



Daily News 17 / 12 / 2020

Brussels, 17 December 2020

EU budget: European Commission welcomes the adoption of the EU's long-term budget for 2021-2027

The European Commission welcomes the Council decision to adopt the next long-term EU budget for the period 2021-2027, which is the final step in the adoption process. With this decision, all the conditions have now been fulfilled for the next multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027 to be in place as of 1 January 2021. As a result, €1.074 trillion [in 2018 prices] will become available for beneficiaries of EU funding during the next seven years. At the same time, work towards finalising NextGenerationEU, the temporary recovery instrument created to fuel Europe's recovery from the coronavirus crisis, continues. Once adopted, the package of a total of €1.8 trillion [in 2018 prices] will be the largest package ever financed through the EU budget. With the combined firepower of the long-term budget and NextGenerationEU, the EU will support citizens, companies and regions most affected by the coronavirus crisis. The package will also help rebuild a post-COVID-19 Europe, which will be greener, more digital, more resilient and better fit for the current and forthcoming challenges. The European Commission will be able to start committing the funds under the next multiannual financial framework as of 1 January 2021, following the adoption of the relevant sector-specific legislation as well as of the annual budget for 2021 by the European Parliament and the Council. More information in the [press release](#) and in the [Q&A](#). (For more information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Claire Joawn - Tel.: +32 229 56859)

Coronavirus: Commission concludes exploratory talks with Novavax to secure a new potential vaccine

Today, the European Commission concluded exploratory talks with the pharmaceutical company Novavax with a view to purchasing its potential vaccine against COVID-19. The envisaged contract with Novavax would provide for the possibility for all EU Member States to purchase 100 million doses, and they could further purchase up to 100 million more doses. Today's finalisation of the exploratory talks with Novavax come in addition to an already secured broad portfolio of vaccines to be produced in Europe, including the contracts already signed with [AstraZeneca](#), [Sanofi-GSK](#), [Janssen Pharmaceutica NV](#), [BioNtech-Pfizer](#), [CureVac](#), and [Moderna](#). This diversified vaccines portfolio will ensure Europe is well prepared for vaccination, once the vaccines have been proven to be safe and effective. Member States could decide to donate the vaccine to lower and middle-income countries or to re-direct it to other European countries. President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, said: *"I am happy to announce that we continue to broaden our portfolio of diverse vaccines. Today's step toward reaching an agreement with Novavax demonstrates the Commission's commitment to ensure all possible options are explored to access vaccines against COVID-19. Access to more vaccines will lead to a sufficient coverage for beating the pandemic."* Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"We are close to adding a seventh promising vaccine to our portfolio and therefore increasing our chances to have the best possible choice for a safe and effective vaccine. All Member States must now ensure that they are ready to start deploying some of them as from early 2021 once proven to be safe and effective. Vaccination will determine how we will live and work in 2021. In the lead up to the festive period, we are asking citizens to continue their efforts to control the pandemic. Everyone must play their part in keeping further resurgences at bay while we wait for a vaccine."* A full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker - Tel.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy - Tel.: +32 229 83978)

Budget de l'UE: de nouvelles règles de l'OLAF aident les enquêteurs et les procureurs de l'UE à lutter contre les fraudeurs

De nouvelles règles qui renforcent le rôle de l'Office européen de lutte antifraude (OLAF) et ouvrent la voie à une collaboration harmonieuse avec le nouveau Parquet européen ont été adoptées

