



## Daily News 31 / 01 / 2018

Brussels, 31 January 2018

### **COLLEGE MEETING: Assessing health technology in the EU: Commission proposes to reinforce cooperation amongst Member States**

Today the Commission has put forward a proposal to boost cooperation amongst EU Member States for assessing health technology. Greater transparency will empower patients, by ensuring their access to information on the added clinical value of new technology that could potentially benefit them. More assessments could lead to effective, innovative health tools reaching patients faster. For national authorities it means being able to formulate policies for their health systems based on more robust evidence. Furthermore, manufacturers will no longer have to adapt to different national procedures. Vice-President **Katainen** said: *"Reinforcing Health Technology Assessment co-operation at EU level boosts innovation and improves competitiveness of the medical industry. The healthcare sector is a crucial part of our economy, it accounts for approximately 10% of the EU's GDP. We are proposing a regulatory framework that will bring benefits to patients all over Europe, whilst encouraging innovation, helping the take-up of high-quality medtech innovations and improving the sustainability of health systems across the EU."* Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, added: *"Today, the Commission has put the wheels in motion for better quality, innovative healthcare for the benefit of patients, especially those with unmet medical needs. I also expect this initiative to result in a more efficient use of resources by Member States through the pooling of resources and exchanges of expertise, thereby avoiding duplications in the assessment of the identical products"*. A [press release](#) is available in all languages and a Q&A in [EN](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

### **COLLEGE MEETING: European Commission endorses provisions for data flows and data protection in EU trade agreements**

The Commission has today endorsed horizontal provisions for cross-border data flows and personal data protection in trade negotiations. As the protection of personal data is a fundamental right in the EU, it cannot be subject to negotiations in the context of EU trade agreements. Data flows between the EU and third countries can be ensured using the mechanisms provided under the EU data protection legislation. As already underlined in the Commission's [Communication](#) of 10 January 2017, "Exchanging and Protecting Personal Data in a Globalised World", the preferred avenue for the EU are "adequacy decisions". Dialogues on data protection and trade negotiations with third countries can complement each other but must follow separate tracks – like currently with Japan and South Korea. The Commission has looked into how best to advance the EU's interests in this area – especially in cases where an "adequacy decision" (recognising an equivalent level of data protection of a third country) cannot be realistically reached in parallel to ongoing trade negotiations. This work was carried out by a project team lead by First Vice-President **Timmermans**. The draft text would allow the EU to tackle protectionist practices in third countries, while ensuring that such trade agreements cannot be used to challenge the strong EU rules on the protection of personal data. The Commission is now informing the other European institutions, as well as the European Data Protection Supervisor and the Article 29 Working Group of data protection authorities on its position in accordance with the usual procedures. The Commission's position today will determine its approach to data flows and data protection in trade agreements until the end of the mandate. (For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185)

### **COLLEGE MEETING: New Code of Conduct strengthening ethical rules for Members of the European Commission enters into force**

Today, the Commission formally adopted the [new Code of Conduct](#) for Members of the European Commission that President **Juncker** had announced in his State of the Union Address. Following consultation of the European Parliament, the new Code takes effect as of today and is applicable to

all current Members of the Juncker Commission, continuing President **Juncker's** push for greater transparency since the beginning of his mandate. The new Code of Conduct features, in particular, improvements on post-office activities, financial interests, preventing conflicts of interest, and ensuring greater transparency and accountability. The new Code of Conduct extends the "cooling-off" period from currently 18 months to two years for former Commissioners and to three years for the President of the Commission. Commissioners will have to declare investments above €10,000 irrespective of whether there could be a conflict of interest. Moreover, it creates an Independent Ethical Committee with reinforced status to strengthen scrutiny and to provide advice on ethical standards. In addition, on 7 February 2018, the European Parliament is expected to agree to the new provisions allowing Commissioners to participate in European Parliament elections without having to take a leave of absence. Finally, at the end of February 2018 the Commission will, for the first time, publish details of all Commissioners' expenses of their business travels. More details can be found online [here](#) in all official EU languages. (For more information: Alexander Winterstein - Tel.: +32 229 93265; Mina Andreeva - Tel.: +32 229 91382)

### **COLLEGE MEETING: European Commission appoints Paraskevi Michou as new Director-General for Migration and Home Affairs**

