



Thursday, 01 December, 2016



Animal health: European Commission takes action against the spread of Avian Flu

On Wednesday 30 November the Member States supported a Commission proposal that consolidates the protective measures in relation to outbreaks of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) of subtype H5N8 in several Member States. Commenting the measures, Commissioner **Andriukaitis** said: *"The Commission has reacted promptly to this situation, and though the virus is still predominantly a bird virus without any specific increased affinity for humans, I call on Member States authorities, and the poultry sector, for extreme vigilance over this virus, and in particular the stepping up of biosecurity on poultry farms"*. The virus, introduced in wild migratory birds which can carry it during their seasonal movements, has caused, at present, a total of 56 outbreaks of HPAI in poultry farms in Hungary, Germany, Austria, Denmark, Sweden and The Netherlands affecting a variety of poultry species (ducks, geese, turkeys, chickens) mainly in backyard farms. Additionally the virus was found in wild birds in 10 Member States (Hungary, Poland, Germany, Croatia, Austria, Denmark, The Netherlands, Sweden, Finland and Romania), as well as in Switzerland. So far all affected countries took the necessary measures. For more information (including a map of the areas concerned), see [here](#).

European Commission adopts rules to strengthen regulation of commodities markets

The European Commission has taken important steps today to strengthen the regulation of commodities markets and curb price speculation. It also ensures that firms active on these markets are regulated appropriately. In particular, the Commission is adopting regulatory standards that will define parameters for competent authorities to determine "position limits", i.e. the maximum amount of commodity derivatives that can be held by a single trader, and which represent a tool to help to limit commodity speculation, support orderly pricing and prevent market abuse. The new rules also ensure that large non-financial firms trading a large amount of commodity derivatives are regulated under MiFID II (through the so called "ancillary activity test"). Today's package completes the rulebook of secondary measures under the revised Markets in Financial Instruments Directive, known as MIFID II, and gives market participants time to prepare for its application, as of 3 January 2018. The Council and the European Parliament now have three months to approve or object to the two standards. For more information, see our [press release](#)

Commission proposes new tax rules to support e-commerce and online businesses in the EU

The European Commission has today unveiled [a series of measures](#) to improve the Value Added Tax (VAT) environment for e-commerce businesses in the EU. Our proposals will allow consumers and

companies, in particular start-ups and SMEs, to buy and sell goods and services more easily online. By introducing an EU wide portal for online VAT payments (the 'One Stop Shop'), VAT compliance expenses will be significantly reduced, saving businesses across the EU €2.3 billion a year. The new rules will also ensure that VAT is paid in the Member State of the final consumer, leading to a fairer distribution of tax revenues amongst EU countries. Our proposals would help Member States to recoup the current estimated €5 billion of lost VAT on online sales every year. Estimated lost revenues are likely to reach €7 billion by 2020 and it is essential that we act now. Finally, the Commission is delivering on its pledge to enable Member States to apply the same VAT rate to e-publications such as e-books and online newspapers as for their printed equivalents, removing provisions that excluded e-publications from the favourable tax treatment allowed for traditional printed publications. For more information, see our [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#) as well as this [blog post](#).

Solidarity with Italy: EU funds to support reconstruction efforts after the earthquakes

When tragedy struck the heart of Italy with a deadly earthquake and aftershocks at the end of August 2016, and again in October, the European Commission stood in full solidarity with the Italian people. The Commission announced its full support, first to address the immediate emergency situation, and later to start rebuilding, together with the national authorities. The Commission gives now a concrete follow up to its commitment, with two decisions aimed at supporting reconstruction efforts and regenerating economic activity in the affected regions with EU funds. President **Juncker** said: *"It is our duty as Europeans to stand by Italy and its citizens, who are showing extraordinary courage in times of difficulty, in order to help the effort to overcome as soon as possible the consequences of the earthquakes and to reconstruct fully the areas damaged. Reconstructing the beautiful Basilica of San Benedetto in Norcia with the help of EU funds will be a lasting symbol of EU solidarity and of the ability of the Italian people to bounce back."* Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** said: *"We have expressed our deepest sympathy to the Italian people in the wake of these disasters and we have moved from words to actions, with our continued efforts to address the specific needs of the affected communities via the EU Solidarity Fund and Cohesion Policy. We will stand side by side with Italy throughout the reconstruction process."* The Commission is putting forward two strands of support through EU funds, with the upcoming release of a first disbursement of aid worth €30 million under [the EU Solidarity Fund \(EUSF\)](#) and a [proposal to amend the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy regulation](#) and introduce an EU co-financing rate of up to 100% for reconstruction operations linked to natural disasters. This would allow reconstruction operations, including the restoration of cultural heritage, to be fully funded with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). A full press release is available [here](#).

