



Wednesday, 19 October, 2016

Commission urges Member States to support proposals to strengthen European defences against unfair trade

The European Commission today called on Member States to support its efforts to provide the EU with updated, strengthened and more robust trade defence instruments. Despite the fact that the Commission has been using the available toolbox of trade defence instruments to its full extent, these have proven insufficient to deal with the huge overcapacities that result in dumped exports on the EU market. The EU is and wants to remain the biggest trading bloc in the world; but trade must be based on fair conditions. President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"Trade is essential for our economic growth and jobs creation, but we should not be naïve. Our current rules are proving insufficient to combat the harm from unfair foreign competition. Some EU industries have lost thousands of jobs. We cannot stay idle. The EU's trade defence rules require an urgent update."* The EU accounts for 15% of world imports (second only to the United States), yet the EU's trade defence measures correspond to only 7.8% of those in place worldwide and affect a mere 0.21% of the imports. When it comes to implementing measures to defend jobs on its territory, no trading bloc exercises a similar level of self-restraint, due to the limitations imposed by the current legislation. The necessary modernisation of trade defence instruments can be achieved through the swift adoption of the proposal tabled in 2013. In a dedicated Communication entitled ['Towards a robust trade policy for the EU in the interest of jobs and growth'](#), the Commission also outlined how a new anti-dumping methodology which the Commission intends to propose would be used to address situations where market conditions do not prevail, while dealing with forthcoming changes to the legal framework of the World Trade Organisation. More information is available in [the press release](#).

President Juncker participates in Tripartite Social Summit

Today, President **Juncker** will participate in the Tripartite Social Summit taking place in Brussels. He will be joined by Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, and Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**. The Tripartite Social Summit is a biannual opportunity for a constructive exchange between representatives from European employee and employer organisations, the European Commission, the European Council, the EU Heads of State or Government and Employment and Social Affairs Ministers from the countries holding the current and future EU Council Presidencies. The guiding theme of this edition is 'Addressing Europe's common challenges: generating growth, creating jobs and ensuring fairness'. Participants will discuss the main challenges in view of the 2017 [Annual Growth Survey](#), the role of the social partners in implementing the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), as well as the integration of refugees into the labour market. A press

conference will take place around 17:15 and can be followed [here](#). More information on the Summit can be found [here](#). A joint press release will be made available [here](#).

Investment Plan for Europe: EU and LABORAL Kutxa sign EUR 100 million agreement to benefit innovative companies in northern Spain

The European Investment Fund (EIF) and Caja Laboral Popular Sociedad Cooperativa de Crédito (LABORAL Kutxa) have signed an InnovFin SME guarantee agreement to enhance access to finance to innovative small and medium-sized enterprises in northern Spain. This transaction benefits from the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#) and is expected to generate EUR 100 million of bank loans. Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel Arias **Cañete** said: *“I am delighted to see Spanish companies benefitting from the Investment Plan for Europe through today's Juncker Plan agreement with Laboral Kutxa. With EUR 100 million in finance to SMEs now available I would encourage SMEs in Northern Spain with investment needs to make the most of this new opportunity.”*

College appoints the members of the European Fiscal Board

Following the consultation of all interested parties, the College of Commissioners today formally appointed the Members of the European Fiscal Board. Niels Thygesen was appointed as its Chairman. The other Members of the Board will be Roel Beetsma, Massimo Bordignon, Sandrine Duchêne and Mateusz Szczurek. Building on the [Five Presidents' Report](#) on completing Europe's Economic and Monetary Union, the [Commission decided](#) last October to set up a European Fiscal Board, as an independent advisory board on fiscal matters. The Board's role is to evaluate the implementation of EU fiscal rules, to advise the Commission on the fiscal stance appropriate for the euro area as a whole and to cooperate with Member States' national fiscal councils. Upon request, the Board would also provide ad-hoc advice on fiscal matters to the Commission. Today's announcement comes after a public call of interest and appropriate consultations with the European Central Bank, the Eurogroup Working Group and national fiscal councils. The Board is independent: the Members are not employees of the Commission and are committed to providing independent advice. The new advisory European Fiscal Board will start work shortly. A memo with more detailed information on the Board is available [online](#).

