



Monday, 10 October, 2016

Preparation of the ECOFIN and Eurogroup meetings, Luxembourg 10-11 October 2016 [updated on 10/10/2016 at 12:42, adding Commissioner Jourová as taking part in the ECOFIN meeting]

Commissioner **Moscovici** will represent the European Commission at today's Eurogroup in Luxembourg, while Vice-President **Dombrovskis**, Commissioner **Moscovici** and Commissioner **Jourová** will take part in tomorrow's ECOFIN meeting. The Eurogroup [agenda](#) includes an exchange of views on the implementation of Greece's stability support programme and a discussion on the implementation of the European Semester. Discussions in both the Eurogroup and Ecofin Council will also focus on the joint Commission – Member State [Report on Health Care and Long-term Care Systems and Fiscal Sustainability](#), which address challenges to the fiscal sustainability of EU health systems against a backdrop of ageing populations and costly technological innovations. Commissioner **Moscovici** will participate in the press conference that follows the Eurogroup meeting. On Tuesday 11th October, the ECOFIN Council will discuss a Commission proposal related to bringing VAT fraud into the scope of new anti-fraud rules in the context of the EU's financial interests. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on tax transparency and will formally approve [the recent tax transparency agreement with Monaco](#). Also on the [agenda](#) and [background note](#) is a follow-up on the autumn G20 and IMF meetings and on the 2016 European Semester policy monitoring process. The Commission will update the Council on the implementation of the Banking Union and the state of play of current legislative proposals in the field of financial services, as well as on negotiations on post-crisis banking reform undertaken by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision. The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the financing aspects of climate change ahead of the UN climate change conference in November. Ministers will also discuss the European Commission's proposal for a [European External Investment Plan](#). Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will participate in the press conference concluding the ECOFIN meeting.

Economic Partnership Agreement with southern African countries enters into effect

Five southern African countries - Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland - and the EU today start a new chapter in their bilateral relations with the entry into effect of their Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). Mozambique is in the process of ratifying the agreement and will join in as soon as the ratification procedure is completed. The EPA is a development-oriented agreement that takes into account the different levels of development of the partners. It gives Botswana, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, and Swaziland immediate duty-free, quota-free access for their exports to the EU market. South Africa will also benefit from enhanced market access, going beyond its existing bilateral arrangement with the EU. It also provides for a number of protective measures in these countries, for instance for nascent, fragile industries or for food security reasons. Furthermore, the agreement increases the flexibility of southern African producers to put together products with components from various other countries, without the risk of losing their free access to the EU market. The southern African markets will open only

partially to EU exports, gradually over time, providing their industries with the intermediary goods they need to support growth. More information is available in [the press release](#), [the MEMO](#), and [today's blog post](#) by Commissioner **Malmström** on the need to give southern African businesses and entrepreneurs the best possible chances of succeeding.

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of telecommunications provider TDC Sweden by Tele2

The European Commission has cleared unconditionally the proposed acquisition of TDC Sweden by Tele2, both telecommunications providers. The Commission concluded that the transaction would raise no competition concerns, in particular because the companies' activities are largely complementary. TDC Sweden, currently part of TDC A/S, a Danish telecommunications group, offers mobile voice and data telecommunications services via a host network, fixed telephony and Internet access services, business connectivity services and related services. These services are offered exclusively to business customers in Sweden. Tele2 offers mobile voice and data telecommunications services via its own network, fixed telephony and Internet access services, business connectivity services and related services to residential and business customers in Sweden. Tele2 is also active in other European countries. The Commission concluded that the transaction would raise no competition concerns. The transaction was notified to the Commission on 2 September 2016. A full press release is available online in [EN](#)

Mergers: Commission clears joint acquisition of Slaney Foods JV and Slaney Proteins by ABP Group and Fane Valley