aujourd'hui par le Parlement européen. Le Parquet européen devrait commencer ses travaux au début de l'année 2021, et le règlement (CE) no 883/2013 révisé (le «règlement OLAF») définit la manière dont l'OLAF travaillera en collaboration avec les procureurs du Parquet européen afin de garantir une bonne protection des finances de l'UE. Johannes **Hahn**, commissaire chargé du budget et de l'administration, a déclaré: « *Nous entamons une nouvelle période budgétaire en 2021 et avons débloqué des fonds importants pour aider l'UE à se remettre des conséquences de la pandémie. Nous devons à nos citoyens et à nos entreprises de veiller à ce que chaque centime soit dépensé conformément aux règles. Le renforcement des pouvoirs de l'Office européen de lutte antifraude (OLAF), l'arrivée du Parquet européen et la coordination des travaux dans l'ensemble de l'architecture antifraude de l'UE en vue d'identifier, d'enquêter et de poursuivre les fraudeurs constituent une avancée majeure dans la protection des intérêts financiers de l'UE.* » L'OLAF et le Parquet européen œuvreront tous deux à la protection des intérêts financiers de l'UE, leurs rôles étant complémentaires: Le mandat du Parquet européen couvre 22 des 27 États membres et se concentrera exclusivement sur les enquêtes et les poursuites pénales. D'autre part, l'OLAF continuera à fonctionner dans l'ensemble de l'UE, avec un objectif plus large, qui comprend également des enquêtes sur les affaires non pénales portant atteinte aux intérêts financiers de l'Union ainsi que sur de graves dysfonctionnements au sein des institutions européennes. Les nouvelles règles définissent en particulier la manière dont l'OLAF et le Parquet européen travailleront ensemble dès le premier jour. Plus d'informations sont disponibles dans le [communiqué de presse](#) et dans le [Q&A](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari - Tél.: +32 229 54578; Claire Joawn - Tél.: +32 229 56859)

Customs controls: EU customs stopped fake and potentially dangerous goods worth nearly €760 million in 2019

Fake goods with a retail value of over €760 million were seized at the EU's external borders in 2019, according to a new [report](#) published by the European Commission today. While this figure represents a €20 million increase in value compared to 2018, the number of detentions increased by over 30% in the same period. This annual report gives an overview of the work carried out by EU customs officials – responsible for the enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR) – at the EU's external borders. Overall in 2019, Member State customs authorities made over 90,000 seizures of goods that infringed on intellectual property rights, consisting of almost 41 million individual items (an increase of 53 % compared to the previous year). Paolo **Gentiloni**, Commissioner for the Economy, said: *"Fake goods not only affect legitimate businesses, but are also a threat to the health, safety and security of our citizens and consumers. The European Commission remains committed to fight this illegal activity and supports Member States in their efforts to bar the entry of counterfeit products into our Single Market."* A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available online. (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Nerea Artamendi Erro – Tel.: +32 229 90964)

AGRIFISH Council: Ministers decide fishing opportunities for 2021 in the North-East Atlantic and for deep-sea stocks

Today, the Council agreed on fishing opportunities for 2021 for the fish stocks managed by the EU in the North-East Atlantic, based on a proposal made by the Commission. As regards stocks that will be shared with the UK, The Council also decided as a transition measure to proportionally roll over the 2020 total allowable catches (TACs), with a few limited exceptions, as proposed by the Commission. This will ensure fishing opportunities in the exceptional circumstances surrounding the still ongoing negotiations on the future relationship between the EU and the UK. These measures complement the [Commission's contingency proposal](#) from last week, which provides for the possibility of reciprocal fishing access by EU and UK vessels to each other's waters, if and when agreed between the EU and the UK, and all conditions for the continuation of the EU fishing operations have been met. Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, said: *"I am very pleased that for the stocks the EU is managing on its own, we have brought eight total allowable catches in line with the levels that guarantee the maximum sustainable yields from those stocks. EU Ministers have followed my proposals on the precautionary approach for nine fish catch quotas. This is a step in the right direction. The Commission proposal was very ambitious and I welcome today's overall good outcome. We have also managed to respond to the uncertainty surrounding Brexit, and secure continued fishing for all EU fishermen and women. Vessels can take to the sea on 1 January 2021 and the fishing sector can be reassured that their business is recognized as a priority for the EU."* The Council has also decided on sustainable catch limits for southern seabass (Bay of Biscay) in line with maximum sustainable yield (MSY). The Council has continued the protection of the vulnerable deep-sea sharks through a prohibition of fishing of this species. In line with the Commission proposal, the Council has agreed to set very limited bycatch for cod in Kattegat (123 tonnes), and roundnose grenadier in Skagerrak and Kattegat (5 tonnes), and a scientific TAC for nephrops in the southern

