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Building a stronger Europe: new initiatives to further boost role of youth, education and culture policies

Following the presentation of a first set of measures in January, the Commission tables today a second package of initiatives to advance work on the [European Education Area by 2025](#), reinforce the cultural dimension of the European Union and bolster youth participation. The initiatives aim to enhance learning mobility and educational opportunities, empower young people, in particular to encourage them to participate in civic and democratic life, and harness the potential of culture for social progress and economic growth in Europe. Jyrki **Katainen**, Vice-President of the Commission for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, said: *"Following last year's Leaders Agenda meeting on education, culture and training at the [Gothenburg Social Summit](#) and in follow up to the [December European Council](#) conclusions, the Commission swiftly presented a number of initiatives. Today, we take a second step focusing on further learning mobility, youth, early childhood education, learning of foreign languages and culture – all important building blocks for the future of Europe."* Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, said: *"Education, culture and youth policy have a central role in building a resilient, competitive and cohesive Europe for the future. Along with the first package adopted in January, the proposals we are putting forward today will help to pave the way towards the European Education Area while strengthening a European identity and empowering people, especially young people."* A full [press release](#), a [Q&A](#), three factsheets on [education](#), [youth](#) and [culture](#) as well as initial [results of a new Eurobarometer on the European Education Area](#) are published online. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: [+32 229 67083](#); Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: [+32 2 29 56184](#))

Commission welcomes green light to start trade negotiations with Australia and New Zealand

The Council adopted today negotiating directives for free trade agreements with Australia and New Zealand. The preparations – which included an impact assessment for both agreements– are now complete and formal negotiations can begin. President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Junker** said: *"These agreements will build on the recent successful agreements with Canada, Japan, Singapore, Vietnam, as well as Mexico among others, expanding the alliance of partners committed to open and rules-based global trade. Open trade must go hand in hand with open and inclusive policy making. That's why the Commission published the [draft negotiating mandates with Australia](#) and [New Zealand](#) when it proposed to the Council to open these negotiations. These agreements will be negotiated in the greatest transparency and we expect Member States to uphold this high level of transparency."* Commissioner for Trade Cecilia **Malmström** said: *"We look forward to adding Australia and New Zealand to the EU's ever-growing circle of close trading partners. We are already close in terms of shared values and our open, global outlook. Together, we will now negotiate win-win trade deals that create new opportunities for our businesses, as well as safeguard high standards in key areas such as sustainable development. I am looking forward to visiting Canberra and Wellington in the coming weeks to officially launch our negotiations. Starting these talks between likeminded partners sends a strong signal at a time where many are taking the easy road of protectionism."* Australia and New Zealand are important allies. Despite the distance, trade between the EU and these two countries is already roughly the same as with Mexico or Canada. Following Commissioner **Malmström**'s June visits to both countries to launch talks at the political level, the first formal negotiation rounds are envisaged to take place in Brussels in July. For more information see the [press release](#), [the factsheet](#), the impact assessments ([Australia](#), [New Zealand](#)) and the webpages dedicated to [EU-Australia](#) and [EU-New-Zealand](#) trade relations. (For more information: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: [+32 229 56185](#); Kinga Malinowska – Tel.: [+32 229 51383](#))

EU mobilises international support for The Gambia

A total of €1.45 billion was mobilised by the International Conference for The Gambia, co-chaired by

The Gambia and the European Union. The reinforced political and financial support by the international community will assist The Gambia in continuing its democratic transition, building on strong democratic institutions, the respect of human rights and the rule of law, and sustainable and shared economic growth. The EU alone increased its support by €140 million, raising the total of its development assistance to €365 million for the period 2017-2020. High Representative/Vice-President Federica **Mogherini**, who co-chaired the conference together with the President of The Gambia, Adama **Barrow**, in Brussels today, said: *"The Gambia is showing to the world that freedom and democracy are about real people and real lives. After the presidential election in 2016, neighbours and the international community stood with the Gambian people. We stood on the side of freedom and democracy. Two years on, we continue to stand by your side. Today the EU is proud to announce €140 million to invest in opportunities for the Gambian people and further strengthen democracy"*. Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**, added: *"When people of a country decide to overturn a two-decades long dictatorship, this is a choice to commend. This is what happened in The Gambia one year and a half ago. When new authorities commit to profoundly reform the country and put it on the path of democracy and development, the international community has to answer their call. This is what happened today in Brussels. Out of the €1.45 billion that were pledged today, the EU has committed additional funding of €140 million until 2020, which adds to the €225 million mobilised since the beginning of the transition in 2017. Because nothing is more important today than showing to the people of The Gambia that democracy brings quick and tangible dividends."* The full [press release](#), a [factsheet](#) and [HR/VP Mogherini's opening remarks at the Conference](#) are available online. (For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Juncker Plan: €100 million under Investment Plan for energy efficient homes in Germany

