I congratulate work done by rapporteurs Elisa Ferreira and Michael Theurer for draft report of TAXE Committee, and Ludek Niedermayer and Anneliese Dodds for report on the concrete follow up in the ECON Committee - great importance to keep up momentum.

Very clear from draft reports that their analysis has been comprehensive and diligent. They made recommendations in a wide range of fields.

The draft report also devotes quite some attention to our State Aid control. Welcome that rapporteurs underline that State Aid Control plays an important role in ensuring more fair taxation in Europe.

Our goal is common & ambitious - have to work hard to achieve it. We want competition to be fair, most notably between multinationals and SMEs - compete door to door but we suspect they do not share in same tax schemes.

Will specify today how State aid control can really do in this respect but how it needs to be completed by other tools if we want a fair corporate tax system in Europe.

What State aid control can ensure is that a company does not receive an unduly advantage - no selectivity, preferential treatment. In other words, all companies in the same country should be treated equally - small or big or coming from any specific sectors, or ownership. And this is what I want to achieve when using the state aid tool.

The decisions in our cases will hopefully set important markers for when a measure constitutes State Aid in the fiscal aid area.

I am strongly committed to use the State aid tool against any tax measures that seriously distort competition. And I will not hesitate to take appropriate action when a company receives an undeserved advantage that distorts competition.

But State Aid Control also has its limits, defined by the Treaty and it is clear that we cannot solve it all when using this tool. Even if you have a hammer not everything is a nail.

If we really want change, we also need more general measures to close the loopholes and enable much more transparency in corporate taxation. That is why the debate on the Commission’s Taxation Action Plan that you just had with President Juncker and Commissioner Moscovici is so important.

We also see the limitations of State Aid Control when it comes to your idea to have recovered money paid into the EU budget.

State aid control tackles distortions of competition between companies. If competition is distorted, the logical consequence is to restore situation to before aid was granted. This means that the taxpayers get their money back in state budget, use for something legitimate.

Recovery is the legal tool for this. Recovery is done in each MS according to the national laws. MS can choose the procedure, as long as it allows for effective and immediate implementation of the Commission’s recovery decisions.

Let me now close by taking stock on the different work streams we discussed last time back in May.

First on our work on Member States' tax ruling practices.

You may recall that back in May, the cooperation with our State aid investigations was not yet satisfactory for all Member States in terms of information gathering.

I therefore asked my services to take formal steps through injunction decisions to get all the information we need to carry out our assessment. And I am pleased to inform you that after these steps, all Member States are now cooperating with our enquiries.

This has allowed us to take our enquiries to a second, deeper level. We requested a large number of further tax rulings from all Member States, for concrete analysis of tax rulings.
• At this stage, although my services are busy as we speak, to analyse all the information received, it seems that the procedure for granting rulings in several Member States actually does comply with the OECD recommendations. So also good news in what we are doing.
• However - there is evidence that certain of these tax rulings seriously distort competition, then I will ask my services to launch further investigations.
• Second, we are also progressing with the ongoing state aid investigations.
• The rapporteurs rightly ask us to progress on our cases as quickly as we can. But I also do welcome that the report stresses that in finalising our cases, quality should come before speed. As promised, we will close our cases as soon as we are ready.
• Finally we are willing to give further guidance to Member States and market players on the application of State aid rules when it comes to tax planning practices of companies.
• To get guidance right, we first have to close a sufficient number of cases and assess under what form this guidance could be provided and provide the necessary clarity both to MS and market players. Pleased that rapporteurs support this - important to stay tuned to enhance efforts.