Bay of Biscay (2.4 tonnes). More information is available Commissioner **Sinkevičius'** [press statement](#) and [online](#). (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel: +32 229 58602; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

AGRIFISH Council: Ministers decide fishing opportunities for 2021 in the Mediterranean and the Black Seas

Based on the [Commission's proposal](#), EU ministers today agreed fishing opportunities for 2021 for the Mediterranean and the Black Seas. Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius** said: *"In line with our political commitments made in the MedFish4Ever and Sofia Declarations, we implemented in EU law ambitious measures taken in the context of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM). On the Western Mediterranean multiannual plan, I regret that Ministers were not ready to agree on higher effort reductions, which would have allowed us to restore the fish stocks to sustainable levels faster and to ensure the long-term social and economic viability of the fishermen and women operating in the region. I welcome, however, that the effort reduction will be accompanied by additional national measures to protect the stocks. For the Mediterranean, the regulation agreed by ministers continues the implementation of the EU multiannual management plan for demersal stocks in the Western Mediterranean, adopted in June 2019, by reducing the fishing effort by 7.5%. The Regulation also introduces measures adopted by the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean in 2018 and 2019, in particular measures for eel, red coral, dolphinfish, small pelagic species and demersal stocks in the Adriatic and deep water shrimps stocks in the Ionian Sea, Levant Sea and the Strait of Sicily. For the Black Sea, the quotas for turbot and sprat are maintained at the 2020 level. More information is available Commissioner **Sinkevičius'** [press statement](#) and [online](#). (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel: +32 229 58602; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)*

Environmental Impact Assessment: Commission adopts reasoned opinion in case brought by Czechia against Poland

The Commission today adopted a reasoned opinion in a procedure brought by Czechia against Poland under Article 259 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Czechia has claimed that Poland infringed European Union law by certain actions undertaken as part of the procedure for prolonging the mining concession of the Turów lignite coal mine until 2026. In the event of a dispute between two Member States, Article 259 provides that the matter must first be brought to the attention of the Commission, which has three months to issue a reasoned opinion, after giving both sides an opportunity to submit their observations. If the Commission has not delivered an opinion within those three months, the absence of such an opinion shall not prevent the matter from being brought before the court. Czechia submitted a complaint to the Commission on 30 September 2020, and after that the Commission heard Czechia and Poland. In its reasoned opinion, the Commission considers that Poland has committed some of the infringements of EU law that Czechia had raised in their complaint but not all. More information is available in the [press release](#). (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel: +32 229 58602; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

2020 EU Industrial R&D Scoreboard: EU companies remain robust and increase investment amidst stiff global competition

Companies in the European Union (EU27) have increased their investment in research and development (R&D) for the tenth consecutive year as included in the [2020 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard](#) published today. In 2019, they invested 5.6% more in R&D, up from 4.7% in 2018. This growth is driven by the automobile, ICT and health sectors. One successful example is the German company BioNTech, leading the groundbreaking development of one of the first COVID-19 vaccines in use. Since its early days, it has benefited from EU R&D support now worth over €108 million. BioNTech ranks at number 654 in the world ranking, and has been in this Scoreboard since 2013. It has multiplied its R&D investment by 6 and its net sales ten times in this 7-year period. EU companies in the Scoreboard are highly internationalised, showing a diversified and strong technological and industrial base. In the ranking of the top 2,500 R&D investing companies worldwide however, they lose ground against fast growing ICT and health sector companies based in the U.S. and China. Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Education, Culture and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"We can be proud of our leading companies, for example now with COVID-19 vaccines development or in green technologies. However, more investment is needed in the ICT sector in particular in the global race for technological leadership and in the green and digital transitions. If we want Europe to drive the transition to a climate-neutral economy, we need to redouble our efforts."* The [EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard](#) has been published annually since 2004 by the