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a €100 million long-term loan with Vivawest, a German real estate company, to build 900 energy efficient homes in North Rhine-Westphalia. The loan is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Juncker Plan. The overall investment expected to be triggered by this EIB loan is more than €250 million. European Commission Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen** said: *"I am delighted that the European Fund for Strategic Investments continues to target investments in the low carbon economy across the EU. This new agreement with Vivawest will benefit many thousands of local residents in the form of energy-efficient homes while having a tangible positive effect on the environment."* (Full press release is found [here](#). For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

Festival de Cannes 2018: Les films soutenus par l'UE mis à l'honneur dans le palmarès

L'édition 2018 du [Festival de Cannes](#) s'est achevée en mettant à l'honneur les films cofinancés par [MEDIA](#), le programme de l'UE de soutien au secteur audiovisuel. Trois films ont été récompensés dans la sélection officielle: le prix de la mise en scène remis à Pawel Pawlikowski pour le film [Zimna Wojna](#)/Cold War (Pologne, France, UK), le prix du meilleur scénario pour [Lazzaro Felice](#)/Happy as Lazzaro d'Alice Rohrwacher (Italie, Suisse, France, Allemagne) et le prix d'interprétation masculine pour [Dogman](#) de Matteo Garrone (Italie, France). Cette année, au total 18 films présentés au Festival de Cannes et dans ses sélections parallèles ont été développés ou distribués avec le soutien du programme Europe Créative-MEDIA. Depuis 1991, l'UE a investi plus de 2,5 milliards d'euros dans le secteur audiovisuel. En marge du Festival, le projet annoncé par la Commissaire Mariya **Gabriel**, chargée de l'économie et de la société numériques, de créer [un répertoire en ligne](#) des films européens a reçu un large soutien de la part du secteur audiovisuel. [En signant un manifeste](#), de nombreuses organisations se sont engagées à donner plus de visibilité aux films européens en facilitant la mise en place de données fiables et disponibles dans les services de vidéos à la demande dans les différents États membres de l'UE. Un projet pilote sera présenté en octobre 2018. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#) et [ici](#), ainsi que dans une [brochure](#) et une [fiche d'informations](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Nathalie Vandystadt - Tél. : +32 229 67083 ; Inga Höglund Tél. : +32 229 50698)

Circular Economy: New rules will make EU the global front-runner in waste management and recycling

Today Member States of the European Union approved a set of ambitious measures to make EU waste legislation fit for the future, as part of the EU's wider circular economy policy. The new rules – part of the Juncker Commission's proposal towards a Circular Economy [presented](#) in December 2015 – will help to prevent waste and, where this is not possible, significantly step up recycling of municipal and packaging waste. It will phase out landfilling and promote the use of economic instruments, such as

Extended Producer Responsibility schemes. The new legislation strengthens the "waste hierarchy", i.e. it requires Member States to take specific measures to prioritize prevention, re-use and recycling above landfilling and incineration, thus making the circular economy a reality. Commissioner **Vella** said: *"The new recycling and landfilling targets set a credible and ambitious path for better waste management in Europe. Our main task now is to ensure that the promises enshrined in this waste package are delivered on the ground. The Commission will do all it can to support Member States and make the new legislation deliver on the ground."* Details on the new targets available [here](#). (For more information: Enrico Brivio – Tel.: +32 229 56172; Iris Petsa – Tel.: +32 229 93321)