Today, the European Commission appointed the current Deputy Secretary-General Paraskevi Michou as Director-General of its Migration and Home Affairs department – the first woman to hold that post. The appointment will take effect on 1 March. The current Director-General Matthias Ruete, one of the Commission's most experienced senior officials, will become Hors-Classe Adviser for strategic matters related to Energy Union, Security Union, Subsidiarity and Proportionality in the Secretariat-General. The appointment will also take effect on 1 March and will last until the end of this year. Ms Paraskevi Michou, a Greek national, joined the European Commission in 1995 and has worked in several Commission departments, including as Acting Director-General in its Justice department between October 2014 and October 2015. She is one of the Commission's key players in shaping the Commission's overall response to the migration crisis, notably by steering the Commission's crisis management on migration across all services. Matthias Ruete, a German national, joined the Commission in 1986. During his successful and long-standing career, he held many important positions and contributed greatly to developing the Commission's policies in areas like enlargement, transport, energy and, most recently, migration and home affairs. Since 2006, he served successively as Director-General in the Commission's departments for Energy and Transport, for Mobility and Transport and for Migration and Home Affairs. Given his vast experience and deep knowledge of key Commission policies, his advice on strategic matters will continue to be highly valuable for the institution. More details are available [online](#). (For more information: Alexander Winterstein – Tel.: +32 229 93265)

### **Sustainable Finance: High-Level Expert Group delivers roadmap for greener and cleaner economy**

The European Commission welcomes the final report by its High-Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance (HLEG), which sets out strategic recommendations for a financial system that supports sustainable investments. The Commission will now move to finalise its strategy on sustainable finance on the basis of these recommendations. Delivering an EU strategy on sustainable finance is a priority action of the Commission's [Capital Markets Union \(CMU\) Action Plan](#), as well as one of the key steps towards implementing the historic [Paris Agreement](#) and the [EU's Agenda for sustainable development](#). To achieve the EU's 2030 targets agreed in Paris, including a 40% cut in greenhouse gas emissions, we need around €180 billion of additional investments a year. The financial sector has a key role to play in reaching those goals, as large amounts of private capital could be mobilised towards such sustainable investments. The Commission is determined to lead the global work in this area and help sustainability-conscious investors to choose suitable projects and companies. You can find a full press release [online](#). (For more information: Vanessa Mock - Tel.: +32 229 56194; Letizia Lupini - Tel.: +32 229 51958)

### **Trade Defence: Commission imposes measures on cast iron products from China**

The Commission has today imposed definitive anti-dumping duties on iron castings from China. The measures range from 15.5% to 38.1%. The Commission has 53 measures now in place on steel and iron products, including 27 on products coming from China. Cast iron castings are a family of products that include for instance manhole covers and grates used in street drainage. The market for castings in the European Union is estimated at around €700 million. The investigation was initiated in December 2016 following a complaint from seven EU producers concerning products from China

and India. The investigation found there to be no dumping in the case of India. EU applied anti-dumping measures for the same product imported from China already in the past between 2005 and 2011. The steel sector is a vital industry for the European Union's economy and occupies a central position in global value chains, providing jobs for hundreds of thousands of European citizens. The global surplus in steelmaking capacity reached around 737 million metric tonnes in 2016, the highest ever seen, and the EU is using the full potential of its trade defence toolbox to ensure a level-playing-field for its producers. This has driven down steel prices to unsustainable levels in recent years and had a damaging impact on the steel sector, as well as related industries and jobs. In March 2016 the Commission issued a Communication presenting a series of measures to support competitiveness of the EU steel industry. Use of trade defence tools was one of the pillars of the strategy. In addition to that, the Commission engaged in the Global Forum on Steel Excess Capacity that agreed last November on an [ambitious package](#) of concrete policy solutions to tackle the pressing issue of global overcapacity in the steel sector. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

### **Commission evaluates Erasmus+ and proposes to boost the programme in the future**

The European Commission has today adopted the [mid-term evaluation of Erasmus+](#), the [EU's flagship programme](#) for education, training, youth and sport (2014-2020). The report shows that the programme is well on track to meet its target of supporting 4 million learners, teachers and trainers by 2020. Moreover, Erasmus+ proves to be highly beneficial by supporting participants' transition to employment and contributing to the development of a European identity among EU citizens. The report also highlights that Erasmus+ has a strong added value compared to what could be achieved by the participating countries on their own in boosting learning mobility and transnational cooperation between educational institutions. Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"This very encouraging evaluation clearly confirms what a success story Erasmus+ is. It helps people to become engaged members of society – which in turn enables us to boost economic growth and build inclusive, fair communities. Yet the evaluation also demonstrates that we need to increase the funding for this programme in the next financing period. As part of our ambition to create a European Education Area, our aim is to step up learning mobility, in particular among school pupils, vocational education and training learners, and youth, while equipping young Europeans with skills needed in a society that is mobile and increasingly digital. We also have to make the successor programme to Erasmus+ even more inclusive by reaching out to the most vulnerable learners and smaller organisations."* The conclusions of the mid-term evaluation report are based on over a million responses from all interested parties. More information on Erasmus+ can be found [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 229 56184](#))

