

Midday Express of 2010-11-26

News from the Communication Directorate General's midday briefing

Nouvelles du rendez-vous de midi de la Direction Générale Communication

[The European Asylum Support Office \(EASO\) holds its first management board meeting in Valletta \(Malta\) and selects its first Executive Director](#)

Today the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) held its first management board meeting in Valletta (Malta) and selected Mr Rob Visser as its Executive Director. He will now be invited to appear before the competent Committee of the European Parliament. With the operational launch of this new agency, the EU makes further progress towards a more comprehensive Common European Asylum System. The EASO will enhance solidarity among Member States, through practical cooperation on asylum matters, and help them fulfilling their European and international obligations in this field.

European Commission services launched a consultation on standards of protection for retail customers in the financial services

The European Commission services have today launched a consultation on the 'packaged retail investment products' (PRIIPs) initiative, which aims at raising standards of protection for retail customers. The consultation outlines possible measures for improving the transparency and comparability of investment products and ensuring effective rules always govern the sales of the products. It also addresses inconsistencies in the standards that apply to different products and industry sectors. The replies will serve as an input for the Commission when developing legislative proposals on transparency and sales for the products. To accompany the consultation the Commission is also publishing two studies. The first identifies some of the costs of possible changes to sales rules for the industry, and can be found [here](#) . The second focuses on decision making by retail investors, and shows some of the factors that hinder effective decision making and that simplifying and standardising product information can significantly improve investment decisions. The study can be found [here](#) . Interested parties are invited to send their comments to the Commission by the 31 January 2011. The consultation paper is available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2010/priips_en.htm

[Innovation Union: Commission launches consultation on active & healthy ageing](#)

The European Commission is seeking the views of public and private organisations, companies and individual citizens on how Europe could scale up innovation to meet the challenges of the ageing population in Europe, and in particular on a pilot European Innovation Partnership (EIP) on active and healthy ageing, as set out in the Innovation Union Flagship Initiative, presented on 6 October by Maire Geoghegan Quinn, European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science and Antonio Tajani, Vice-President for Industry and Entrepreneurship. Between 2010 and 2030, the number of Europeans aged over 65 will rise by nearly 40%, posing huge challenges but also offering great opportunities for Europe's society and economy. The EIP, which the Commission has proposed should be launched in 2011, would seek to meet three goals: to improve the health and quality of life of older people, enabling them to live active and independent lives; to contribute to the sustainability and efficiency of health and social care systems; and to foster competitiveness and business opportunities . The online consultation runs until 28 January 2011.

[European Commission allocates €20 million to enhance environmental protection in the Baltic Sea region](#)

The adopted action programme will support efforts concerning environmental protection and energy efficiency in the Baltic Sea region. The funding will concentrate on environmental projects with a cross border impact in the Russian and Belarusian part of the region. Actions will address pressing environmental issues such as e.g. the fight against hazardous substances and eutrophication. Furthermore, regional and local authorities in Member States and Russia and non-state actors are eligible for financial support; encouraging the development and transfer of innovative practices and demonstration projects in the environmental sector.

[European Commission supports border management in Ukraine with €66 million](#)

This assistance package will support the Ukrainian government in developing and implementing an Integrated Border Management Strategy. It includes among other things modernisation of land and maritime border infrastructure as well as enhancing border checking and surveillance capacities. Waiting time at border control posts shall be reduced and coordination among the different existing border management services shall be deepened. Moreover, the funding is intended to significantly improve conditions in the temporary holding facilities for irregular migrants.

[Commission announces winners of environmental management awards](#)

Six organisations have won the European Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) Awards for excellence in environmental management. The winners were announced at an awards ceremony in Brussels last night. The Commission's annual environmental awards have been handed to private companies and public organisations for outstanding environmental achievements since 2000. The 2010 awards focused on resource-efficiency, taking into account water and energy consumption, waste generation and carbon emissions. This year, a record 42 organisations from 15 European countries were nominated. The six winners were selected by a jury of six experts in the field of environmental management and resource efficiency.

