

**TODAYS
News**

Tuesday, 06 June, 2017

Launch of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare: Q&A on Animal Welfare policy

Today, European Commissioner Vytenis Andriukaitis officially inaugurates the kick-off meeting of the EU Platform on Animal Welfare (the Platform). The Platform will gather 75 representatives from stakeholders, NGOs, scientists, Member States, EEA (European Economic Area) countries, international organisations and EFSA (European Food Safety Authority). This is the 1st time that all key EU players will gather to exchange experiences and contribute to improving the welfare of animals. [More information here](#)

EUROSTAT: April 2017 compared with March 2017 - Volume of retail trade up by 0.1% in euro area - Up by 0.5% in EU28

In April 2017 compared with March 2017, the seasonally adjusted volume of retail trade rose by 0.1% in the **euro area** (EA19) and by 0.5% in the **EU28**, according to estimates from **Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union**. In March the retail trade volume increased by 0.2% in the **euro area**, while it fell by 0.1% in the **EU28**. [Full text available here](#)

State aid: Commission and China start dialogue on state aid control

European Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, and He Lifeng, Chairman of China's National Development and Reform Commission, have signed on Friday, 2 June in Brussels a Memorandum of Understanding to start a dialogue on state aid control. The State aid dialogue creates a mechanism of consultation, cooperation and transparency between China and the EU in the field of state aid control. The dialogue will be used to share with China the European experience in enforcing state aid control. It will also be used to learn more about the implementation of the newly adopted Fair Competition Review in China. This new State aid cooperation dialogue will further the EU's and China's mutual interest and joint work to promote fair global competition. It is part of the Commission's broader strategy to address the distortion that national subsidies policies put on the promotion of a global level playing field where companies can compete on their merits. Commissioner **Vestager** commented: *"Decisions by one country to grant a subsidy to a company that operates globally may affect competition elsewhere. The European Commission is pleased to start a discussion with China on how to best handle state intervention in the economy."* More information on the Commission's [website](#). A full press release is available online [here](#).

State aid: Commission endorses new €101 million Croatian national broadband scheme for 2017-2023

The European Commission has found that Croatia's €101.4 million Next Generation Network (NGN) Broadband plan is in line with EU state aid rules. This scheme aims to provide fast internet access where it is currently not available, in particular in rural areas. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Croatia's broadband scheme will bring faster internet to consumers and businesses that currently do not have it. It will help Croatia to put in place the necessary infrastructure for an information society and contribute to creating a Digital Single Market within the EU."* The scheme aims to increase the coverage of high speed broadband and provide speeds of 100 Mbit/s symmetrical (i.e. upload and download). It will run until 31 December 2023. The new infrastructure will be financed mainly through the [European Regional Development Fund](#) and partly by national funds, and the network will remain in public ownership. The full press release is available online [here](#)

Capital Markets Union: Banks to provide feedback to SMEs on access to funding

As the Commission gears up to publish the Mid-Term Review of the Capital Markets Union (CMU) Action Plan on 8 June, it is intensifying its efforts to improve the funding environment for small businesses. Currently, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) often fail to get funding from banks yet they do not receive proper feedback as to the reason why, which hampers future attempts. The Commission has been working to address this problem by getting the financial industry to do more to help small businesses navigate the complex financial landscape. Five major EU banking federations have now agreed to providing SMEs with the feedback they need so that they can ultimately increase their chances of getting loans. Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and the Capital Markets Union, said: *"Small businesses are the lifeblood of the EU economy. That's why the financial system must better respond to their varied needs: from start-ups looking for better access to capital to ambitious scale-ups in need of risk finance. Thanks to today's agreement, SMEs will receive clear feedback on the reasons why their request for financing has been rejected, which will help them to better understand how to actually access the financing they need."* The Commission today is also publishing a report that maps national and regional initiatives to help small businesses identify a wider range of sources of finance, as well as providing investors and lenders with reliable information about companies. In a bid to help tackle information barriers in the SME funding market and improve access by innovative SMEs to alternative forms of finance, the Commission has also launched [a call for proposals](#) for a maximum amount of € 2.5 million under the Horizon 2020 programme. This Call for Proposals will allow to support capacity-building projects to address information barriers in the SME funding market and increase the range of financing opportunities by drawing on these successful national initiatives. Further information on the feedback to SMEs initiative is available [here](#).

