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Further crucial step for the Digital Green Certificate: Member States agree on technical specifications*

One month after the Commission's proposal for a [Digital Green Certificate](#), Member States representatives in the [eHealth Network](#) agreed on [guidelines](#) describing the main technical specifications for the implementation of the system. This is a crucial step for the establishment of the necessary infrastructure at EU level. In parallel Member States are encouraged to deploy the needed technical solutions at national level. It is of utmost importance to advance the work on the technical implementation, in parallel to the ongoing legislative process, to ensure a roll-out of Digital Green Certificates across the EU by June 2021. The agreed technical specification covers data structure and encoding mechanisms, including the QR code, which will ensure that all certificates, whether digital or on paper, can be read and verified across the EU. The guidelines also describe the EU gateway. Set up by the Commission, it will allow the sharing of electronic signature keys so that the authenticity of Digital Green Certificates can be verified across the EU. No personal data of certificate holders will pass through the gateway, as this is not necessary for the verification. Finally, the guidelines describe reference implementations for software to issue Digital Green Certificates; a reference app to verify certificates; and a template for a wallet app for citizens to store them. While it will be for Member States to set up these systems at national level, the reference implementations will help speed up deployment as Member States will be able to build on them. In order to have Digital Green Certificates rolled out in June, the technical implementation has to advance in parallel to the legislative process. The next step on the technical side is now the set-up of national infrastructure, the roll-out of national solutions for issuing, verifying and storing Digital Green Certificates, and the set-up of the EU gateway. After a piloting phase in May, the EU gateway should be ready as of June for Member States to connect. More information is available in a [press release](#). *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Christian Wigand - Tel.: +32 229 62253; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391; Katarzyna Kolanko - Tel.: +32 229 63444)*

EU awards €507 million to top researchers to pursue innovative projects

The Commission announced today the winners of the 2020 [Advanced Grants](#) competition of the European Research Council (ERC). The funding, worth €507 million from Horizon 2020, will go to 209 leading researchers across Europe. Their work is set to provide new insights into various subjects, such as the links between obesity and pancreatic cancer, threats from wildlife viruses, brain-inspired neural networks computer chips, and new ways for architects to design the buildings of the future. In addition to strengthening Europe's knowledge base, the [new research projects](#) will lead to the creation of some 1,900 new jobs for post-doctoral fellows, PhD students and other research staff. More than 2,600 applicants submitted their proposals to this call, while female researchers submitted 22% of proposals and 23% of grants were awarded to women. The share of women among researchers awarded Advanced Grants has been steadily increasing from around 10% in 2014 to more than 22% in 2020. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *"The awarding of more than 200 ERC Advanced Grants in key scientific areas will help boost our scientific research and innovation capacity, for the benefit of all EU citizens. We will be able to continue and reinforce investments with the forthcoming Horizon Europe ERC work programmes. I am also pleased to see more women applying for these prestigious grants and winning them."* The selected researchers will work across three research domains, namely physical sciences and engineering, life sciences and social sciences and humanities. The list of selected researchers is available [here](#). More information is available in this [ERC press release](#). *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)*

EU allocates over €43 million in humanitarian aid to South Sudan

Commissioner **Lenarčič**, who is currently in South Sudan, has announced today new funding of

€43.5 million in humanitarian aid in the country. The funds will be used, among others, to help those most in need, including with protection and food assistance, as well as those affected by man-made and natural disasters. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, said: *"The humanitarian situation across South Sudan is extremely dire. Parts of this youngest African country are facing famine-like conditions and the country as a whole is bracing itself for the worst food crisis ever. There seems to be little international interest in this acute situation in the country. Only five donors, including the European Commission, account for almost 77% of the total aid to South Sudan. This lack of interest risks turning this already disastrous situation into a forgotten crisis. A scale-up of the humanitarian response is urgently needed from all donors to ensure the adequate capacities are in place. Not getting things right now will make matters even worse next year with even more lives being lost."* The EU funding announced today will help address acute humanitarian needs, provide humanitarian protection to communities affected by violence, and strengthen preparedness to deal with new shocks, including epidemics and natural disasters. With millions of children remaining out of school in South Sudan, part of the funding will also be allocated to Education in Emergencies. *The full press release is available [online](#) (For more information: Balazs Ujvari — Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi- Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

