### **European Commission - Daily News**





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## Investor citizenship schemes: European Commission opens infringements against Cyprus and Malta for 'selling' EU citizenship

Today, the European Commission is launching infringement procedures against Cyprus and Malta by issuing letters of formal notice regarding their investor citizenship schemes also referred to as 'golden passport' schemes. The Commission considers that the granting by these Member States of their nationality – and thereby EU citizenship – in exchange for a pre-determined payment or investment and without a genuine link with the Member States concerned, is not compatible with the principle of sincere cooperation enshrined in Article 4(3) of the Treaty on European Union. This also undermines the integrity of the status of EU citizenship provided for in Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Commission considers that the granting of EU citizenship for pre-determined payments or investments without any genuine link with the Member States concerned, undermines the essence of EU citizenship. The Cypriot and Maltese governments have two months to reply to the letters of formal notice. If the replies are not satisfactory, the Commission may issue a Reasoned Opinion in this matter. The full press release is available online. (For more information: Christian Wigand - Tel.: +32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko - Tel.:+32 229 63444)

#### L'Union européenne renforce son soutien aux pays du centre du Sahel

Aujourd'hui, l'Union européenne, le Danemark, l'Allemagne et l'Organisation des Nations Unies (ONU) organisent conjointement une table ronde ministérielle virtuelle sur la région du Sahel central en Afrique, avec la participation de donateurs et d'organisations internationales, ainsi que des pays concernés : le Burkina Faso, le Mali et le Niger. L'événement discutera des perspectives à long terme pour les pays de la région, pour surmonter la spirale de violence et des crises humanitaires auxquelles ils sont actuellement confrontés. Il vise également à mobiliser davantage de soutien pour la région, particulièrement en cette période où la pandémie de coronavirus accroît les besoins humanitaires. Le commissaire européen chargé de la gestion des crises, Janez Lenarčič, qui représente l'UE à l'événement, annoncera un total de 43,6 millions d'euros destinés par l'UE aux trois pays de la région du centre du Sahel, pour le reste de l'année 2020. Janez Lenarčič a déclaré : « Au cours des dernières années, l'UE s'est particulièrement mobilisée en faveur du Sahel, et le soutien international apporté a été conséquent. Pourtant, la situation sécuritaire, sociale et humanitaire au Sahel central continue de se détériorer. Face à une situation qui s'aggrave dramatiquement nous devons ensemble, la communauté internationale et les gouvernements concernés faire plus, faire mieux, et agir rapidement. Ce n'est qu'en s'attaquant aux causes profondes que nous réussirons à offrir une vie meilleure aux personnes affectées par les crises qui frappent la région. » Jutta Urpilainen, commissaire européenne aux partenariats internationaux, a déclaré : « La conférence d'aujourd'hui est un signe très clair de notre solidarité envers la région du Sahel et ses habitants. Notre soutien de 20 millions d'euros au Programme alimentaire mondial des Nations Unies aidera les plus vulnérables au Burkina Faso, au Mali et au Niger, et en particulier les femmes enceintes et allaitantes et les jeunes enfants. Nous espérons ainsi porter assistance à 65 000 personnes l'année prochaine avec ce projet. Si nous unissons tous nos forces pour lier paix, développement et aide humanitaire, et que nos partenaires assument la responsabilité d'améliorer la gouvernance et les réformes, je suis convaincu que nous pouvons faire une différence pour les populations du Sahel. La Team Europe continuera à soutenir les populations du Sahel. » L'Union européenne et ses Etats membres ont mobilisé au total environ 8 milliards d'euros pour aider à stabiliser la région du Sahel depuis 2014. Pour plus d'informations, consultez le communiqué de presse. (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari - Tél.: +32 229 54578; Ana Pisonero Hernandez - Tél.: +32 229 54320; Daniel Puglisi - Tél.: +32 229 69140; Gesine Knolle - Tél.: +32 229 54323)

President von der Leyen at the annual meeting of the U.S. National Academy of Medicine

Yesterday evening, President von der Leyen, gave a speech at the annual meeting of the U.S.