### **New assistance package for Palestine: EU strongly committed to support socio-economic revival of East-Jerusalem**

The European Commission has adopted a €42.5 million assistance package benefiting Palestinians, including substantial support in East Jerusalem. New projects will increase the resilience of locals and support the Palestinian presence in East-Jerusalem, through targeted measures benefiting young people and the private sector. Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes **Hahn**, said: *"With this new assistance package the EU continues to support the Palestinians on their way towards the establishment of their own state as part of the two-state solution, with Jerusalem as capital of both Israel and Palestine. The European Union is, and will remain, Palestine's most reliable and important donor, investing in businesses, youth and schooling, helping to provide access to clean water in Gaza, strengthening civil society and investing on education and health."* The full [press release](#) is available online. In addition, the European Union and Norway convened today in Brussels an extraordinary session of the international donor group for Palestine. [Videos](#) of the press conference of the High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini** with Foreign Minister of Norway Marie Eriksen Søreide are available on EbS. (For more information: Maja Kocijancic – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Paroc by Owens Corning**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Paroc Group Oyj of Finland by Owens Corning of the US. Paroc Group Oyj produces and supplies mineral wool insulation materials for building and technical applications. Owens Corning is active in the development, manufacture and sale of roofing, insulation and glass fibre composites worldwide. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the

complementary product portfolios of the companies, Owens Corning's limited presence in insulation materials in the European Economic Area and the presence of a number of strong competitors in the relevant markets. 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.8721](#). (For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Maria Sarantopoulou – Tel.: +32 229 13740)

## **Eurostat: Décembre 2017 - Le taux de chômage à 8,7% dans la zone euro - À 7,3% dans l'UE28**

Dans la zone euro (ZE19), le taux de chômage corrigé des variations saisonnières s'est établi à 8,7% en décembre 2017, stable par rapport à novembre 2017 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 9,7% de décembre 2016. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans la zone euro depuis janvier 2009. Dans l'UE28, le taux de chômage s'est établi à 7,3% en décembre 2017, stable par rapport à novembre 2017 et en baisse par rapport au taux de 8,2% de décembre 2016. Cela demeure le taux le plus faible enregistré dans l'UE28 depuis octobre 2008. Ces chiffres sont publiés par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

## **Eurostat: Estimation rapide - janvier 2018 - Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro en baisse à 1,3%**

Le taux d'inflation annuel de la zone euro est estimé à 1,3% en janvier 2018, contre 1,4% en décembre 2017 selon une estimation rapide publiée par Eurostat, l'office statistique de l'Union européenne. S'agissant des principales composantes de l'inflation de la zone euro, l'énergie devrait connaître le taux annuel le plus élevé en janvier (2,1%, comparé à 2,9% en décembre), suivis de l'alimentation, alcool & tabac (1,9%, comparé à 2,1% en décembre), des services (1,2%, stable comparé à décembre) et des biens industriels non énergétiques (0,6%, comparé à 0,5% en décembre). Un communiqué de presse Eurostat est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Enda McNamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976)

