

# **Agenda of the European Commission**

## ***7 – 13 July 2014***

**Background notes from the Spokespersons' service for journalists.  
The European Commission reserves the right to make changes.**

### **Monday 7 July:**

Commission to propose a Directive on working time of inland waterway workers

### **Wednesday 9 July:**

Horizon 2020: Public-private innovation partnerships launch calls

### **Wednesday, 9 July:**

Commission to adopt Recommendation on online gambling

### **Wednesday 9 July:**

Towards more effective EU merger control

### **Thursday 10 July:**

Commission publishes annual Erasmus statistics (2012-2013)

**Monday 7 July:**

***Commission to propose a Directive on working time of inland waterway workers***

**The news:**

On 7 July, the Commission will propose a Directive on working time for inland waterway workers. The proposed Directive would implement an agreement reached by EU-level representatives of employers and employees in this sector, which is adapted to the distinctive working conditions on inland waterways. It would facilitate the application of the maximum working time rules on passenger and cargo transport ships and barges on inland waterways throughout the EU. These rules would therefore contribute to improving the working conditions of 31,000 shipboard personnel and to fairer competitive conditions for the 9,645 enterprises active in this sector. The proposed Directive would complement the general [working time Directive \(2003/88/EC\)](#), which does not cover inland waterway workers.

The proposal will be forwarded to the EU's Council of Ministers and the European Parliament for adoption.

**The background:**

Workers on inland waterway transport have specific irregular work patterns compared to workers on land. They often work long hours in a short period of time, live at their workplace, and usually take longer rest periods at the end of the season.

Since over 75% of the inland waterway transport in the EU takes place across more than one Member State, companies and workers would benefit from EU level coordination of rules on maximum working time.

EU-level representatives of employers and employees concluded this agreement on 15 February 2012 and asked the Commission to submit it to the Council for implementation as a Directive, in accordance with [Article 155 of the Treaty](#). The Commission has examined closely the content and impact of this agreement from the angles of legality, representativeness and economic and social effects.

**The event:**

A press release will be available on the day.

**The sources:**

- Link to the agreement (all language versions)  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=480&langId=en&intPageId=1840>
- Link to other sectoral working time rules:  
<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=706&langId=en&intPageId=206>

**The contacts:**

Jonathan Todd	+32 2 299 41 07	<a href="mailto:jonathan.todd@ec.europa.eu">jonathan.todd@ec.europa.eu</a>
Cécile Dubois	+32 2 295 1883	<a href="mailto:cecile.dubois@ec.europa.eu">cecile.dubois@ec.europa.eu</a>

**Wednesday 9 July:**

***Horizon 2020: Public-private innovation partnerships launch calls***

**The news:**

Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), public-private partnerships set up under EU's new research and innovation programme Horizon 2020, will launch the first calls for research projects on 9 July 2014. The partnerships work in strategic areas such as medicines, fuel cells, air and rail transport and electronics. They represent an essential investment into Europe's economy and in a better quality of life.

**The background:**

Through partnerships with industry and Member States, Horizon 2020 pools Europe's resources to tackle the biggest challenges and to support competitiveness of sectors that deliver high quality jobs.

Eleven partnerships with the industry and Member States are being launched under Horizon 2020. The overall investment over the next seven years is worth more than €23 billion, where the EU's contribution of €9 billion will unlock a €10 billion investment from the private sector and €4 billion from Member States.

Most of the funding will go to Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs). These are run as Joint Undertakings that organise their own research agenda and award funding for projects on the basis of open calls. The first round of these calls will be now launched by most of the seven public-private partnerships.

**The event:**

- Stakeholder conference with addresses by President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso (to be confirmed), Vice-Presidents Neelie Kroes and Siim Kallas, and Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn on 9 July.
- IP and Memo will be available on the day.
- Available on EbS

**The sources:**

- [Horizon 2020 website](#)
- [Horizon magazine](#)
- [Participant Portal](#)
- U : Research - Horizon 2020 - 2013 (Part 1) (Reference: I-075812)  
<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I075812>
- EU: Research - Horizon 2020, 2013 (Part 2) (Reference: I-077412)  
<http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I077412>

**The contacts:**

[Michael Jennings](#) +32 2 296 33 88  
[Monika Wcislo](#) +32 2 298 65 95

**Wednesday, 9 July:**

***Commission to adopt Recommendation on online gambling***

**The news:**

On Wednesday, 9 July, the European Commission will adopt a Recommendation to help Member States deliver a high level of protection to their citizens in the area of online gambling services.