European Commission (Directorate-General for Research and Innovation and the Joint Research Centre). You can find a press release [here](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

Higher Education: Latest update on fees and financial support to students in Europe

Today, the European Commission's Eurydice Network published its latest [report](#) on national student fee and support systems in European higher education. The report presents a snapshot of the main policies on fees and financial support to students in 43 higher education systems in 2020/21. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *"The availability of financial resources has a major impact on students' willingness and ability to participate in higher education studies, in particular, disadvantaged students. National student fee and support systems have an important role in supporting or discouraging access to higher education. This report gives us an excellent overview of national policies and will contribute to our work on achieving a European Education Area by 2025, for example, on the social dimension of higher education, widening access to under-represented groups and increasing the diversity of students in European study mobility."* The report shows that there are different approaches to student fees across Europe: in some countries, there are no fees; in others, all students pay fees; and in some countries, only certain categories of student pay fees. Some of these measures are also presented in the report. Similarly, in all European higher education systems, there is at least one type of direct financial support - public grants or loans - to students. The most common type of support are grants targeting socially or economically disadvantaged students. However, the proportion of students who receive grants and the annual amounts of these grants varies greatly across countries. In 2020, several governments adopted measures in the area of student fees and financial support to address or prevent financial difficulties due to the coronavirus crisis. Read the full report [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Sinéad Meehan - van Druten - Tel.: +32 229 84094)

€182.9 million to promote European agri-food products, with a focus on sustainable agriculture

A total of €182.9 million has been allocated to the promotion of EU agri-food products in and outside the EU in 2021. This [promotion policy work programme](#) puts a special focus on promoting products and farming methods that support more directly the European Green Deal objectives, prioritising organic products, fruit and vegetables and sustainable agriculture. EU policy for the [promotion of agri-food products](#) is designed to increase the sector's competitiveness by taking advantage of expanding global agri-food markets, and raising awareness of the high standards used in EU agriculture, including in terms of quality and sustainability. A new framework for the promotion policy will be put in place next year, as envisaged in the [Farm to Fork strategy](#). Agriculture and rural development Commissioner Janusz **Wojciechowski** said: *"European agriculture is at a crossroads. Its standards in terms of quality and safety are renowned around the world. It now needs a stronger focus on sustainability. Our promotion policy has been supporting EU producers in raising awareness about their products in the EU and beyond. It will now also be a crucial tool in promoting sustainable agriculture in line with the Green Deal's ambitions. Sustainable agriculture has shown benefits for producers by adding value to their products and for consumers who increasingly want sustainably sourced food. The 2021 promotion policy budget reflects our growing ambition, also in view of next year's review of our promotion policy framework. We need to maintain such a budget over the next years to ensure that this policy can continue supporting the Green Deal objectives."* A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229-99075; Sophie Dirven – Tel.: +32 229-67228)

Investment Plan for Europe: access to additional financing for SMEs in Slovakia

With backing from the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#), the EIB Group will provide a €49 million guarantee to Slovenská sporiteľňa (SLSP), the largest financial institution in Slovakia, to support SMEs and mid-cap businesses impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. The guarantee provides regulatory capital relief and thus additional lending headroom to SLSP. This agreement is in line with the EU strategy to provide support small and medium-sized businesses and sustain jobs under the current difficult economic conditions. Commissioner for the Economy, Paolo **Gentiloni**, said: *"I welcome this agreement between EIB Group and Slovenská sporiteľňa, which is backed by a guarantee from the Investment Plan for Europe. It will provide small and mid-cap businesses in Slovakia with access to additional financing to maintain their operation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. In these difficult times we must do all we can to help businesses stay afloat."* The

