

TODAYS

News

Thursday, 15 December, 2016



Major steps towards a Digital Single Market: Commission welcomes agreement on the use of high-quality radio frequencies and adopts "fair use policy" to make the end of roaming charges work

Last night, negotiators from the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission reached a political agreement on an EU-wide approach for the use of the ultra-high frequency band of 700 MHz for mobile services, an important milestone and the first agreement under the [Digital Single Market strategy](#). The 700 MHz band will be made available for wireless broadband, thus facilitating the introduction of 5G as of 2020. The deal will improve internet access for all Europeans, including those who live in rural areas, and help develop innovative cross-border applications, while securing frequencies for a vibrant audio-visual sector. Last night's agreement builds on a proposal presented by the [Commission in February 2016](#). The European Parliament and the Council are now expected to formally endorse the agreement in the coming weeks. Andrus **Ansip**, Vice-President for the Digital Single Market, said: *"Better spectrum coordination is vital to provide higher quality internet to all Europeans. It paves the way for 5G, the next generation of communication networks, and the internet of things. We made a first important step and we will continue our work towards a more efficient use of spectrum, which is one of the main objectives of our new Electronic Communications Code and 5G action plan presented earlier this year."* (See also the recent blog post on [Connectivity, radio spectrum and the Digital Single Market: preparing for the future](#)). Günther H. **Oettinger**, Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, said: *"A coordinated strategy for the whole ultra-high frequency band asserts our European vision. It ensures that Europeans can access innovative services and creative content on the move from their tablets and smartphones, as well as on smart TV sets at home."* Following the vote by Member States' Representatives on Monday (see [joint statement](#)), this morning the Commission also formally adopted a "fair use policy" and an associated sustainability mechanism to make the end of roaming charges work for travellers as of 15 June 2017. This Implementing Act can be found [here](#). More information will be available [here](#). A [press release](#) on the Commission's proposal was also published last week, with a [statement by Vice-President Ansip](#). On last night's spectrum agreement, a press release is available [here](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over ILAC Shopping Centre by Hammerson and Irish Life

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over the ILAC Shopping Centre in Ireland by Hammerson plc of the UK and its current owner, Irish Life Assurance plc of Ireland. ILAC is a shopping centre situated in Dublin, which comprises a mix of more than 80 retailers and catering units. Hammerson owns, develops and manages commercial real estate in Europe. Irish Life is a life and pensions company that provides protection, pensions and savings products to clients across retail, corporate and investment management businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of its limited impact on the market

structure. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.8229](#).

Declaration to minimise the negative effects of the Danish departure from Europol, following the referendum in Denmark on 3 December 2015

Following the referendum in Denmark on 3 December 2015, we agree on the need for operational arrangements, minimising the negative impact of Denmark's departure from Europol on 1 May 2017, for the mutual benefit of Denmark and the rest of the European Union in the combatting of cross-border serious and organised crime and international terrorism. Such arrangements must be Denmark-specific, and not in any way equal full membership of Europol, i.e. provide access to Europol's data repositories, or for full participation in Europol's operational work and database, or give decision-making rights in the governing bodies of Europol. However, it should ensure a sufficient level of operational cooperation including exchange of relevant data, subject to adequate safeguards. More details [here](#).

Investment Plan for Europe: European Fund for Strategic Investments to trigger EUR more than 164 billion in new investments

The [Investment Plan for Europe](#) is now expected to trigger more than EUR 164 billion in total investments. This comes just two years after the Plan was launched by the Juncker Commission and represents over half of the EUR 315 billion of total investments mobilised that was originally earmarked. These figures follow this week's meeting of the European Investment Bank (EIB) Board of Directors which approved 26 new projects to be financed under the EFSI on the recommendation of the EFSI's independent Investment Committee. The operations approved under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) now represent a total financing volume of EUR 30.5 billion and are located in 27 Member States. The EIB has now approved 176 infrastructure projects for financing under the EFSI which represent a volume of financing of EUR 22.4 billion. The European Investment Fund (EIF) has approved 243 SME financing agreements, with total financing under the EFSI of EUR 8.1 billion. More than 388,000 SMEs and Midcaps are expected to benefit. The list of EFSI projects is available [here](#) and project information by country and by sector will be available [here](#). *For more information see [here](#)*