The main features of this Commission Recommendation are:

(i) to ensure that citizens in the EU, especially minors, are aware of the inherent risks associated with gambling; and that operators have a set of common principles to abide by for responsible commercial communication;

(ii) to provide greater clarity and assurance for consumers that the authorised sites they choose to play on have adequate safeguard measures in place, for example effective age verification, registration and identification controls;

(iii) to provide for appropriate measures to prevent the risks associated with gambling, such as addiction or excessive gambling.

**The background:**

Online gambling services are widely offered, advertised, and used across Europe, with the EU representing around 45% of the global online gambling market. More than 12% of all gambling in the EU is done online, making online gambling services worth in excess of €10 billion (Gross Gambling Revenue) in 2012. They cover a range of games of chance, such as sports betting, poker, casino games and lotteries, with around 6.8 million consumers participating in one or more games. However, there are thousands of unregulated gambling websites, often from outside the EU, to which consumers are exposed and which carry significant risks such as fraud and money laundering.

There is no sector-specific EU legislation regulating gambling services. At the same time, an increasing number of Member States are seeking to address the challenges they face and are reviewing their national regulations and practices. As a result of the wide-ranging public consultation exercise led by the Commission since 2010, there have been requests from the European Parliament, Member States and from stakeholders for EU guidance in relation to the protection of citizens, consumers and vulnerable groups – in particular minors.

The initiative was announced in the Communication '[Towards a comprehensive European framework for online gambling](#)' adopted on 23 October 2012 ([IP/12/1135](#) and [MEMO/12/798](#)).

**The event:**

A press release will be issued.

**The sources:**

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/gambling/news/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/gambling/news/index_en.htm)

**The contacts:**

Chantal Hughes +32 2 296 44 50

[Chantal.Hughes@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Chantal.Hughes@ec.europa.eu)

Carmel Dunne +32 2 299 88 94

[Carmel.Dunne@ec.europa.eu](mailto:Carmel.Dunne@ec.europa.eu)

Wednesday 9 July:

## *Towards more effective EU merger control*

### **The news:**

On 9 July 2014, the European Commission adopts the White Paper "*Towards more effective EU merger control*" suggesting possible improvements to the EU merger control rules, ten years after the entry into force of the revised EU Merger Regulation in 2004. The 2004 reform has worked well and has contributed to a more efficient and predictable merger regime in the EU. On the other hand, experience from the last 10 years also shows that some improvements could be envisaged. The White Paper starts a public consultation of stakeholders on these proposals.

The changes proposed in the White Paper would allow the Commission to better address potential sources of harm for competition and consumers by also **reviewing certain acquisitions of non-controlling minority shareholdings** that could be problematic from a competition point of view, without creating undue additional burden on businesses. In addition, options are proposed to **simplify the current Merger Regulation** by cutting red tape for businesses, for example by further simplifying the procedure for non-problematic cases and by **streamlining the case referral system** from Member States to the Commission so that it can better and faster achieve its objective to ensure that merger cases are dealt with by the most appropriate authority. Finally, the White paper takes stock of the use of the current EU merger control rules and generally reflects on ways to improve coherence and convergence between merger control rules and practice on EU and Member State level.

### **The background:**

10 years after the last overhaul of the Merger Regulation, the Commission considers that it is time to reflect on how merger control on the EU level could be made even more effective in the interest of European businesses and consumers.

In 2013 the Commission published a Staff Working Document outlining a relatively wide spectrum of policy options primarily relating to the topics of minority shareholdings and case referrals with a view of seeking stakeholders' comments (see [IP 13/584](#)). Taking these into account, the White Paper presents a more detailed and fine-tuned proposal outlining the proposed design of the revised system.