President von der Leyen welcomes the first official submission of a recovery and resilience plan by Portugal

President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: *"Across Europe, we can see vaccination campaigns accelerating. In parallel, it is now all the more important to launch NextGenerationEU. Economic recovery must go hand in hand with an improved health situation on the ground. I welcome Portugal's recovery and resilience plan as the first one officially submitted to the Commission. The submission marks the beginning of a new phase in the process of implementing the Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Commission looks forward to assessing the Portuguese plan, which focuses on resilience, climate and digital transitions and includes projects in almost all of the European flagship areas. We will continue to engage intensively with Member States to help them deliver high quality plans. Our goal remains to adopt all plans by the summer. For the first payments to be made, we need all Member States to have approved the Own Resources Decision. I am confident that all will be in place by the summer."* The [recovery and resilience plan of Portugal](#) is the first plan officially submitted to the Commission. The plan sets out the reforms and public investment projects that Portugal plans to implement with the support of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). The RRF is the key instrument at the heart of NextGenerationEU, the EU's plan for emerging stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission continues to engage intensively with the remaining Member States to help them deliver high quality plans. A full [press release](#) and a [Q&A](#) are available online. *(For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)*

RÉUNION DU COLLÈGE : Finance durable et taxinomie de l'UE: la Commission prend de nouvelles mesures pour diriger les capitaux vers des activités durables

La Commission européenne a adopté hier un ensemble complet et ambitieux de [mesures](#) visant à mieux orienter les flux de capitaux vers des activités durables dans l'ensemble de l'Union européenne. En permettant aux investisseurs de réorienter leurs investissements vers des technologies et des entreprises plus durables, les mesures adoptées aideront l'Europe de façon déterminante à atteindre la neutralité climatique d'ici à 2050. Elles feront de l'UE un acteur mondial de premier plan en matière de normalisation dans le domaine de la finance durable. Le paquet de mesures se présente comme suit: 1) un acte délégué relatif au volet climatique de la taxinomie de l'UE qui vise à promouvoir les investissements durables; 2) une proposition de directive sur la publication d'informations en matière de durabilité par les entreprises qui vise à améliorer le flux d'informations sur la durabilité du côté des entreprises ; et 3) six actes délégués modificatifs relatifs aux devoirs fiduciaires et au conseil en investissement et en assurance. Valdis **Dombrovskis**, vice-président exécutif pour une économie au service des personnes, a déclaré: *« Aujourd'hui, nous faisons en bond en avant avec la toute première taxinomie en matière de climat, c'est qui est essentiel si nous voulons encourager les investissements privés dans des activités durables et permettre à l'Europe d'atteindre la neutralité climatique d'ici à 2050. Il s'agit d'une avancée majeure »*. La commissaire chargée des services financiers, de la stabilité financière et de l'union des marchés des capitaux, Mairead **McGuinness**, a ajouté: *« Les nouvelles règles sur lesquelles un accord est intervenu aujourd'hui changeront la donne dans la finance. Nous revoyons à la hausse nos ambitions en matière de finance durable afin de contribuer à faire de l'Europe le premier continent neutre pour le climat d'ici à 2050 »*. Pour plus d'informations, un [communiqué de presse](#) et [Questions et Réponses](#) sont disponibles en ligne. *(For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229*

Liberté des médias: La Commission consulte sur sa recommandation concernant la sécurité des journalistes