Agriculture biologique: la Commission salue l'adoption des nouvelles règles

A la suite du Parlement européen, les Etats membres ont aujourd'hui formellement adopté au sein du Conseil les nouvelles règles pour l'agriculture biologique qui bénéficiera ainsi d'un cadre légal simplifié couvrant tous les producteurs, qu'ils soient de l'Union européenne ou de pays tiers exportant dans l'Union européenne. Le Commissaire à l'agriculture Phil **Hogan** a salué l'adoption du nouveau règlement sur le bio: *"L'adoption de ce jour marque l'accomplissement d'un grand travail et de beaucoup de patience. L'approbation par le Conseil du nouveau règlement permet aux producteurs biologiques existants et potentiels de s'organiser en toute confiance et certitude sur la base des nouvelles règles qui entreront en vigueur le 1er janvier 2021. Le secteur biologique n'a cessé de gagner en importance – une croissance de 125% au cours des dix dernières années – mais cette croissance risquait d'être compromise par des règles qui n'étaient plus adaptées à l'usage prévu. L'un des grands succès de la politique agricole commune a été sa capacité à s'adapter aux nouveaux défis et opportunités. Le secteur biologique européen est sur une trajectoire ascendante et ce règlement soutiendra la croissance du secteur en fournissant un cadre législatif approprié. Les producteurs, les opérateurs et les partenaires commerciaux ont maintenant deux ans et demi pour s'adapter au nouveau cadre législatif qui vise également à protéger les intérêts du consommateur européen."* Le nouveau règlement sera formellement signé par le Parlement et le Conseil le 30 mai et entrera en vigueur le 1er janvier 2021. La [déclaration complète](#) du Commissaire **Hogan** est en ligne, ainsi qu'une [foire à questions](#) sur les nouvelles règles. Une [fiche visuelle d'information](#) est également disponible. (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Rosario – Tel.: +32 229 56 185; Clemence Robin – Tel.: +32 229 52509)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Egyptian joint venture by Cargill and ADM

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the joint acquisition of National Vegetable Oils Co ("NVOC"), a joint venture based in Egypt, by Cargill and Archer Daniels Midlands ("ADM"), both of the US. NVOC produces and sells crude soybean oil, soybean meal and soybean hulls in the Egyptian market and is currently solely controlled by Cargill. Cargill is active in the international production and marketing of food, as well as in agricultural and risk management products and services. ADM is a processor of oilseeds, corn, sugar, wheat and other agricultural commodities, and a manufacturer of vegetable oils and fats, vegetable protein, meal, corn as well as other value added products and feed ingredients. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because the joint venture will have no or negligible activities in the European Economic Area. 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.8856](#). (For more information: Lucía Caudet – Tel. +32 229 56182; Maria Sarantopoulou - Tel.: +32 229 13740)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

European Commission and African Union Commission to meet on 23 May

On 23 May, members of the European Commission and the African Union Commission will meet in Brussels for the 9th Commission-to-Commission Meeting, co-chaired by President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker** and the African Union Commission Chairperson, Moussa **Faki Mahamat**. The two Commissions will discuss how to reinforce their cooperation in order to tackle common global challenges. They will also follow-up more concretely on the [Abidjan Summit](#), based on agreed priorities such as peace and security, governance, investment, sustainable development, migration and education. A press point at the VIP Corner is scheduled for 15:35 with President **Juncker** and President **Faki Mahamat**. Europe is Africa's closest neighbour and main partner in foreign investments, trade, security, remittances and development, and humanitarian assistance. The **Juncker** Commission has stepped up cooperation with its African partners, launching

a range of innovative new tools and financing to boost investment in the continent. More information is available in a [factsheet on the Africa-EU Partnership](#). (For more information: Margaritis Schinas – Tel.: +32 229 60524; Carlos Martin Ruiz De Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Christina Wunder – Tel.: +32 229 92256)

Commissioner Hahn travelling to Kyiv, Ukraine

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations is in Kyiv today 22 May and tomorrow 23 May, to reiterate the EU strong support for the Ukrainian reform process, and to assess progress in this regard. Ahead of the visit Commissioner **Hahn** said: *"It is with great pleasure that I am travelling to [Ukraine](#) once again. I will be focussing on how Ukraine can attract the foreign investment necessary to further increase economic growth. This will require that the fight against corruption is sustained and intensified. I will also review EU support to Ukraine's decentralisation process which I believe is one of the most successful and significant of the many reforms carried out in Ukraine so far."* Commissioner **Hahn** will meet with Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman and Deputy Prime Minister Hennadiy Zubko with whom he will discuss the Ukrainian decentralisation process. The Commissioner will also meet representatives of Ukrainian and EU business in order to initiate improvements to the business and investment climate. Commissioner **Hahn** is keen to support the government in its bid to increase investment in Ukraine; he will insist with all his interlocutors on the imperative of maintaining and intensifying the fight against corruption, not least through the establishment of a specialised anti-corruption court. Photos and videos of the mission will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Maja Kocijančič – Tel.: +32 229 86570; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.: +32 229 64887)