25 years of the EU's MEDIA programme: Building on success to further support audiovisual creation

Today and tomorrow hundreds of top filmmakers, industry representatives and policy makers are gathering in Brussels to explore the challenges and opportunities ahead for Europe's audiovisual sector, including the future of the EU's MEDIA programme, which is 25 years old this year. More information [here](#)

Commission launches Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition to help Europeans in their career and daily life

Today, the Commission is launching the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition, together with Member States, companies, social partners, NGOs and education providers, to help meet the high demand for digital skills in Europe which are essential in today's job market and society. The Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition is one of the ten key initiatives proposed by the Commission under the [New Skills Agenda for Europe](#), presented

in June this year. Andrus Ansip, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market said: "*Allowing more people to develop digital skills is like giving a ticket to the digital economy. We cannot build the Digital Single Market in Europe without addressing the digital skills gap. The launch of the Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition is a milestone in our joint effort to increase everyone's digital skills in Europe.*" (read his [speech](#)). Günther H. Oettinger, Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society added: "*The lack of digital skills is already hampering innovation and growth in Europe. Not just for ICT companies but for organisations in all sectors – private and public. We must remove this obstacle to make sure Europeans get the jobs they deserve and our businesses have access to a large pool of digital talent.*" For more information, see our [press release](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Clondalkin by Egeria Industrials

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Clondalkin of the Netherlands by Egeria Industrials of Switzerland. Clondalkin manufactures flexible packaging products used in several industries, including confectionery, food, beverage, dairy, tobacco and hygiene. Egeria Industrials is a private equity firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies' activities do not overlap and are very limited on related markets. 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.8218](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of parts of Emerson Electric by Nidec Corporation

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of U.S.-based Emerson Electric's motors, drives and electric power generation businesses by Nidec Corporation of Japan. Emerson Electric manufactures and sells electric motors, drives and electric generators as well as automation, commercial and residential solutions and equipment. Nidec Corporation manufactures and sells electric motors, machinery, electronic and optical components and other products. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the overlap between the companies' activities is very limited. 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.8202](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of bree Corporation by NEC Corporation and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation.

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of bree Corporation by NEC Corporation and Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, all of Japan. bree Corporation is a joint venture providing a payment service, relying on mobile barcodes, in Japanese convenience stores. NEC Corporation is a technology group providing network equipment and IT solutions worldwide. Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation is worldwide active as a provider of commercial financial services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because bree Corporation has no actual or foreseen activities within the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8256](#).

Eurostat: October 2016- Euro area unemployment at 9.8%- EU28 at 8.3%

The **euro area** (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 9.8% in October 2016, down from 9.9% in September 2016 and from 10.6% in October 2015. This is the lowest rate recorded in the **euro area** since July 2009. The **EU28** unemployment rate was 8.3% in October 2016, down from 8.4% in September 2016 and from 9.1% in October 2015. This is the lowest rate recorded in the **EU28** since February 2009. These figures are published by **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. [Full text available on EUROSTAT website](#)

Eurostat: Material deprivation – complementary variables: More than 1 in 10 people in the EU cannot afford to get together with friends or family for a drink

13.0% of the population aged 16 or over living in the European Union (EU) reported in 2014 not being able to get together with friends/family for a drink or meal at least once a month due to lack of resources, while 17.8% could not afford to regularly participate in a leisure activity. A press release is available [here](#).