## **Les jeunes mettent en avant leurs idées pour l'avenir de l'Europe**

Aujourd'hui, 100 jeunes venus de toute l'Europe présentent leurs idées concrètes sur la manière de donner un bel avenir à l'Europe, dans le cadre de discussions initiées par l'initiative [Nouveau récit sur l'Europe](#). Ces [recommandations](#) accompagnent les résultats d'une [nouvelle enquête d'Eurobaromètre](#), qui montre que la participation des jeunes aux activités de volontariat, aux organisations et aux élections a augmenté ces dernières années. L'initiative Nouveau récit sur l'Europe, qui s'est déroulée au cours des deux dernières années et se termine aujourd'hui, a touché 62 000 jeunes à travers une série de débats qui ont eu lieu dans toute l'Europe. Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissaire chargé de l'éducation, de la culture, de la jeunesse et du sport, a déclaré : "Voir des jeunes si engagés et entendre leurs idées rafraîchissantes me remplit d'optimisme quant à l'avenir de l'Europe. J'étudierai avec la plus grande attention les recommandations du Nouveau récit sur l'Europe. Mais ce n'est pas la fin du processus - les jeunes doivent être au cœur du débat sur l'avenir de l'Europe, et c'est pourquoi je voudrais que ces réflexions se poursuivent." Alors que le débat sur l'avenir de l'Europe bat son plein, l'éducation et la jeunesse figurent en bonne place dans l'agenda politique de l'UE. Les chefs d'État et de gouvernement ont discuté de l'avenir de l'éducation, de la culture et de la jeunesse lors du Sommet social de Göteborg du 17 novembre 2017. Cela a abouti aux conclusions du Conseil européen du 14 décembre 2017 invitant les États membres, le Conseil et la Commission à donner suite aux discussions de Göteborg. Les recommandations présentées aujourd'hui alimenteront les futurs travaux de la Commission sur les politiques de l'éducation, de la culture et de la jeunesse. Un communiqué de presse est à votre disposition [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Vice-President Šefčovič in Latvia for second Energy Union Tour**

Commission Vice-President for Energy Union **Maroš Šefčovič** will be in Latvia on 1-2 February for the second [Energy Union Tour](#). He will meet Latvian Prime Minister Māris Kučinskis, Minister of

Economics and Deputy Prime Minister Arvils Ašeradens, Minister of Foreign Affairs Edgars Rinkēvičs, and Minister of Finance Dana Reizniece-Ozola, as well as members of the Latvian parliament's European Affairs Committee. Discussions will focus on Latvian energy security and the planned synchronisation of the Baltic states' electricity grid with the Continental European Network as part of the [Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan](#), the liberalisation of Latvia's energy markets, and its progress towards its climate and energy targets for 2020 and 2030. The Vice-President will also participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) and visit the site of the Kurzeme Ring Project in western Latvia, where a 330kV high voltage line is being constructed to boost the reliability of the region's electricity supplies. Ahead of his visit, Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: *"The synchronisation is the European Commission's top priority and my tour in Riga is yet another step to pave the way to a final political agreement on a synchronisation option by June European Council. This would allow us to prepare concrete projects and their financing from the Connecting Europe Facility under the current budgetary framework"*. More information about the Energy Union Tour on the [Commission's website](#). (For more information: Anca Paduraru – Tel.: +32 229 91269; Nicole Bockstaller – Tel.: +32 229 52589)

### **Trade negotiations: Vice-President Katainen travels to Mexico**

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness will travel on 1 February 2018 to Mexico for high-level political meetings in the context of the ongoing negotiations for a new trade agreement between the EU and Mexico. The overall objective of the ongoing negotiations is to upgrade the EU-Mexico relation based on an agreement negotiated two decades ago putting in place rules adapted to the reality of today's global trade. This would also send a strong signal in support of an open, rules-based and fair trade order that the EU is strongly committed to promote. The programme of the Commissioner **Katainen**'s visit in Mexico City includes meetings with Mr Luis Videgaray Caso, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mexico, Mr José Antonio González Anaya, Minister of Finances, and Mr Ernesto Cordero, President of the Mexican Senate, as well as a group of Mexican business representatives. The visit takes place in an important phase of talks. Following this intensive work in the end of 2017, more meetings were held already in January and will continue with the Mexican delegation set to come to Brussels from 5 to 9 February and EU negotiators flying to Mexico the week after, 12-16 February. The negotiations have already been successful for large parts of the agreement and the both sides remain strongly committed to achieving an ambitious and balanced deal and aim to conclude the talks as soon as possible. The EU-Mexico trade increased by 170% since the previous agreement became effective. The EU is today Mexico's second-biggest export market after the US. More information about [EU-Mexico trade relations](#). (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56185; Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: +32 229 51383)

### **Commissioner Avramopoulos in Vienna**

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos** will be in Vienna, Austria tomorrow to meet Minister of Interior Herbert Kickl and Minister within the Federal Chancellery for EU, Arts, Culture and Media Gernot Blümel. A meeting with representatives of both the National Council and the Federal Council is also scheduled. Discussions will focus on migration and security as well as on the priorities of the Austrian EU Presidency, which will take place in the second half of 2018. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Markus Lammert – Tel.: +32 229 80423)

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission (ex-Top News)