[Commission services launch a public consultation on the review of the Insurance Mediation Directive](#)

The services of the European Commission have today launched a public consultation to seek the views of stakeholders on possible measures to be taken to enhance the rights of consumers in the area of insurance. The main aim of the Insurance Mediation Directive (IMD) is to ensure a high level of professionalism and competence among insurance intermediaries whilst guaranteeing a high level of protection of customers' interests. The revision of the Insurance Mediation Directive (IMD) aims to improve transparency and to establish a level playing field between the sales of insurance products through insurance intermediaries and those sold by insurance undertakings. There is also a need to align the IMD revision with the ongoing work of the Commission on Packaged Retail Investment Products (PRIPs), for which a separate consultation is also being launched today. The responses to this consultation will feed into the preparation of the Commission's proposal for the review of the IMD in late 2011. The deadline for responses is 31 January 2011. The consultation paper can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2010/insurance-mediation_en.htm

[Concentrations: la Commission donne le feu vert à l'entrée de CD&R dans le capital d'Univar](#)

La Commission européenne a autorisé, en vertu du règlement UE sur les concentrations, le projet de concentration entre CD&R, CVC et Univar dans le domaine de la distribution de produits chimiques. Après examen, la Commission est parvenue à la conclusion que l'opération n'entraverait pas de manière significative le jeu d'une concurrence effective dans l'Espace économique européen (EEE) ou une partie substantielle de celui-ci.

EU tightens controls on imports of plastic Chinese kitchenware

The EU will tighten its controls on imports of plastic Chinese kitchenware, after the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health (SCoFAH) endorsed yesterday by qualified majority a Commission proposal. A Regulation on specific import conditions for Chinese kitchenware made of polyamide and melamine is to enter into force in July 2011. In recent years, Member States have been notifying, through the Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) a consistently high number of non-compliant kitchenware originating from China. The EU Food and Veterinary service, in its inspections in China and Hong Kong noted shortcomings in the Chinese system to control plastic kitchenware exported to the EU. Therefore, the EU has now decided to tighten the rules for these products. The kitchenware originating from China can only be imported with a declaration certifying their compliance with the strict EU limits on primary aromatic amines and formaldehyde. As from July 2011 Member States will do a documentary check on all shipments of polyamide and melamine kitchenware from China and analytical checks will be performed on 10% of the consignments. Primary aromatic amines are genotoxic substances and should therefore not migrate into food. They can occur as contamination in the polyamide kitchenware. Formaldehyde is authorised to be used in the manufacture of melamine kitchenware with a migration limit of 15 mg of Formaldehyde per kilo of food. This limit is based on the evaluation of the substance by the Commission's Scientific Committee on food, which was replaced by the European Food Safety Authority after EFSA was established in 2002.

European Innovation Partnership on active & healthy ageing

“We need to find better ways to value elderly people” Neelie Kroes, European Commission Vice-President for the Digital Agenda, told a Stakeholders' Conference on the European Innovation Partnership on Active and Healthy Ageing in Brussels on 26th November. “Digital technologies are the greatest driver for innovation in health. ICT improves care efficiency, frees up hospital beds, and users love it. This is our historical opportunity to confront our demographic destiny, to build a new industry and to secure quality of life for our elderly.” The Partnership proposed by the Commission will aim to increase healthy lifespans by two years by 2020 through solutions which improve health and quality of life of older people, increase the sustainability and efficiency of health and social care systems and offer new business opportunities. A consultation related to the proposed Partnership, on how to use ICT to offer options for active and healthy ageing in Europe, was launched today and runs until 28 January 2011 (see [IP/10/1609](#)). See [SPEECH/10/690](#)

Vice-President Tajani opens EU-Africa Business Forum

Today, on the eve of the Africa-EU Summit (see [MEMO/10/604](#)), European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani opens the fourth EU-Africa Business Forum in Tripoli (Libya). The theme of the Forum is ‘the private sector, a crucial partner for shaping the future of Africa’. During his visit to Libya, the Vice-President will discuss EU-Africa cooperation in the area of raw materials and joint initiatives in the area of space policy, such as GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) and Africa. Commissioner Andris Piebalgs

will speak at the closing ceremony of the Forum on 27 November. For further details, see <http://www.euafrika-businessforum.org/>

Rediffusion

Bisphenol A : Commission welcomes ban in baby bottles by Member States

This afternoon, the Standing Committee on the Food Chain and Animal Health reached a qualified majority on a proposal from the European Commission on a Directive to ban Bisphenol A from plastic infant feeding bottles. The measure will enter into force as of mid-2011. This is the result of months of discussion and exchange of views between the Commission's services, the European Food Safety Agency (EFSA), the Member States and the industry. Reacting to the vote, John Dalli, Commissioner in charge of Health and Consumer Policy, said : "This is good news for European consumers. In the view of the recent opinion of EFSA, I had stressed that there were areas of uncertainty, deriving from new studies, which showed that BPA might have an effect on the development, immune response or tumour promotion. The decision taken today is good news for European parents who can be sure that as of mid-2011 plastic infant feeding bottles will not include BPA". Following today's vote, Member States will have to prohibit the manufacture of polycarbonate infant feeding bottles with BPA from 1st March 2011. As from 1st June 2011, the placing on the market and the importation into the Union of these bottles will be prohibited.