[Investment Plan for Europe](#) has so far mobilised €535 billion of investment across the EU, benefitting over 1.4 million SMEs in total. The press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

European Citizens' Initiative: The Commission grants extensions to citizens' initiatives due to the COVID-19 pandemic*

Today, the Commission decided to grant extension until 1 February 2021 for the European Citizens' Initiatives due to the challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The extension concerns initiatives, which are currently collecting statements of support. A first set of six months extension was already granted in [July](#). Listening to citizens' views helps shaping EU policies on matters affecting their daily lives. European Citizens' Initiative is one of the unique tools through which European citizens can directly influence the future of the EU and call for new laws. The text of the Commission Decision is available [online](#) and more information available on the [European Citizens' Initiatives website](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand – tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferroli – Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

Commission welcomes political agreement on European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for displaced workers

The Commission welcomes the political agreement reached yesterday evening between the European Parliament and EU Member States in the Council on the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for displaced workers (EGF). Pending its final approval, this agreement will allow the [European Globalisation Fund](#) to continue supporting workers and self-employed persons whose activity has been lost. The EGF helps to fund personalised support measures that complement national support mechanisms, such as tailor-made training courses, re-skilling and up-skilling – particularly to gain digital skills, mentoring and career guidance, job-matching assistance and job search, the launch of a new business, and allowances for carers. Under the new political agreement, the focus shifts from the cause of restructuring to its impact: more workers will be able to receive European support for restructuring situations as the main criterion to trigger the Fund will be that at least 200 workers are laid off (from 500 previously). Additionally, the costs of support services in Member States can be covered at a higher rate. Finally, thanks to the new eligibility rules, all reasons for restructuring, including the economic effects of the coronavirus crisis, as well as larger economic trends like decarbonisation and automation, can be eligible for support. Nicolas **Schmit**, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, said: *"In the current economic crisis, it is particularly important that we express solidarity with workers who face job losses due to restructuring. The European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for displaced workers can help them and the self-employed to find new job opportunities by funding their tailor-made training courses, re-skilling programmes – especially to gain digital skills, career guidance, and job-matching assistance. It can also be used to help start a new business. We must ensure that we protect the dignity of workers and provide everyone the best possible opportunities to gain the skills they need to thrive."* Until 2027, the EGF will have an annual ceiling of €186 million. Once finalised, the Regulation on the EGF must be approved by the European Parliament and the Council to enter into force. A [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#) are available. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

REUNION DU COLLEGE : Riposte face au coronavirus: lutter contre les prêts non performants pour permettre aux banques de soutenir les ménages et les entreprises de l'UE

La Commission européenne a [présenté une stratégie](#) visant à prévenir l'accumulation future de prêts non performants (PNP) dans l'ensemble de l'Union européenne en conséquence de la crise de la COVID-19. Cette stratégie vise à garantir que les ménages et les entreprises de l'UE continuent, tout au long de la crise, d'avoir accès aux financements dont ils ont besoin. Les banques ont un rôle crucial à jouer pour atténuer les effets de la crise de la COVID-19, en préservant le financement de l'économie. C'est essentiel pour soutenir la reprise économique de l'UE. Compte tenu de l'incidence de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur l'économie de l'UE, une augmentation du volume des PNP dans l'ensemble de l'UE est attendue, quoique l'on ne sache pas encore dans quels délais ni dans quelles proportions. Selon le temps dont l'économie de l'UE aura besoin pour se remettre de la crise de la COVID-19, la qualité des actifs des banques et, partant, la capacité de ces dernières à prêter, pourraient se détériorer. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, vice-président exécutif pour une économie au service des personnes, a déclaré : *« L'histoire nous enseigne qu'il vaut mieux s'attaquer précocement et résolument au problème des prêts non performants, en particulier si l'on veut que les banques continuent de soutenir les entreprises et les ménages. Nous prenons dès maintenant des mesures préventives et coordonnées. La stratégie adoptée aujourd'hui contribuera à une reprise rapide et*