The European Commission has cleared unconditionally, after an investigation under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control of Slaney Foods JV and Slaney Proteins (Ireland) by meat processor ABP Group (Ireland) and farmer-owned agri-food company Fane Valley (United Kingdom). All three companies (ABP, Fane Valley and Slaney) are active in the purchase and slaughter of live cattle, sheep and lambs, as well as de-boning and processing of meat. Their activities cover also the marketing of fresh beef, lamb and mutton to meat retailers (including supermarkets) and industrial meat processors. The Commission's investigation focused in particular on the impact of the proposed transaction on competition in the markets where the activities of the parties overlap and which constitute affected markets in terms of EU merger rules: (i) purchasing of live cattle for slaughter in Ireland by ABP and Slaney Foods JV; purchasing of live sheep and lambs for slaughter in an area encompassing Ireland and Northern Ireland by ABP, Slaney Foods JV and Fane Valley; (ii) sale of fresh beef, lamb and mutton in Ireland, including to industrial processors; sale of fresh lamb and mutton meat in Belgium, including to supermarkets by ABP and Slaney Foods JV; (iii) collection of animal by-products, generated by the slaughtering activities, in Ireland by ABP and Slaney Foods JV. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not adversely impact effective competition in the EU's Single Market as regards any of these markets. The transaction was notified on 2 September 2016. A full press release is available online [here](#)

Mergers: Commission opens in-depth investigation into HeidelbergCement and Schwenk's joint acquisition of Cemex Croatia

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether the proposed acquisition of Cemex Croatia by HeidelbergCement and Schwenk is in line with the EU Merger Regulation. The proposed transaction would combine Cemex Croatia, the largest producer in the area, and Duna Dráva Cement (DDC), the largest importer. HeidelbergCement and Schwenk plan to acquire, via their joint subsidiary DDC, assets in Croatia and Hungary that currently belonging to Cemex. At the request of the parties, the Commission referred the Hungarian part of the transaction to the Hungarian

competition authority. Therefore, the Commission's investigation focuses only on the acquisition of Cemex' Croatian assets. The Commission's initial investigation indicates that the proposed transaction may remove a significant competitor from an already concentrated regional market and may reduce competition for grey cement in Croatia. The transaction was notified to the Commission on 5 September 2016. The Commission now has 90 working days, until 23 February 2017, to take a decision. Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The Construction sector, like any other sector needs competition. As cement is an essential part of the sector we need to make sure that consolidation does not lead to higher prices for construction companies and ultimately consumers in Croatia."* A full press release [here](#)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a newly created company supplying container and mobile assets by Brambles and First Reserve Management

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of a newly created company ("Newco", United Kingdom), by Brambles Industries Limited, of Australia ("Brambles") and by First Reserve Management L.P. of the United States of America ("FR"). Newco will manufacture, rent, sell and service container and mobile assets for a number of industries, in particular, the oil and gas industry. Newco will be created from certain pre-existing businesses which are currently individually operated by Brambles and FR, namely the companies (i) Ferguson, (ii) Chep Catalyst and Chemical Containers, and (iii) Hoover. Brambles is a global supply-chain logistics company. FR is a global private equity and infrastructure investment firm specialising in the energy industry. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because of its limited impact on the market structure. 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.8195](#).

State aid: Commission approves amended Slovenian support scheme for renewable energy and high-efficiency cogeneration

The European Commission has approved changes to a Slovenian support scheme for renewable energy and high-efficiency cogeneration under EU state aid rules. The amended scheme will increase renewable energy production in line with EU energy objectives and without unduly distorting competition. In May 2015, Slovenia notified plans to amend their existing support scheme for renewable energy and high-efficiency cogeneration to make it more cost-effective and improve the integration of renewable electricity into the market. The full press release is available online [here](#)

State aid: Commission approves liquidity support for Attica Bank

The European Commission has found that the envisaged state guarantee by Greece in favour of Greek Attica Bank to support the bank's access to liquidity is in line with EU state aid rules. Attica Bank plans to issue bonds that can serve as collateral for Eurosystem financing operations. These bonds will benefit from a state guarantee issued by the Greek state, in exchange for a fee paid by Attica Bank, and will have a nominal amount of €380 million. The Commission's assessment showed that measure is targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. The Commission has therefore concluded that this liquidity support measure is in line with EU state aid rules, in particular its [2013 Banking Communication](#). More information is available on the Commission's competition website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number SA.46558.