La Commission a publié aujourd'hui une feuille de route visant à recueillir des réactions en vue de sa recommandation à venir sur la sécurité des journalistes dans l'UE, comme annoncé dans le [plan d'action pour la démocratie européenne](#). Les personnes intéressées peuvent faire part de leur point de vue par l'intermédiaire du portail « [Donnez votre avis](#) » jusqu'au 20 mai. Věra **Jourová**, vice-présidente chargée des valeurs et de la transparence, a déclaré: « *L'assassinat tragique du journaliste d'investigation Giorgos Karaivaz nous a rappelé une fois de plus que nous devons redoubler d'efforts pour protéger les journalistes. Nous travaillons à présent à l'élaboration de recommandations à l'intention des États membres et nous sollicitons un retour d'information sur des mesures telles que les lignes directes, la formation et la sensibilisation de la police et de la justice.* » Thierry **Breton**, commissaire chargé du marché intérieur, a ajouté: « *Ceux qui transmettent les informations doivent également bénéficier des standards les plus élevées en terme de protection de leur travail, aussi bien en ligne que hors ligne. Il est essentiel de garantir la sécurité numérique et l'autonomie des journalistes dans le cadre de nos efforts pour protéger nos valeurs, nos démocraties et l'État de droit. Notre tâche consiste à élaborer un standard européen pour la protection des journalistes.* » En préparation de l'initiative, la Commission a organisé un [dialogue structuré](#) dans le cadre de la première édition du [Forum européen des médias d'information](#). La recommandation, qui sera présentée plus tard dans l'année, abordera les questions de sécurité physique et en ligne, en mettant particulièrement l'accent sur les attaques fondées sur le sexe et les minorités. Cette recommandation s'inscrit pleinement dans le droit-fil d'une initiative à venir visant à endiguer le recours abusif aux poursuites contre la participation du public (SLAPP), et s'inscrit aussi dans un ensemble plus large d'actions visant à faire face aux menaces qui pèsent sur les journalistes et à renforcer la liberté et le pluralisme des médias dans l'UE. (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tél.: +32 229 58615; Christian Wigand – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tél.: +32 229 63444; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391)

Earth Day: New JRC report shows the shrinking amount of primary forests in Europe and calls for their mapping and strict protection

Today, on the 'Earth Day' a [new report](#) on 'Mapping and assessment of primary and old-growth forests in Europe', published by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre shows that about 4.9 million hectares of the EU's forests are 'primary' or 'old-growth'. These are forests that follow natural dynamics, exist in their original condition and are largely untouched by human interference. These forest types are the natural heritage of Europe, but account for only 3% of the EU's total forested area and 1.2 % of the EU's landmass. Protecting them is vital for preserving biodiversity and mitigating climate change. Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: "Our experts at the Joint Research Centre have a wealth of experience in delivering policy-relevant information on the status of and trends in Europe's forests. This latest report provides scientific evidence and highlights knowledge gaps, so that we can take the right actions to protect this most precious part of our natural heritage." Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: "European untouched forests are natural treasures that have been providing benefits to humans for centuries and are vital for our health, biodiversity and climate. They also hold important historical and identity values for local communities. That is why mapping and monitoring remaining primary forests in the EU is an important contribution to the next step - their strict protection. I welcome this new evidence-based report that confirms the value of these forests and points to the urgency to properly map and protect old-growth forests." This evidence-based report shows that there is a need for more robust and up-to-date mapping of primary and old-growth forests in order to better protect them, with a significant 'mapping deficit' in some EU regions. It also confirmed that for those areas of primary and old-growth forests already mapped, the majority are protected to some extent, for instance through the [Natura 2000 network of protected areas](#). The report contributes to the commitment made in the [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030](#) to define, map, monitor and strictly protect all the EU's remaining primary and old-growth forests. It is a compilation of existing mapping exercises by various researchers and organisations, and statistical information reported by the Member States. More information is in the [news item](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