*durable en Europe en aidant les banques à éliminer ces prêts de leur bilan et à continuer de distribuer des crédits. » Mairead **McGuinness**, commissaire chargée des services financiers, de la stabilité financière et de l'union des marchés des capitaux, a ajouté : « De nombreuses entreprises et de nombreux ménages se sont retrouvés confrontés à d'importantes difficultés financières en raison de la pandémie. Faire en sorte que les entreprises et les citoyens européens continuent de recevoir un soutien de la part de leur banque est une priorité absolue pour la Commission. Nous avons présenté aujourd'hui un ensemble de mesures qui, tout en garantissant la protection des emprunteurs, peut contribuer à prévenir une augmentation des PNP semblable à celle qui avait eu lieu après la dernière crise financière. » La [communication](#), le [communiqué de presse](#) et les [questions et réponses](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Ferrie – Tél.: 32 229 86500; Aikaterini Apostola – Tél.: +32 229 87624)*

Antitrust: Commission re-adopts decision and fines CCPL €9.44 million for its participation in retail food packaging cartels

The European Commission has re-adopted a cartel decision against CCPL and has imposed total fines of €9,441,000 on three entities of CCPL Group for their participation in three separate cartels in the retail food packaging sector. In [June 2015](#), the Commission adopted a decision against several companies for their participation in at least one of five separate cartels in the retail food packaging sector. The companies fixed prices and allocated customers of polystyrene foam or polypropylene rigid trays, in breach of EU antitrust rules. In 2015, the Commission imposed total fines of €33,694,000 on CCPL (referred as Coopbox in the Decision of 2015) for its participation in three out of the five cartels. In July 2019, the General Court annulled the fines imposed on the entities belonging to the CCPL Group due to lack of sufficient reasoning concerning the fines reduction granted to them in the scope of the assessment of their application for inability to pay the fines under point 35 of the [Guidelines on Fines](#) (case T-522/15). The judgment did not question CCPL Group's liability for the three cartels. Today's decision addresses the procedural error identified by the General Court and imposes fines on three entities of the CCPL Group. This decision takes into account that the fines for each cartel shall not exceed 10% of the CCPL Group's total turnover in the business year preceding the adoption of this decision (i.e. 2019), in line with Article 23(2) of the [Council Regulation 1/2003](#). The amending decision will be made available under the case [AT.39563](#) in the public register on the Commission's competition website. More information on the Commission's action against cartels is available in the [cartels section](#) of the competition website. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €200 million German scheme to promote shift of freight transport from road to rail

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a German aid scheme to promote the shift of freight transport from road to rail. The measure will support companies willing to connect their facilities to the public railway network. In line with the goals of the [European Green Deal](#), the German measure aims at contributing to a reduction of road congestion and CO2 emissions. The scheme has a yearly budget of €40 million and will run from 2021 to 2025. The measure will support the development of private connecting railways ("sidings") and other related infrastructure promoting modal freight, including transshipment infrastructure. Under the scheme, companies will be compensated for up to 50% of the infrastructure costs (and up to 80% for transshipment infrastructure). The Commission found that the scheme is beneficial for the environment and for mobility as it supports rail transport, which is less polluting than road transport, while also decreasing road congestion. The Commission also found that the measure is proportionate and necessary to achieve the objective pursued, namely to support the modal shift from road to rail. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure complies with EU State aid rules, in particular [Article 93](#) of the Treaty concerning the coordination of transport. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.58570 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €70.8 million Latvian scheme to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €70.8 million Latvian scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The support will take the form of direct grants amounting to 30% of the beneficiary's