Launch of the European Drug Report 2017

Today, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, together with Laura d'Arrigo, Chair of the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA) Management Board, and EMCDDA Director Alexis Goosdeel, will launch the European Drug Report 2017. Commissioner Avramopoulos said: *"The impact of the drugs problem continues to be a significant challenge for European societies. The annual European Drug Report gives us the necessary analysis, guidance and tools to tackle this threat together across Europe, not just to protect the health of our citizens, but also to stop huge profits from drugs ending up in the pockets of organised crime groups in Europe and beyond."* The European Drug Report provides a comprehensive analysis of recent trends in the drug situation in Europe, including developments in the European drug market, drug use among young Europeans and the threats posed by new substances. The report will be accompanied by 30 Country Drug Reports presenting summaries of national drug phenomena in the EU28, Turkey and Norway. The European Drug Report 2017 and the full press release is available online in 24 languages on the EMCDDA [website](#). A press point will take place in the VIP corner at 13:00 CET and will be streamed live on [EbS](#).

Antitrust: Commission opens formal investigation into distribution practices of clothing company Guess

The European Commission has opened a formal antitrust investigation into the distribution agreements and practices of clothing manufacturer and retailer Guess. The Commission will investigate information indicating that Guess' distribution agreements may restrict authorised retailers from selling online to consumers or to retailers in other Member States. They may also restrict wholesalers from selling to retailers in other Member States. Companies are generally free to set up the distribution system that best serves them. However these systems must comply with EU competition rules. In particular, consumers must be free to purchase from any retailer authorised by a manufacturer, including across national borders. The Commission will examine whether Guess illegally restricts retailers from selling cross-border to consumers within the EU Single Market. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: *"The Commission has information indicating that Guess, in its distribution agreements, may ban cross-border sales to consumers. One of the key benefits of the EU's Single Market is that consumers can shop around for a better deal. We are going to investigate Guess' practices further to ensure that it's playing by the rules and not preventing consumers from buying products across borders."* A full press release is available online [here](#)

Mergers: Commission clears joint venture between General Electric and ATI

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by General Electric and ATI, both of the US. The joint venture will develop novel titanium alloy production processes. General Electric is a global, diversified manufacturing, technology and services company. ATI is a worldwide producer of specialty materials and components, including titanium and titanium alloys, nickel-based alloys and other specialty steels and alloys. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would not raise competition concerns as the joint venture does not have activities in the European Economic Area. 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.8301](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

European Development Days focus on "Investing in Development" - #EDD17

The [11th edition of European Development Days](#) opens tomorrow, 7 June, with a specific focus on investing in development. Europe's leading forum on international cooperation and development promises to be the biggest ever with some 7,000 participants expected. The event's debates, panels, and special events will provide insights into the most pressing development challenges facing the world, and various approaches to dealing with these challenges. A key moment of the European Development Days will be the signature of the European Consensus on Development, a strategic document, outlining the future of European development policy. For the first time, the Consensus will apply in its entirety to all EU Institutions and all Member States, who are committed to work more closely together. During the European Development Days, discussions will bring together Heads of State or Government, business leaders and stakeholders to debate and share new insights into sustainability, inclusivity, peace and prosperity, focusing on the roles of youth, women and the private sector in development cooperation.

Commissioner Oettinger participates in Citizens' Dialogue in Germany Following the debates and dialogues taking place across the Union on the future of Europe and the presentation of the Commission's

[White Paper on the Future of Europe](#), Commissioner Günther H. **Oettinger**, in charge of budget and human resources will participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) on 6 June April in Mainz, Germany. Commissioner **Oettinger** will discuss the future of Europe. The dialogue will start at 19:00 CET and can be followed live on [Facebook](#).

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