EUROSTAT: Air passenger transport in the EU - More than 900 million air passengers in 2015 - Air passenger transport continues to rise in every Member State

In 2015, 918.3 million passengers travelled by air in the **European Union** (EU), up by 4.7% compared with 2014 and by 22.0% compared with 2009. Over this period, air passenger transport has steadily risen in the EU. [Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Tibor Navracsics in Beijing for China-EU Education Ministers Conference

Today, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, arrives in Beijing, China, where, tomorrow, he will give a keynote speech and take part in discussions at the China-EU Education Ministers Conference hosted by Mr Chen Baosheng, Chinese Minister of Education. Commissioner **Navracsics** will also have a bilateral meeting with Vice Premier of China Madam Liu Yandong for discussions on culture and sport as well as on education. During his visit, the Commissioner will also meet Minister of Culture Mr Luo Shugang, and give a speech at Peking University, a participant in the [Erasmus+ programme](#) and [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#). Ahead of his trip, Commissioner **Navracsics** said: *"This education conference is an important step bridging last year's high level EU-China people-to-people dialogue in Brussels and the next one, which will take place in China in 2017. He added: "Education and culture are central to the EU's relationship with China. I want us to build on what we have already achieved. Staying open and willing to work together, to learn from each other, makes all of us stronger."* Over the last decade, the EU and China have been closely cooperating in the areas of education and training, culture, multilingualism and youth. Cooperation consists of regular policy dialogues at government level, as well as concrete joint projects and exchanges involving citizens. Since 2012, these activities have been integrated under the EU-China High Level People-to-People Dialogue, which complements the High Level Economic and Trade Dialogue and the High Level Strategic Dialogue.

Johannes Hahn visits Egypt

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will visit [Egypt](#) on Tuesday 11 and Wednesday 12 October. During the course of his visit he will meet key interlocutors of the country including the President of the Republic, the Ministers of International Cooperation, Electricity and Renewable Energy, as well as Trade and Industry. Commissioner **Hahn** will also meet representatives of the business community and civil society. The main purpose of the visit is to hold talks on focusing the EU-Egypt partnership on priority areas for co-operation, such as socio-economic development, jobs, migration, regional affairs and citizens' rights. The Commissioner will sign a €129 million package of financial measures supporting these goals. Ahead of the mission he said: *"Egypt is a key partner in our neighbourhood. The EU has been deploying significant assistance and will continue to support Egypt's economy and social development. In particular, young Egyptians deserve to be offered better perspectives. We are already working on an "EU Facility for Inclusive Growth and Job Creation" to be launched next year. This programme, in coordination with EU Member States will leverage funds from the European Finance Institutions to create of a more conducive environment for domestic and international investments and foster job creation particularly among the youth."* Videos and photos of the visit will be available on [EbS](#).

Commissioner Jourová participates in a High-Level Event on Roma Youth Empowerment in Bratislava

Today, a high-level event on Roma Youth Empowerment is being organised by the European Commission and the Slovak Presidency Council of the European Union. Its aim is to bring young Roma together to work on how they can be a driving force in the Roma integration process. Commissioner **Jourová** will open the event together with Lucia Žitňanská, the Slovak Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, with Ján Richter, the Slovak Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, as well as with Jiří Dienstbier, Minister for Human Rights and Equal Opportunities of the Czech Republic. She will then meet with a group of Slovak Roma Youth leaders to discuss their personal experiences on Roma integration. Finally, she will chair the jury of the [European Roma Spirit Award](#), which will then be awarded later that day to a company, a media, a personality or an NGO which contributed to the social inclusion of the Roma people. More details on Roma in the EU is available [online](#).

Commissioner Julian King on official visit to the Hague, Netherlands

Tomorrow Commissioner Julian **King** is visiting The Hague, Netherlands, where he will meet with Mr Ard van der Steur, Minister for Security and Justice. He will also visit Eurojust, one of the key EU Agencies he will be working with as a Commissioner for the Security Union. He will meet the senior management including its President Ms Michèle Coninx to discuss the added value of Eurojust in supporting Member States in their fight against serious cross-border organised crime and terrorism. He will also discuss how Eurojust works with other agencies, including Europol, to coordinate their response to complex terrorist investigations. There will be a press point at 15:30 at the Eurojust premises and the details will be made available later on [EbS](#).

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