gross wages and salaries over the months of August, September and October 2020. The scheme will be open to companies active in all sectors, excluding primary producers of agricultural products, public companies and financial institutions. To be eligible, companies must have suffered (i) a decrease in turnover of at least 20% in November 2020 or December 2020, compared to the average turnover of the months of August, September and October 2020; as well as (ii) a decrease in turnover of at least 30% compared to the turnover of November or December 2019 respectively. The aim of the measure is to help beneficiaries counter the decrease in working capital in the context of the second wave of the coronavirus. The Commission found that the Latvian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular: (i) the aid will not exceed the €120,000 for companies active in the fisheries and aquaculture sector and €800,000 for companies active in all other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted before 30 June 2021. The Commission concluded that the measure is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. More information on the Temporary Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.59592 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €39.2 million Polish scheme to support enterprises active in pig breeding sector in the context of the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a PLN 175 million (approximately €39.2 million) Polish scheme to support enterprises active in the pig breeding sector affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support, which will take the form of direct grants, will be open to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises active in the pig breeding (farmers). The purpose of the scheme is to help the beneficiaries address their liquidity needs and continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The aid will be granted as a lump sum. The Commission found that the Polish scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the aid will not exceed €100,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural sector as provided by the Temporary Framework, and (ii) the aid under the scheme can be granted until 30 June 2021. The Commission concluded that the measure is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. More information on the Temporary Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.60060 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Alnut by De Agostini and Foodiverse

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Alimentación y Nutrición Familiar S.L.U. ('Alnut') of Spain by De Agostini S.p.A. of Italy and Foodiverse Hold S.L. ('Foodiverse') of Switzerland. Alnut manufactures and commercialises prepared baby food products and plant based desserts. De Agostini is active in private equity and alternative asset management with a particular focus on the publishing sector, media and communication services, lotteries and gaming services. Foodiverse provides asset management activities and services, mainly related to food products companies. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of its limited impact on the market. 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.10071](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Edifecs by TA Associates and Francisco Partners

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over the whole of Edifecs, Inc. by funds managed by TA Associates Management L.P. ("TA

Associates”) and funds managed by Francisco Partners Management LP (“Francisco Partners”), all of the US. Edifecs is a healthcare technology company active in the provision of infrastructure software solutions aiming to improve operational performance by streamlining the exchange of information between hospitals and other healthcare organisations. TA Associates is a private equity firm investing in five core sectors, namely technology, financial services, healthcare, consumer and business services industries in Asia, Europe and North America. Francisco Partners is a private equity firm focused on investment in technology and technology-enabled businesses. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the fact that Edifecs has negligible actual or foreseen activities within the territory of 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.9876](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

STATEMENTS

Journée internationale des migrants: Déclaration commune de la Commission européenne et du haut représentant de l'Union pour les affaires étrangères et la politique de sécurité

À l'occasion de la Journée internationale des migrants, la Commission européenne et le haut représentant, Josep **Borrell**, ont fait la déclaration suivante: « *Chaque année, environ deux millions de personnes s'installent dans l'Union européenne et environ un million quitte l'UE pour s'installer ailleurs. La migration a toujours fait partie de notre identité européenne, et il en sera toujours ainsi. À l'occasion de la Journée internationale des migrants, l'Union européenne réaffirme qu'elle est fermement résolue à protéger la dignité et les droits de l'homme de tous les migrants. Les migrants apportent une valeur ajoutée à nos économies et à nos sociétés, et nous nous efforçons de veiller à ce que la migration se déroule d'une manière sûre, légale et bien gérée. Dans le cadre de la [réaction mondiale de l'Union européenne face à la pandémie de COVID-19](#), nous avons concentré notre attention sur le soutien aux populations vulnérables, telles que les migrants, les personnes déplacées de force et leurs communautés d'accueil dans le monde entier, et nous continuerons sur cette voie. La gestion des migrations requiert une coopération, une mobilisation, une solidarité et un partage des responsabilités à l'échelle mondiale. En septembre dernier, nous avons proposé un [nouveau pacte sur la migration et l'asile pour l'Union européenne](#). Dans le cadre du nouveau pacte, nous nous engageons à approfondir notre coopération avec les pays partenaires. L'amélioration des perspectives économiques, le renforcement de la lutte contre les trafiquants d'êtres humains et les passeurs, qui profitent du désespoir d'autrui et mettent en danger des milliers de vies humaines, ainsi que l'amélioration de la réadmission et de la réintégration des migrants constituent autant d'éléments qui font l'objet de partenariats complets et sur mesure auxquels nous participons déjà et que nous cherchons à renforcer.* » La [déclaration complète](#) est disponible en ligne. (Plus d'informations : Nabila Massrali - Tél : +32 229 88093 ; Adalbert Jahnz - Tél : +32 229 53156 ; Ciara Bottomley - Tél : +32 229 69971)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hydrogen: Executive Vice-President Vestager and Commissioner Breton to participate in event organised by German Presidency on launch of new IPCEI Hydrogen

