



Friday, 20 January, 2017

### Commission brings in top innovators to advise on a potential European Innovation Council

A new [High Level Group](#) will advise the Commission on how to better support breakthrough, market-creating innovation in [Horizon 2020](#) and future research and innovation programmes. Carlos **Moedas**, Commissioner for Research, Science and Innovation, said: *"I am delighted that we have managed to attract such a high-calibre group of innovators operating in different fields to assist the Commission in designing a new approach to supporting innovation under the working title of a European Innovation Council. I am confident that they will bring a vital user perspective, helping us to design an approach that is fit for purpose and targeted on boosting the quality of EU support for breakthrough, market-creating innovation on which Europe's prosperity increasingly relies."* The High Level Group of Innovators brings together [15 leading personalities](#) from across Europe with a wide range of entrepreneurial and investment expertise in business innovation. Changes that the Commission is considering in some areas of Horizon 2020 include a new "bottom up" approach to support innovation in any area as opposed to predefining topics, a proposal evaluation system that include face to face interviews (and not just paper proposals), and bringing together different instruments so they are simpler to access. The initiative complements other Commission efforts to help innovators stay and grow in Europe, as laid out in the [Start-Up and Scale-Up Initiative](#). The Group will hold its first meeting in March. It will build on the [results of a Call for Ideas](#) carried out in 2016 and will feed into the work of the High Level Group on Maximising the Impact of EU Research and Innovation Programmes chaired by Pascal Lamy, which is due to report by June 2017.

### Investment Plan for Europe: EUR 70 million loan agreement supports sustainable production facilities in Spain

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has finalised a loan agreement with [SAICA](#), a family-owned paper and packaging company, to finance investment in new sustainable production facilities at its factory in Zaragoza, Spain. This transaction benefits from the support of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). Specifically, the loan agreement will allow the company to invest in innovative technologies and processes to develop a new range of high quality products. 570 jobs are expected to be created during the project's construction phase, with a further 118 permanent positions following this initial two year period. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Modernising production facilities to promote sustainable industrial practices demands investment. This is where the EFSI can play an important role. I am glad that this EFSI-backed loan agreement will allow SAICA, a family-owned*

business, to invest in cutting-edge technology, enable sustainable production practices and create new jobs." A full press release is [available here](#). For more information see [here](#)

## **President Juncker delivers a speech at the Academy of European Law**

European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** gave a speech at the annual reception of the Academy of European Law (ERA, Europäische Rechtsakademie) on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary since its creation. He described judicial systems as the guarantor of democracy, and fundamental rights and legal certainty as the most important pre-condition for the investment into our economies. Speaking of the European Union, he stressed that *"the European Union is at its heart a Community of Law – eine Rechtsgemeinschaft. I have always considered the word "law" to be synonymous with the word "Europe". Whether it be protecting our workers from social dumping through the Posting of Workers Directive or protecting our citizens from illegal guns through the Firearms Directive, the law is our best tool to build the Europe that protects, the Europe that empowers and the Europe that defends our citizens."* President **Juncker** also stressed the importance of making sure that legislation will have an added value, rather than an added burden: *"My defence and passion for law does not mean that I want more of it. Since I took office I focused on having better laws rather than having more laws. As part of our drive for Better Regulation we have gone from 130 initiatives a year, down to the 21 most important initiatives relevant for our citizens."* With regards to the Rule of Law, President **Juncker** said: *"We cannot take the Rule of Law for granted, we have to defend and improve it. That is true today even more than it ever was."* Finally, the President reaffirmed the European Commission's commitment to meeting its target of 700,000 legal practitioners – 50% of professionals across the EU – taking part in European judicial training activities by 2020. Over 500,000 professionals have already received training and EU funding is available to support professionals to deepen their knowledge of EU law. The full speech is available [here](#).

