



Monday, 03 July, 2017

EU and New Zealand agree a more secure and trade-friendly customs environment

The EU and New Zealand have signed today an Agreement on Cooperation and Mutual Administrative Assistance in Customs Matters, an important step in strengthening EU-New Zealand relations. The agreement will benefit legitimate trade between the two parties by creating a more secure and trade-friendly environment as their customs authorities will exchange more information to ensure the proper application of customs legislation under the Agreement. Today's agreement will further help to prevent, investigate and combat breaches of customs legislation. New Zealand is a close partner of the EU, with total trade in goods amounting to EUR 8.1bn in 2016 and total trade in commercial services amounting to further EUR 4.3bn in 2015.

Social security goes digital: Quicker and easier exchange of social security information throughout the EU and beyond

Today the Commission launches the [Electronic Exchange of Social Security Information system \(EESSI\)](#), a new IT platform that will connect electronically around 15 000 social security institutions of EU Member States plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland. The tool marks an important step forward in modernising social security coordination, as it will replace the current paper-based exchanges between social security institutions, to allow for a quicker, easier and secure exchange of social security information throughout the EU and beyond. This will make it easier to combat fraud and error, as national social security institutions will use standardised electronic documents in their own language, ensuring that the data they exchange is correct and complete. The new tool will also benefit citizens who have lived and worked in several of the participating countries, and who will see their social security benefits calculated quicker and more efficiently. Countries will have two years to connect their national systems to the central IT platform. By July 2019 full electronic exchange of social security data in a simple, speedy and secure way will be a reality across Europe. The Commission will continue supporting Member States with the deployment and maintenance of the system over the next years. More information on the new electronic exchange system can be found [here](#).

President Juncker pays tribute to Germany's former Chancellor Kohl at European Ceremony of Honour in Strasbourg

On Saturday 1 July, the first European Ceremony of Honour took place in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, where leaders from all over the world gathered to pay tribute to former federal Chancellor of Germany, Helmut Kohl. At the start of the ceremony, President **Juncker**, European Council President Tusk, and European Parliament President Tajani delivered speeches, and farewell messages were given by former President of the United States Bill Clinton, former Spanish Prime Minister Felipe González and

Russian Prime Minister Dmitri Medvedev. French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered the closing speeches. *"In Helmut Kohl, a giant of the post-war era leaves us"* President **Juncker** said, describing Helmut Kohl as both a German and a European patriot. *"Helmut Kohl was not only the architect of German unity. He contributed fundamentally — more than others — to reconciling European history and European geography"* President **Juncker** said. From the European Parliament, the coffin was taken to Germany, where the former Chancellor was buried after a requiem mass in the cathedral of Speyer. President **Juncker's** full speech is available in [here](#), as well as his [statement](#). A video of the ceremony in Strasbourg is available on [EBS](#), where the video *"Helmut Kohl, a great European"* also shown at the ceremony, is also available.

EUROSTAT: May 2017 - Euro area unemployment at 9.3% - EU28 at 7.8%

The **euro area** (EA19) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 9.3% in May 2017, stable compared to April 2017 and down from 10.2% in May 2016. This remains the lowest rate recorded in the **euro area** since March 2009. The **EU28** unemployment rate was 7.8% in May 2017, stable compared to April 2017 and down from 8.7% in May 2016. This remains the lowest rate recorded in the **EU28** since December 2008. [Full text available here](#)

The role of research and innovation in the future of Europe: the high-level group chaired by Pascal Lamy presents his recommendations

Against the backdrop of the Commission's White Paper on the future of Europe, the conference "Research & Innovation – shaping our future", hosted by Research, Science and Innovation Commissioner Carlos Moedas, will bring together policymakers from EU institutions, nearly 700 stakeholders and interested actors to discuss the role of research and innovation for Europe's future.

Pascal Lamy, the chair of the High Level Group on maximising the impact of European research and innovation programmes, will present the Group's vision and recommendations for the future, based on the results of the interim evaluation of Horizon 2020. Visionary speakers will include captains of industry, researchers and innovators at the frontier of progress, politicians and movers and shakers in society but also young people who have expectations for the future. They will discuss with the audience how research and innovation could transform our economy and improve our society. More information [here](#) and [here](#)

Security Union: The EU takes next step to strengthen EU external borders management

The Entry/Exit System (EES), a priority file identified in the [Joint Declaration](#) on legislative priorities for 2017, received the political backing of the European Parliament and the Council last week. Proposed by the Commission in [April 2016](#), the system will register entry and exit data of non-EU nationals crossing the EU's external borders. This will allow for a better oversight of authorised short stays, detection of over-stayers and overall modernisation of EU external border management. As reiterated in the [European Council Conclusions](#) of 22-23 June 2017, the Entry-Exist System, together with the [European Travel Information and Authorisation System](#) (ETIAS), will contribute to enhancing external border control and internal security. First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"We welcome the political support of the European Parliament and the Council. Now we need to push forward with modernising our EU border management and strengthen security for our citizens."* Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** said: *"After the introduction of systematic checks on all travellers crossing EU external borders and the successful launch of the European Border and Coast Guard, this is another building block to make our external borders smarter and more secure while guaranteeing*

mobility." Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** said: "*The Entry/Exit system will enhance our internal security by making the external borders stronger, thereby bringing us one step closer to achieving full interoperability of EU information systems by 2020.*" The discussions on the proposal will now continue between the European Parliament and the Council at technical level. The final text will then have to be formally adopted by both co-legislators. More information on the Commission's efforts towards creating a [Security Union](#): 'A Europe that Protects' and existing [EU information systems](#) is available online.