This afternoon, Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, and Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry **Breton** will participate in the event '[IPCEI now and tomorrow – The future of European cooperation in key technologies - celebrating the launch of IPCEI Hydrogen](#)', organised by the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union. During the event, several European countries will sign a manifesto to commit to work together on large-scale joint investment projects to support the development and deployment of hydrogen technologies and

systems, including an Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI). Where private initiatives supporting breakthrough innovation and infrastructure fail to materialise because of the significant risks such projects entail, EU State aid rules enable Member States to jointly fill the gap to overcome these market failures with an IPCEI, while limiting potential competition distortions and ensuring positive spill-over effects for EU industry at large. Following the publication of the [European Hydrogen Strategy](#) and the launch of the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance, the Commission is committed to pave the way towards a more efficient and interconnected energy sector, driven by the twin goals of a cleaner planet and a stronger economy. The event will be preceded by a press conference, which can be watched [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229-66953; Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024)

L'aide humanitaire: le commissaire Lenarčič participe à la Conférence Nationale Humanitaire 2020

Aujourd'hui, le commissaire **Lenarčič** participera à la Conférence nationale humanitaire 2020 organisée par la France. L'événement virtuel réunit des participants d'organisations humanitaires internationales et non gouvernementales, marquant ainsi l'engagement de la France dans l'action humanitaire, le droit international humanitaire et l'importance des partenariats sur le terrain. Avant l'événement, le commissaire chargé de la gestion des crises, Janez **Lenarčič**: « *Les besoins humanitaires croissants dans le monde et les violations continues du droit international humanitaire dans les conflits nous concernent tous. L'UE invite la communauté internationale à redoubler d'efforts pour remédier au sort des personnes touchées par les crises humanitaires et à soutenir des solutions durables. Nous devons prendre de nouvelles mesures pour renforcer le respect du droit humanitaire international et préserver l'espace humanitaire. En approuvant l'appel à l'action humanitaire lancé par la France et l'Allemagne, l'UE est prête à contribuer à cet effort collectif.* » ». La [conférence](#) vise à faire le point sur les résultats de la stratégie humanitaire de la France pour la période concernant 2018-2022 et à examiner le Fonds d'urgence humanitaire. (Pour plus d'informations : Balazs Ujvari - Tél : +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi - Tél : +32 229 69140)

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

Europe Direct Contact Centre: Brexit helpline for citizens

As we are approaching the end of the transition period on 1 January 2021, the Europe Direct Contact Centre (EDCC) – the EU's single phone number for citizens – will remain at the disposal of citizens, businesses and stakeholders to answer Brexit-related questions in all 24 official languages. Questions related to the UK will be treated as a matter of priority. This is part and parcel of the EU's overall readiness for the end of the transition period. The Contact Centre is available via free phone from all Member States and the United Kingdom (00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11) and by [webform](#). For more information about the EDCC, see [facts and figures](#), [2019 Annual Activity Report](#) and [audiovisual material](#)).

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