## **Commission launches public consultation on the Capital Markets Union Mid-Term Review**

As part of its efforts to achieve a Capital Markets Union (CMU) with tangible impact, the Commission services are launching today a public consultation on the planned CMU mid-term review. This consultation offers an opportunity for stakeholders to provide targeted input to complement and advance actions put forward in the CMU Action Plan. European Commission Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, said: *"We have built good momentum behind the Capital Markets Union project and we are well on our way to completing the first wave of measures. Now, we want to move faster and be more ambitious. This mid-term review consultation will help shape the next phase of our work to build a single market for capital in Europe."* European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth and Investment, said: *"Progress towards building a Capital Markets Union is crucial to strengthen the third pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. It will contribute to creating an investment friendly environment and make it cheaper and more interesting for insurance companies and banks to invest in long-term infrastructure projects. We are determined to deliver on our commitments and the mid-term review will allow us to ensure that the Capital Markets Union Action Plan remains relevant in a changing political, economic and technological context."* The results of this consultation will feed into the mid-term review of the CMU Action Plan that the Commission aims to publish in June 2017. The review will seek to strengthen the current policy framework for the development of capital markets by updating the proposed actions and integrating complementary measures in response to key challenges. Respondents are invited to provide evidence-based feedback and specific suggestions by 17 March 2017 through [the online questionnaire](#). A [Q&A](#) is available online.

## Essen becomes the European Green Capital for 2017

On 21 January, the town of Essen in Germany will officially become the European Green Capital for 2017. In a ceremony, Karmenu **Vella**, Commissioner for the Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, will hand over the title for 2017 from Ljubljana to Essen. With more than two thirds of Europeans living in towns or cities, addressing environmental challenges is of outmost importance for the health and wellbeing of citizens. The European Green Capital Award rewards efforts and commitment in improving the urban environment, boosting awareness of the need for environmental change at the city level. Commissioner **Vella** said: *“I congratulate Essen on becoming European Green Capital 2017 and making the city a healthier place to live in. The impressive transformation from coal and steel industry to the greenest city in North Rhine-Westphalia is proof of Essen's successful structural change. Great progress in environmental sustainability required vision, good governance, strong leadership and citizens' involvement. I look forward to Essen's programme of activities, and I wish Mayor Kufen, his team, the people of Essen the very best.”* A full [press release](#) is available online.

## Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of inno2grid by Deutsche Bahn and Schneider Electric

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over inno2grid of Germany by DB Energie GmbH, a subsidiary of Deutsche Bahn AG of Germany and by Schneider Electric GmbH of Germany, a subsidiary of Schneider Electric SE of France. inno2grid offers design, consulting, planning and testing services as well as the deployment, operation and distribution of decentralised intelligent energy infrastructures and related mobility solutions. DB Energie GmbH is the energy division of Deutsche Bahn AG, a passenger and logistics company. DB Energie GmbH is active in the generation, purchase and supply of energy. Schneider Electric SE is active among others in the electricity distribution and energy management sectors and offers integrated solutions for energy infrastructures. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of its very 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.8074](#).

## Announcements

### High Representative/Vice-President Mogherini co-chairs the Second Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean

On Monday, High Representative/Vice-President **Mogherini** will co-chair, together with Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Ayman Safadi, the [second edition of the Regional Forum of the Union for the Mediterranean](#) (UfM) in Barcelona. Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, will also participate. The two-day Forum will gather 43 delegations from the members of the UfM and observers and will take place in the UfM headquarters, in the presence of the UfM Secretary General, Fathallah Sijilmassi, and other invitees such as the League of Arab States, the Anna Lindh Foundation, the Parliamentary Assembly of the UfM, ARLEM, EBRD, EIB and the EESC. The theme of the Forum this year is "Mediterranean in Action: Youth for stability and Development", centering around youth's potential as driving force for stability and development and discussing perspectives for strengthening cooperation, synergies and complementarities between main stakeholders towards a better future for the Euro-Mediterranean region. The first day of the Forum will consist of a Ministerial meeting, followed by a press conference, the inauguration of the Forum and an open conference with participation of the civil society, in particular business associations, universities and local authorities' representatives. The

second day will consist of panels and a closing session. Audio-visual coverage of the Forum will be available on [EbS](#).

MEX/17/117



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