Mergers: Commission clears joint acquisition of a port terminal in Spain by Marmedsa and UECC

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the proposed acquisition of United European Car Carriers Ibérica (UECC Ibérica) of Spain by Marítima del Mediterráneo (Marmedsa) of Spain, and the current parent United European Car Carriers Unipessoal (UECC) of Portugal. UECC Ibérica manages and operates a terminal in the port of Pasajes (Gipuzkoa, Spain) for the handling of vehicles. Marmedsa, operating under the Noatum brand, provides maritime, logistics and cargo terminal operations in the Iberian Peninsula. UECC is a subsidiary of United European Car Carriers, B.V., active in the provision of short-sea vehicle transportation of cars and light commercial vehicles within Europe. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because a number of alternative vehicle terminal operators and carriers will remain active in Spain after 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.8105](#).

EUROSTAT: August 2016 compared with July 2016 - Production in construction down by 0.9% in euro area - Down by 1.3% in EU28

In August 2016 compared with July 2016, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector decreased by 0.9% in the **euro area** (EA19) and by 1.3% in the **EU28**, according to first estimates from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In July 2016, production in construction grew by 1.5% in the **euro area** and by 0.3% in the **EU28**. [Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

EUROSTAT: 20.10.2016: First European Statistics Day

Tomorrow, European Statistics Day is being celebrated for the first time. With the European Statistics Day the European statistical community "*aims at raising awareness of European citizens to the importance and value of official statistics for our society*", says Walter Radermacher, Director General of Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. "*To function correctly, modern democratic societies must be underpinned by a solid base of reliable, objective statistics. Decision-makers at EU level, in the Member States, in local authorities and in businesses need statistics in order to make better decisions which ultimately improve everyone's lives. More generally, all citizens in a democratic society need statistics to assess the performance of our decision-makers. Independent, impartial, reliable and accessible data free of charge for everyone has thus become an essential feature of European society.*" The event will be launched during the second Conference of European Statistics Stakeholders (CESS), which is taking place in Budapest on 20 and 21 October and brings together European methodologists, producers and users of statistics. The European Statistics Day is organised at the initiative of the European Statistical Advisory Committee (ESAC) and is supported by the members of the European Statistical System (ESS) and the European System of Central Banks (ESCB). A EUROSTAT press release is available [online](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commission appoints new Directors to its departments for Competition, Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response

Today, the Commission appointed Mr Kris Dekeyser and Ms Maria Velentza as Directors in its department for Competition (DG COMP) and Mr Johannes Luchner as Director in its Directorate-General "EU Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection" (DG ECHO). Mr Kris Dekeyser, a Belgian national, will take up his job as Director in "Policy and Strategy" immediately. He joined the Commission in 1991 and has worked on EU competition policy throughout his career. He has worked as Head of Unit since 2003 and is currently Acting Director "Policy and Strategy" in DG Competition. Ms Maria Velentza, a Greek national, will be Director for Markets and Cases III: financial services in DG COMP as of 1 November 2016. She first became Head of Unit in 2007. Between 2011 and 2015, she was an Adviser for the Task Force for Greece. She has been Head of Unit for "Macroeprudential Policy and Relations with the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB)" at DG Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union (DG FISMA) since May 2015. Mr Johannes Luchner, an Austrian national, will take up his duties as Director "Emergency management" in DG ECHO immediately. He joined the Commission in 1996. From 2000 to 2004, he worked in the Cabinet of Vice President for Administrative Reform, Neil Kinnock. He first became Head of Unit in 2006. Between 2013 and 2014, he was Deputy Head of the Task Force for Greece's Athens office.