Mergers: Commission clears creation of joint venture by Hitachi Automotive Systems and Honda Motor Company

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the creation of a joint venture company by Hitachi Automotive Systems Ltd (HIAMS) and Honda Motor Company Co., Ltd, both of Japan. HIAMS supplies automotive products and technologies. Honda manufactures automobiles, motorcycles and power products. The joint venture will be active in the production and supply of electric motors in Japan, China and the US. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns, because the joint venture has no, or negligible, actual or foreseen activities within the EEA. 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.8485](#).

Mergers: Commission clears the creation of joint venture between Wärtsilä and CSSC

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of joint control of a newly created joint venture by Wärtsilä of Finland and China State Shipbuilding Corporation ('CSSC') of China. The joint venture will supply electrical and automation systems for seaborne vessels in China. Wärtsilä supplies complete life cycle power solutions for the marine and other markets. CSSC is active in various industries, including shipbuilding. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns because the joint venture will have no or only limited activities in the EEA. 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.8439](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Nord Anglia Education by CPPIB and BPEA

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Nord Anglia Education Inc. of Hong-Kong by Canada Pension Plan Investment Board (CPPIB) of Canada and the current parent Baring Private Equity Asia (BPEA) of Singapore. Nord Anglia is a premium school operator running 45 international schools, boarding schools and private schools. CPPIB is a professional investment management organisation that invests the assets of the Canada Pension Plan. BPEA is an independent alternative asset management organisation running a pan-Asian investment programme in real estate, private equities and growth capital. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the companies' activities do not overlap. 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.8515](#).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Holiday Inn Hotel in Munich by NN Group and ATP

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of indirect joint control by NN Group of the Netherlands and Arbejdsmarkedets Tillægspension (ATP) of Denmark over a Holiday Inn hotel and its related facilities and amenities located in Munich, Germany. NN is a global financial institution offering investment and insurance services. ATP is a Danish public pension fund which administers a number of welfare and social security schemes that help to provide basic security for Danish citizens. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would not raise competition concerns because of its 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.8505](#).

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Greek bank guarantee scheme

The European Commission has authorised the prolongation of the Greek guarantee scheme for credit institutions until 30 November 2017 under EU state aid rules. The liquidity situation of the Greek banks is gradually improving, but challenges still remain. In this context, the Commission has found that the prolongation of the guarantee scheme is in line with EU state aid rules, i.e. the [2013 Banking Communication](#), in particular because the prolonged measure is targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. The Commission is authorising guarantee schemes on banks' liabilities for successive periods of five or six months in order to be able to monitor developments and adjust conditions accordingly. The scheme is available for banks with no capital shortfall. The Greek guarantee scheme was initially approved [in November 2008](#). The authorisation of the scheme was prolonged several times, last time [in December 2016](#) until end June 2017. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [SA.48400](#).

STATEMENTS

Migration to Italy: Joint declaration by Commissioner Avramopoulos and the Ministers of Interior of France, Germany and Italy

The Ministers of Interior of France, Germany and Italy and the European Commissioner for Migration and Home Affairs met in Paris on 2 July 2017 to discuss the challenges posed by the increasing migratory flow on the Central Mediterranean route. They expressed strong solidarity with Italy, which faces rising numbers of arrivals. In order to provide increased support to Italy and contribute to stem the migratory flow, they agreed to work on a series of measures, including a code of conduct for NGO's, to be drafted and presented by Italy; enhanced support to the Libyan coast-guard; providing additional support to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) working within Libya; encouraging the examination of possible concrete options to reinforce border controls at the Southern border of Libya; reinforcing the EU strategy on returns; and making full use of and accelerating the agreed EU relocation scheme. As an immediate follow up, the College of Commissioners will tomorrow discuss and present a set of measures to ensure stepped up implementation of EU migration policy with Italy and for reducing flows along the Central Mediterranean Route. The Commission is working in concert with the Estonian presidency of the Council and the measures to be presented tomorrow should then form the basis of discussions on immediate support for Italy that will take place at the informal Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting in Tallinn on Thursday. The joint declaration is available in [here](#).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EU-Iran Higher Education and Research Event to prepare closer cooperation

The European Commission and the Iranian Ministry of Science, Research and Technology are co-hosting a two-day science and research event in Tehran to pave the way for expanding Iran-European Union (EU) cooperation between higher education institutions, research institutes and other organisations through the EU's higher education and research and innovation programmes, [Erasmus+](#) and [Horizon 2020](#). This initiative follows the [joint statement](#) agreed between EU High Representative/Vice-President Federica Mogherini and Iranian Foreign Minister, Mohamad Javad Zarif, on 16 April 2016 on EU-Iran bilateral cooperation. The event will cover various topics in the research and innovation and higher education areas. The first day will focus on higher education in science, technology and research and opportunities available under the [Horizon 2020 programme](#). This includes thematic workshops on different topics, as well as mobility grants for researchers such as the European Research Council grants and [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) – the EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. The second day will be dedicated to exchanging ideas and best practices, as well as exploring opportunities for Iran-EU cooperation between higher education institutions, including under [Erasmus+](#). This will include Capacity Building in Higher Education; [International Credit Mobility](#); [Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees](#), and [Jean Monnet Actions](#). To promote cooperation between the EU and Iranian institutions, sessions have also been arranged on both days to allow university officials and academics the opportunity to network. Further details can be found [here](#).

MEX/17/1878



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