' unique resources into green and blue growth."* Today, Commissioner **Crețu** visited the sites affected by the forest fires this summer and pointed out that the EU was ready to help reconstruct and alleviate the financial burden linked to the disaster through the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) (EUSF). The

Commissioner announced yesterday that Portugal had submitted an application to benefit from EUSF assistance. The Commission will now process the application and will then propose an amount of aid to the European Parliament and the Council.

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COMING UP

[Wednesday 21 September: A transatlantic Citizens' Dialogue on tax avoidance and privacy in the digital age](#)

Columbia University in New York will host the EU Commissioner for Competition, Margrethe Vestager, who will discuss tax avoidance and privacy issues in the digital economy with the 2001 Nobel Laureate in Economics and University Professor Joseph E.



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