

Piraeus to securitize 7 bln euros of NPEs

Piraeus Bank, Greece's largest lender by assets, said yesterday it plans to securitize roughly 7 billion euros of nonperforming exposures (NPEs) in 2020. Greek banks have been working to reduce more than 70 billion euros in soured loans, the legacy of a financial crisis that shrank the country's economy by a quarter. Piraeus said it aims to cut its NPE ratio to 15 percent of its total loan book in 2022, from 49 percent last year, and to a single digit by 2023. Its NPEs, which include loans which a bank thinks might become nonperforming, were 25.7 billion euros at the end of September, from 27.3 billion at the end of 2018. In an effort to help banks offload up to 30 billion euros of sour loans, the government has set up the so-called Asset Protection Scheme Hercules (HAPS). The plan is similar to Italy's GACS mod-

el. In October, Piraeus Bank announced a deal with Sweden's Intrum to create a company to service its bad loan portfolio. *(Reuters)*

Strategic partnership for EY Greece and InvestGR

Ernst & Young Greece (EY Greece) yesterday announced the signing of a three-year strategic partnership agreement with the InvestGR Forum: Foreign Investments in Greece, an annual event organized by consulting firm Public Affairs & Networks. The main purpose of the strategic partnership is so that survey findings carried out by EY on a global scale, titled "Attractiveness Survey," can have their official presentation in Greece at the InvestGR Forum, beginning with the 3rd InvestGR Forum 2020: Greece is Back, on June 24. In a special panel discussion, EY Greece will present the re-



Thessaloniki-Munich. Lufthansa announced yesterday that a new service will link Thessaloniki with Munich for the winter season, starting on October 27 and flying three times per week - on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays - besides the daily-Thessaloniki-Frankfurt link. Tickets are already available for booking.

search findings, "EY Attractiveness Survey: Greece 2020," on the attractiveness of Greece as an investment destination. The survey, which is an integral part of the broader "EY Attractiveness Survey Europe," assessing Europe's attractiveness as an investment destination, analyzes Greece's investment performance in recent years. It also records the views of the investment community on the strengths and weaknesses of the country as an investment destination, based on a significant sample of executives from large foreign companies that either already have an investment presence in Greece or are potential investors.

Garanti Bank. Hungary's OTP Bank and Italy's Intesa Sanpaolo have reached the final stages of the race to buy Garanti BBVA's Romanian unit, Romanian news outlet Ziarul Financiar (ZF) said yesterday, citing banking market sources. "After latest talks, the

finalists are Hungary's OTP and Italy's Intesa," ZF said, adding that the price of the sale could top 400 million euros. It said bidders had included local rivals Banca Transilvania and Raiffeisen Bank Romania. *(Reuters)*

Turkish inflation. Turkey's consumer price inflation rose a bit more than expected to 12.15 percent year-on-year in January, official data showed yesterday, climbing for the third consecutive month after a dramatic drop last year. A currency crisis in 2018 sent inflation surging to a 15-year high above 25 percent. But it has since declined and briefly touched single digits last year, allowing the central bank to cut interest rates sharply. Turkey's central bank has remained optimistic that inflation will drop toward 8.2 percent by year-end, keeping the door open to a bit more policy easing. *(Reuters)*