Commissioners Avramopoulos, Jourová and King in Sofia for EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting

Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship Dimitris **Avramopoulos**, Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Vera **Jourová** and Commissioner for the Security Union Julian **King** are in Sofia today and tomorrow to participate in the EU-U.S. Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting. They will represent the EU together with the Bulgarian Minister of the Interior Valentin Radev and Minister of Justice Tsetska Tsacheva on behalf of the Bulgarian Presidency, who will be also joined by the Austrian Federal Minister of the Interior Herbert Kickl and Federal Minister of Justice Josef Moser from the incoming Austrian Presidency of the Council of the EU. The U.S. will be represented by the Acting Deputy Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security Claire Grady and Attorney General Jeff Sessions. The meeting, which is held twice a year to advance transatlantic cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs, will focus on EU-U.S. cooperation on counterterrorism, cooperation in cyberspace, including access of judicial authorities to electronic evidence, transnational organised crime, including the fight against money-laundering and terrorism financing, as well as migration, border management and the ongoing work to achieve full visa reciprocity. (For more information: Natasha Bertaud – Tel.: +32 229 67456; Tove Ernst – Tel.: +32 229 86764; Christian Wigand- Tel.: +32 229 62253)

Commissioner Navracsics joins 10th anniversary celebrations for the European Union Prize for Literature

This evening, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, Tibor **Navracsics**, will attend an event in Brussels to celebrate ten years of the [European Union Prize for Literature](#) which is awarded annually to new and emerging authors, recognising literary talent from all corners of Europe. This special anniversary, which takes place during the [European Year of Cultural Heritage](#), is being marked in a different way. All previous winners of the Prize were invited to submit an original short work of fiction focusing on the topic 'A European Story'. 36 winners from 26 countries took up the challenge and shared their European stories which will be presented at this evening's event at which time they will be available [here](#). Commissioner **Navracsics** said: *"For the past ten years, the EU Prize for Literature has recognised 108 talented authors from 37 different countries for their outstanding works of fiction. We are proud to have such a great number of excellent laureates who represent Europe in their diversity. I would like to thank the 36 participants in this year's special contest. Each of their stories, written in 23 different languages, has a distinct perspective, style and syntax, but they all tell a European story."* A professional jury made up of selected personalities from the world of art and literature will now proceed to select a winner. The public will also have the opportunity to vote online for their favourite work. Both awards will be presented at a special ceremony in Vienna in November during the Austrian Presidency of the EU and alongside the Vienna Book Fair. (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein - Tel: +32 2 29 56184)

Vice-President Katainen meets federal ministers in Berlin

Vice-President Jyrki **Katainen**, responsible for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness, is in Berlin today to discuss with several ministers and senior officials the future of Europe, defence, investment, competitiveness, deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union and the new Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027. He will also attend a Citizens' Dialogue on the future of Europe and global megatrends. Vice-President **Katainen** will have a working lunch with Mr Olaf Scholz, Federal Minister of Finance, to discuss the new Multiannual Financial Framework and deepening of the EMU; he will meet Ms Ursula von der Leyen, Federal Minister of Defence, to discuss the future of European defence; as well as Mr Helge Braun, Head of the Federal Chancellery and Federal Minister for Special Tasks, to discuss the future of Europe. The Vice-President will deliver a speech and participate in a short Q&A session on the European Defence Action Plan with senior officials of the Ministry of Defence. Finally, Vice-President **Katainen** will participate in a [Citizens' Dialogue](#) in "Erlebnis Europa" (Experience Europe) to discuss tomorrow's Europe and global megatrends, with a particular focus on the circular economy and Artificial Intelligence. (*For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361*)

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

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