European State of the Climate report: alarming trends on temperature increase

The [Copernicus Climate Change Service \(C3S\)](#), implemented by the [European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts](#) on behalf of the Commission, releases today its [European State of the Climate 2020](#) (ESOTC 2020). To help address the challenges of climate change, the [Copernicus](#) services monitor data on a global scale, including surface air temperature, precipitation, sea ice area and atmospheric greenhouse gases. The 2020 report underlines how temperatures continue a clear warming trajectory. The annual temperature for Europe was the highest on record – at least 0.4 °C warmer than the next five warmest years, which all occurred during the last decade. For the Arctic as a whole, 2020 was the second warmest year on record with an air surface temperature of 2.2 °C above the 1981-2010 average. While the early part of the year was colder than average over large parts of the Arctic, summer and autumn made up for this with both seasons having the highest temperatures on record. The report's findings come from measurements from satellites and ground stations and from global reanalysis data – computer modelling combined with multiple data sources, as well as from model-derived estimates. The 2020 report includes a short overview of the global context, a more comprehensive overview of conditions in Europe, and a focus on the Arctic. It provides a detailed analysis of the past calendar year, with descriptions of climate conditions and events, and explores the associated variations in key climate variables from across all parts of the Earth system. The ESOTC 2020 also gives updates on the long-term global trends of key climate indicators and is providing an important benchmark for future assessments of the environment. Additional information about the global climate in 2020 can be found in the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) statement on the [State of the Global Climate in 2020](#) (For more information: *Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tel.: +32 229 88199*)

Covenant of Mayors looking to raise ambition across Europe

Yesterday, the Commission opened a new chapter in the life of the [European Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy](#), seeking to raise ambition on the path towards climate neutrality in line with the [European Green Deal](#), and put a greater focus on action. Mayors and local representatives from cities across Europe gathered virtually to renew their political commitment on local energy and climate action towards achieving the Green Deal. Now, at a time when the EU is stepping up its energy and climate ambition for 2030 and 2050, it is time for the Covenant of Mayors and its 10,000 municipalities to do the same. In a video message to yesterday's Covenant meeting, Commissioner for Energy, Kadri **Simson**, said: *"Cities drive the energy transition on the ground and are at the forefront of the fight against climate change. They turn our policies and objectives into clean buses and bike lanes; they install solar PVs on our roofs, renovate our buildings, sometimes our entire neighbourhood, implementing the Renovation Wave and fighting energy poverty."* One of the new features within the Covenant's renewed ambitions will be the increased commitment of cities to engage their citizens, businesses and local stakeholders in the transition via the Climate Pact. The [European Climate Pact](#) is an EU-wide initiative inviting everyone to participate in climate action and build a greener Europe. More information available [here](#). (For more information: *Tim McPhie – Tel: +32 229 58602; Ana Crespo Parrondo – Tel: +32 229 81325*)

Drones: Commission adopts new rules and conditions for safe, secure and green drone operations

The Commission today adopted the U-space package - three regulations that together create the conditions necessary for both drones and manned aircraft to operate safely in a section of our airspace known as the U-space. These regulations introduce new services for drone operators, allowing them to carry out more complex and longer-distance operations, particularly in congested, low-level airspace (below 120m), and when out of sight. The U-space package creates and harmonises the conditions needed for manned and unmanned aircraft to operate safely, to prevent collisions between drones and other aircraft, and to mitigate the risks of drone traffic on the ground. Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** said: *"Drones are a clear part of the future transport and logistics landscape. There is vast potential when it comes to new cargo and delivery services, as well as other innovative applications, including drone flights with passengers on board in the future. This has clear added value in terms of achieving our decarbonisation, digitalisation and resilience ambitions, and the U-Space package is an important step towards creating the well-functioning, trusted and safe enabling environment that we need to develop a competitive EU drone services market."* The U-space package is included in the '[Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy](#)', laying the foundations for how the EU transport system can achieve its green and digital transformation and become more resilient to future crises. The regulatory package will now enter into force in April and will become applicable as of 26 January 2023. You can find more info [here](#). (For more information: *Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917*)

Politique de cohésion de l'UE: mesures de soutien à la relance et à la transition approuvées pour le Danemark et la France