Vice-President Ansip in Malta to discuss progress towards a Digital Single Market

Tomorrow and on Friday, Vice-President **Ansip** will be in Malta to underline the importance of moving forward quickly with the Commission's proposals to create a [Digital Single Market](#), more specifically under the upcoming Maltese Presidency of the Council of the EU (January – June 2017). Tomorrow,

Vice-President **Ansip** will meet Owen Bonnici, Minister for Justice, Culture and Local Government; Louis Grech, Deputy Prime Minister, and Ian Borg, Parliamentary Secretary for the Maltese EU Presidency preparations; Chris Cardona, Minister for the Economy, Investment and Small Business, and Emmanuel Mallia, Minister for Competitiveness and Digital, Maritime and Services Economy. They will discuss the Commission's proposals that could be adopted during the Maltese Presidency, if not earlier: for example, the proposals to ensure [Europeans can travel across borders with their online content](#), to [cut wholesale roaming charges](#), to [tackle geo-blocking](#), to [offer more free Wi-Fi access points](#) and to [coordinate radio frequencies better](#). Vice-President **Ansip** will also meet Therese Comodini Cachia, Member of the European Parliament, who has recently been nominated rapporteur on the proposals to modernise EU copyright rules. The Vice-President will visit the Malta Digital Hub and the Malta Life Sciences Centre, which are part of the Maltese Life Sciences Park. Improving conditions for startups to expand and scale Europe-wide is a priority for the Vice-President. As part of the upcoming initiatives, the Commission will soon propose to adapt EU VAT rules so that they fit better for small e-commerce businesses. On Friday, Vice-President **Ansip** will address the Maltese Parliamentary Committees responsible for Foreign and European Affairs and for Economic and Financial Affairs, and will then have exchanges with students and citizens at a public event at the University of Malta.

Commissioner Navracsics at Education, Training and Youth Forum to discuss implementation of the New Skills Agenda for Europe

Tomorrow, Commissioner **Navracsics** will give a keynote speech during the [Opening Panel](#) of the Commission's annual [Education, Training and Youth Forum](#), which takes place on 20-21 October in Brussels. Ahead of the event, Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *"Education is the best investment in Europe's young citizens. It makes people employable throughout their lives and enables them to become engaged, independent citizens by making the most of their talents. The European Commission, through policy cooperation and its programme Erasmus+, has a vital role to play in supporting countries as they strive to improve the key competences, skills and educational attainment of their citizens."* The Education, Training and Youth Forum brings together around 400 participants from 33 countries participating in the [Erasmus+ programme](#) for education and training. They will discuss how best to deliver on the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), which the Commission presented on 10 June 2016. Three panels and twelve workshops will cover a wide range of issues and include the first public discussion on the upcoming review of the [2006 Recommendation on Key Competences for lifelong learning](#). [Webstreaming](#) of the panels will be available from 9:30-12.30 (20 October) and 11.30-13.00 (21 October).

Commissioner Thyssen gives keynote speech at 20th anniversary of the European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities

Tomorrow, 20 October, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, will give a keynote speech on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the [European Association of Service Providers for Persons with Disabilities \(EASPD\)](#) in Brussels. The celebration is an occasion to look back at the shift in disability policy during the past 20 years. But it is also an opportunity for the Commissioner to address the specific challenges facing the sector of social care providers and the remaining obstacles preventing people with disabilities to lead an independent life. In particular, Commissioner **Thyssen** will highlight the importance of the Commission's proposal for an [Accessibility Act](#). Ahead of the event, Commissioner **Thyssen** said: *"It is up to us policy makers to create the right framework conditions allowing people to make the most out of their abilities. Accessibility is indispensable for social inclusion, especially against the background of demographic ageing and the digital transition. It is expected that in 2020 120 million Europeans will experience a degree of disability. This increases the need for accessibility in everyday life. Many everyday services and products, like banking or booking applications have gone digital. This offers opportunities for people with disabilities to*

participate in society and in the labour market. But this can only work out if digital products and services are made accessible to all people. We want to endorse innovation, but we also want to make sure that no one is left behind." Commissioner **Thyssen**'s speech will be made available [here](#).

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