Investment Plan for Europe: Two agreements worth over EUR 500 million to support research and renewable energy

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed two agreements worth over EUR 500 million in Belgium and Germany. These transactions benefit from the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). In Belgium, a EUR 438 million loan will support the construction of the Norther wind farm which will supply renewably generated electricity to around 324,000 Belgian families, cutting an estimated 593,000 tons of CO₂-equivalent greenhouse emissions per year. In Germany, the European Investment Bank (EIB) is providing Giesecke & Devrient with a loan of EUR 80 million to step up the company's research and development activities in the field of financial transaction security. Commenting on the Norther wind farm agreement, Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, responsible for Energy Union, said: "*Today's agreement demonstrates how the EFSI can act to boost investment while also helping to ensure that Europe has secure, affordable and climate-friendly energy sources. I believe that the Investment Plan will continue to make a substantial contribution towards Europe's transition to becoming a secure, competitive and low-carbon economy in the years ahead.*" (For more information see [here](#))

EU and IOM launch initiative for migrant protection and reintegration in Africa along the Central Mediterranean migration routes

Today the European Union, through the EU Trust Fund for Africa (EUTF), the governments of Germany and Italy, and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) have launched a new initiative to support African countries in responding to the urgent protection needs and tragic loss of life of migrants along the Central Mediterranean migration routes and in strengthening migration governance. The new "EU Trust Fund for Africa and IOM initiative for Migrant Protection and Reintegration of Returnees along the Central Mediterranean migration routes", benefiting from a €100 million allocation, will cover the Sahel and Lake Chad region and neighbouring countries, including Libya. Federica **Mogherini**, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice President of the Commission declared: *"The European Union is delivering on its commitments. Our primary goal is to save lives at sea, to protect the most vulnerable, to provide possible alternatives to migration and ultimately to improving people's lives. Our work with IOM helps our partners to better manage migration flows, to offer support to migrants in strained circumstances and provide reintegration opportunities to returning migrants. These are the commitments we took one year ago in the Valletta Summit, and then with the Partnership Framework on Migration, and the first results are coming. We will continue to deliver."* Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica** stated: *"Migrants often become stranded along migration routes in Africa and the Mediterranean and find that they are unable to continue their journey. At this point, far from home and with no money, they are faced with difficult choices in order to survive or continue their journey. They become victims of criminal networks and are subject to trafficking of all kinds. Migration is not about numbers, it is about human beings. This new initiative will provide credible alternatives to those men, women and children that are the most at risk"*. See also the [Joint Press Release](#) and a [Joint Factsheet](#)

Commissioner Malmström welcomes Parliament's strong support for Ecuador to join trade agreement

The European Parliament yesterday approved the Protocol of Accession of Ecuador to the EU's Trade Agreement with Colombia and Peru allowing the deal to become effective, on a provisional basis, as of 1 January 2017. *"I am very pleased with the outcome of the Parliament's vote,"* said Cecilia **Malmström**, Commissioner for Trade. *"We've managed to clear the way for Ecuador to join its Andean neighbours in building a privileged trade relationship with Europe. This agreement can give a positive boost to sustainable and inclusive development in Ecuador. It is also an important building block in our strong partnership with Latin America."* The strong support in the EP (544 votes in favour, 114 against and 44 abstentions) follows the Council's decision on 11 November and will result in a fundamental upgrade of the EU's bilateral relationship with Ecuador. The Commission will now be working together with Ecuador to ensure that provisions of the agreement translate into tangible benefits for companies, consumers, citizens and civil society on both sides. A [press release](#) from the [signature of Ecuador's accession](#) to the EU-Colombia/Peru trade agreement, as well as a [blog post](#) by Commissioner **Malmström**, are available online.)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of NewDay by CVC and Cinven

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over NewDay Group Holdings S.à r.l of Luxembourg by CVC Capital Partners SICAV-FIS S.A, also of Luxembourg, and Cinven Capital Management (VI) General Partner Limited of Guernsey. NewDay is a consumer finance provider offering store cards and credit cards, specifically near-prime consumer credit cards and co-brand consumer credit cards. It is active only in the UK. CVC and Cinven (VI) GP are both equity investment funds and are active globally holding interests in a range of sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the transaction leads

to a very limited impact on the market for the provision of personal loans in the UK. 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.8272](#)

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