STATEMENTS

Statement by Commissioner Jourová on the European Parliament consent vote on the conclusion of the EU-U.S. data protection "Umbrella Agreement"

On the occasion of the final vote by the European Parliament on the conclusion of the *EU-U.S. Data Protection "Umbrella Agreement"*, Justice Commissioner, Věra **Jourová** said: *"I welcome the strong positive vote of the European Parliament (...). This historic agreement introduces high data protection standards for transatlantic law enforcement cooperation. More than ever, the EU and the U.S. need to cooperate to fight crime and terrorism and protect citizens from common security challenges. At the same time this cooperation needs to safeguard the European fundamental right to privacy. The Umbrella Agreement will ensure that the exchanges of personal data, such as criminal records, names or addresses, are governed by strong data protection rules. After years of negotiations, we concluded a unique agreement that guarantees a high level of protection to EU citizens' personal data transferred to judicial and police authorities across the Atlantic. A major novelty is that the U.S. will grant all EU citizens the right to enforce their data protection rights in U.S. courts, a right that U.S. citizens already enjoy in Europe."* The Umbrella Agreement was signed by EU-U.S. Justice Ministers on 2 June 2016. It will enter into force once each party has completed the necessary internal procedures. On the European Union side, this is the adoption of a decision by the Council on the conclusion of the agreement, following the European Parliament's consent vote. Full [statement](#) and a [Q&A](#) are available online.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Energy diplomacy: Commissioner Arias Cañete participates in the Euro-Mediterranean Forum on Energy

Today, the European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy Miguel **Arias Cañete** participates in the Euro-Mediterranean Ministerial Energy Meeting in Rome, a key forum under the Union for the Mediterranean to foster energy cooperation on both shores of the Mediterranean. A Ministerial Declaration endorsing the work carried out over the year will be adopted, opening the way for concrete projects and initiatives at regional level. Commissioner **Arias Cañete** said: *"Today's outcome will help us further strengthen the special bond between the EU and our Mediterranean neighbours. Energy can be a token of prosperity, and the Mediterranean region has an untapped potential to become a major energy hub and provider of clean energy."* The Union for the Mediterranean energy cooperation is based on three platforms covering three priority policy areas: natural gas; integration of electricity markets; renewable energy and

energy efficiency. The Euro-Mediterranean Platforms are meant to be an effective instrument that, under the coordination of the Union for Mediterranean co-presidencies, organizes and supports a systematic dialogue of all the concerned public and private stakeholders. The purpose of the Platforms is to provide a permanent forum for discussing energy policy objectives and measures, with a view to identifying concrete partnership actions and following-up on their implementation. On the sidelines of the forum, Commissioner Arias Cañete will meet with his counterparts from the Eastern Mediterranean to discuss the region's potential to become an energy hub. In addition, he will meet with ministers from Tunisia and Italy to find ways to accelerate electricity cooperation between both countries. More information on the website of the [Union for the Mediterranean](#).

Commissioner Crețu visits Saxony

Today and tomorrow, Commissioner for Regional Policy Corina **Crețu** will visit Leipzig and Dresden, in the German state of Saxony. Today in Leipzig she visits a refugee accommodation centre and participates to a panel discussion on "the Future of Cohesion Policy" with Fritz Jaeckel, Chief of the State Chancellery and State Minister for Federal and European Affairs, and Constanze Krehl, Member of the European Parliament. Tomorrow in Dresden she will meet Stanislaw Tillich, the State's Prime Minister, Martin Dulig, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister in charge of Economic Affairs, and Eva-Maria Stange, State Minister for Science and the Arts. She will also visit an EU-funded research project at the University of Dresden, [the Institute for Lightweight Engineering and Polymer Technology](#). *"As Saxony is a key beneficiary of Cohesion Policy funds in Germany, I'm looking forward to our discussions on the future of the policy. But we will also discuss what Cohesion Policy can do today: integrating migrants in cities and fighting segregation have become priorities at EU level and it is also a key topic for Saxony. I will underline that we remain open to modify Structural funds programmes, upon request, to include more social inclusion projects,"* said Commissioner **Crețu** ahead of her visit. More information on the European Structural and Investment Funds in Germany is available [here](#) and on the [Open Data Platform](#).

Commissioner Stylianides delivers keynote speech at Annual Conference of the Commission's Humanitarian Aid partners

On 1st and 2nd December 2016, the European Commission is hosting a conference with its humanitarian partners to discuss recent developments, challenges and opportunities in the humanitarian sector. The annual conference serves as a platform for the Commission's humanitarian partners to discuss future actions and ideas more detail. Addressing the conference, Commissioner Stylianides emphasised the importance of being innovative in our partnerships when responding to the challenge of the refugee crisis and addressed how to ensure that both doers and donors collectively ensure greater aid effectiveness and efficiency. The Commissioner's speech will be made available [here](#). For more information about the Annual Conference, please consult the [ECHO's Partners website](#).

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