La Commission a approuvé la modification de deux programmes opérationnels (PO) de la politique de cohésion qui augmenteront de près de 274 million d'euros le financement disponible pour les investissements dans le cadre de [REACT-EU](#) (Aide à la Relance pour la Cohésion et les Territoires Européens) au Danemark et en France. La Commissaire chargée de la cohésion et des réformes, Elisa **Ferreira**, a déclaré: « *Je suis heureuse de constater que les amendements au programme REACT-UE s'accélèrent dans toute l'UE. J'exhorte les États membres à tirer pleinement parti du financement REACT-UE pour ces mesures politiques afin de soutenir la reprise à long terme suite à la crise du coronavirus* ». Au Danemark, la modification du FEDER 'Innovation et croissance durable des entreprises PO' mettra en œuvre un programme national de développement des entreprises pour les PME combiné au soutien aux entreprises pour les ouvrages régionaux, facilitant ainsi la reprise grâce à la transition verte et numérique. En France, la modification du 'PO Rhône-Alpes' FEDER-FSE soutiendra les PME, la numérisation, l'économie verte et le secteur de la santé, tout en assurant une formation et un soutien au marché du travail, tant en Rhône-Alpes qu'en Auvergne. Dans le cadre de [NextGenerationEU](#), la législation REACT-EU étend les mesures de réponse à la crise et les modalités d'assistance fournies par le biais des paquets de l'[Initiative d'investissement en réaction au coronavirus](#) en fournissant un complément de 47,5 milliards d'euros (50,5 milliards d'euros en prix courants) aux programmes de la politique de cohésion tout au long de 2021 et 2022. Les mesures REACT-UE devraient se concentrer sur le soutien à la résilience du marché du travail, l'emploi, les PME et les familles à faible revenu, ainsi que sur la mise en place de bases pérennes pour les transitions vertes et numériques et une reprise socio-économique durable. (Pour plus d'informations: Vivian Loonela - Tél.: +32229 66712; Veronica Favalli - Tél.: +32229 87269)

Agriculture : la Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique de Roumanie et une spécialité traditionnelle garantie de Slovénie

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription du [«Cașcaval de Săveni»](#) de Roumanie dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP) et de la [«Slovenska potica»](#) dans le registre des spécialités traditionnelles garanties (STG). Le « Cașcaval de Săveni » est un fromage affiné, produit dans la région de Botoșani. Il se distingue par sa longue durée d'affinage (60 jours), qui lui permet d'acquérir une consistance onctueuse et homogène, ainsi qu'une couleur plus prononcée. Sa saveur se caractérise par des tonalités de noix et une légère amertume. Les conditions climatiques locales favorable au développement de pâturages naturels riches d'une flore diversifiée contribuent à la qualité du lait utilisé pour l'obtention du « Cașcaval de Săveni ». La « Slovenska potica » est un gâteau à pâte levée roulée et garni de différents fourrages, parmi lesquels ceux aux noix, à l'estragon et aux raisins secs sont les plus connus. Sa forme traditionnelle est ronde avec un trou au milieu étant donné qu'elle se cuit dans un moule traditionnel appelé « potičnik ». La « Slovenska potica » résulte d'un mode de production, d'une transformation ou d'une composition correspondant à une pratique traditionnelle. Dans la tradition culinaire slovène, c'est un plat qui symbolise un menu festif. Ces nouvelles appellations vont rejoindre 1609 produits alimentaires déjà protégés dont 64 spécialités traditionnelles garanties. La liste est disponible dans la base de données [eAmbrosia](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

Mergers: Commission clears creation of a joint venture by Aurubis and TSR

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture by Aurubis and TSR, a subsidiary of Remondis (Rethmann Group), all based in Germany. The joint venture will be active in the dismantling of cables. Aurubis is a vertically integrated worldwide provider of non-ferrous metals and one of the main copper producers in Europe. TSR is active in collecting, trading and processing secondary raw material for steel producers and the foundry industry and offers waste disposal and environmental services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the overlaps between the activities of the companies are limited and the risk of foreclosure is low. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [case register](#) under the case number [M.10157](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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