The effectiveness of EU merger control may in particular be enhanced by its application to certain potentially problematic transactions involving the acquisition of non-controlling minority shareholdings. By acquiring stakes in their competitors, companies can influence their behaviour and reduce competition in the market. The Merger Regulation does not allow the Commission to examine these effects, while some national rules do. The proposals in the White Paper would allow the Commission to review some of these transactions. The system would only target certain specific transactions, i.e. those that *prima facie* appear to be problematic from a competition point of view. Benign investments and restructuring efforts would not be concerned by the reform. This would establish a one-stop shop for the control of the acquisitions of minority shareholdings that might have a cross border impact within the EU.

At the same time, the initiative aims at streamlining and simplifying the referral process, dealing with issues which require a revision of the Merger Regulation. The White Paper also reflects on ways to improve convergence and enhanced cooperation between the national competition authorities and the Commission. Finally, other technical proposals aim at streamlining or improving various other provisions of the EU Merger Regulation particularly with a view towards simplifying procedures.

The initiative should be seen in the context of the Commission's commitment to regularly review the functioning of existing legislation under the new Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme ("REFIT-programme") in order to make rules and procedure less burdensome for business (see [IP 14/682](#)).

The White Paper goes one step further than the recently adopted Merger Simplification Package that simplifies procedures for unproblematic mergers within the framework of the current Merger Regulation, resulting in a net substantial net reduction in information requirements for merging companies and an increased use of a so-called 'simplified' procedure (see [IP 13/1214](#)).

**The event:**

- Vice-president Joaquín Almunia, the European Commissioner for Competition, will present the main elements of the proposals in a press conference in the Commission's press room. A press release and other documents will be available on the day.
- Available on EbS

**The contacts:**

Antoine Colombani	+32 (0)2 297 45 13	<a href="mailto:antoine.colombani@ec.europa.eu">antoine.colombani@ec.europa.eu</a>
Marisa Gonzalez Iglesias	+32 (0)2 295 19 25	<a href="mailto:marisa.gonzalez-iglesias@ec.europa.eu">marisa.gonzalez-iglesias@ec.europa.eu</a>

**Thursday 10 July:**

***Commission publishes annual Erasmus statistics (2012-2013)***

**The news:**

The latest figures for the Erasmus exchange programme will be presented by the Commission on 10 July.

**The background:**

Erasmus has already created opportunities for more than 3 million students to study or train abroad, with more than 250 000 a year receiving EU grants according to the last set of data (2011-2012).

Although Erasmus is best known for helping to increase the skills and employability of students, it is also open to higher education staff, who can benefit from a teaching and training experience abroad. In addition, Erasmus plays a key role in improving cooperation and the quality of higher education by supporting innovation and modernisation.

Erasmus+, the new EU programme for education, training, youth and sport launched in January 2014, builds on the success of Erasmus and other mobility schemes.

With a 40% increase in its budget for 2014-2020, Erasmus+ will provide grants for 4 million people (most under the age of 25) to study, train, teach or carry out voluntary work abroad over the next seven years. More than 2 million higher education students and 300 000 higher education staff will receive EU support. Even more than in the past, Erasmus+ will focus on quality and accessibility through increased linguistic support, more flexible rules and specific aid for people from disadvantaged backgrounds, with special needs and from remote areas.

**The event:**

- Androulla Vassiliou, the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, will present the Erasmus statistics for 2012-13. A press release will be available on the day.
- Available on EbS

**The sources:**

- Information on Erasmus+: [http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/higher-education/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/education/opportunities/higher-education/index_en.htm)
- Information on Commissioner Vassiliou: [http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/vassiliou/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/vassiliou/index_en.htm)

**The contacts:**

Dennis Abbott +32 2 295 92 58 [dennis.abbott@ec.europa.eu](mailto:dennis.abbott@ec.europa.eu)  
Dina Avraam +32 2 295 96 67 [dina.avraam@ec.europa.eu](mailto:dina.avraam@ec.europa.eu)