National Academy of Medicine. "Global crises need global solutions. Health and climate change are two areas where Europe is willing and able to lead. And they are two areas where a strong transatlantic alliance has the potential to make a real difference. I believe it is now time to revitalise global health cooperation." The President mentioned the launch of the European Green Deal as one of the first initiatives launched after she came into office, as well as the efforts under the Coronavirus Global Response and COVAX Facility. "Just as with mitigation and adaptation policies for climate change, we must focus on the same principles for health. The crisis exposed the lack of global investment in preparing for pandemics. And it showed us the need to strengthen our capacity to respond to epidemics, emerging diseases and chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats. This is a lesson that we are already heeding here in Europe. [We also need systemic change since challenges] on a global scale cannot be fixed with a single intervention or a silver bullet. It requires change involving government, industry, researchers and all of us as individuals." Ursula von der Leyen also underlined the need to use and respect science: "Like many of you, I am concerned about the erosion in trust in science in some quarters. But science is also making a popular comeback. The world has seen its true value for policymaking and for communicating complex public health decisions. We must continue to stand up for science - so science can help us find and explain solutions to our global challenges." Read the full speech online. (For more information: Dana Spinant - Tel.: +32 229 90150)

### Investment Plan backs additional support for SMEs in Spain affected by COVID-19 crisis

The European Investment Bank (EIB) Group and Banco Santander in Spain are teaming up to provide additional financing on favourable terms to SMEs and mid-cap companies affected by the COVID-19 crisis. Part of this agreement is backed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the main pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. Thanks to this new agreement, over €900 million will become available to support the economic recovery of Spanish businesses. A specific focus of the new financing will be on investments into innovation, digitalisation and climate change mitigation and adaptation. Paolo **Gentiloni**, Commissioner for the Economy, said: "Once more the Investment Plan is joining forces with the EIB and EIF to support lending to SMEs hit hard by the COVID-19 crisis. The newly available financing from Banco Santander in Spain will benefit a large number of small and medium-sized companies, especially those operating in the digital sector or seeking to adapt to climate change." The press release is available here. The Investment Plan for Europe has so far mobilised €535 billion of investment across the EU, benefitting over 1.4 million SMEs in total. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

#### Baltic Sea: Agreement reached on 2021 fishing opportunities

Today, the Commission and the Member States reached an agreement on the fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2021. The agreement comes at a difficult time for the Baltic region, as it struggles with the ongoing environmental threats to the ecosystem and the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Virginijus Sinkevičius, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, welcomed the agreement: "I am pleased that we have found a compromise that works for the fishermen and women, while allowing fish stocks to replenish and reach healthy levels. This was the rationale of our proposal, which followed the advice of the International Council on the Exploration of the Seas (ICES) and the provisions of the Baltic multi-annual plan. I am happy that the Member States have kept to the spirit of Our Baltic ministerial conference a few weeks ago, when together with agriculture, fisheries and environment ministers from the region, we agreed to address all the factors affecting this fragile ecosystem." Overall, the agreement means that 8 out of 10 Baltic Sea total allowable catches (TACs) are set at sustainable levels - maximum sustainable yield (MSY). For two out of these stocks this is even below the MSY point value, or - for stocks where scientists could not give MSY-advice - in line with their precautionary advice. Reducing the fishing pressure alone will however not solve the problems of the Baltic Sea. A comprehensive approach is needed in line with the Our Baltic ministerial declaration signed by Commissioner Sinkevičius and Baltic Ministers of Agriculture, Fisheries and Environment three weeks ago. More information on the specificities of the agreement for the different fish stocks is available in the Commissioner's statement here. (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva -Tel.: +32 229 53664)

## EU Threat Landscape Report: Cyber attacks are becoming more sophisticated, targeted and widespread

Today, the European Union Agency for Cybersecurity (ENISA) published their yearly report

summarising the main cyber threats encountered between 2019 and 2020. The report reveals that the attacks are continuously expanding by becoming more sophisticated, targeted, widespread and often undetected, while for the majority of them the motivation is financial. There is also an increase of phishing, spam and targeted attacks in the social media platforms. During the coronavirus pandemic, the cybersecurity of health services was challenged, while the adoption of teleworking regimes, distance learning, interpersonal communication, and teleconferencing also changed the cyberspace. The EU is taking strong action to strengthen cybersecurity capacities: It will update legislation in the area of cybersecurity, with a new Cybersecurity Strategy coming up by the end of 2020, and is investing in cybersecurity research and capacity building, as well as in raising awareness about new cyber threats and trends, such as through the annual Cybersecurity Month campaign. The ENISA Threat Landscape Report is available here and a press release is available here. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

#### EIT Awards 2020: announcement of nominees

The European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) is today unveiling the list of 28 outstanding entrepreneurs from across Europe nominated for the EIT Awards 2020. The nominees will compete in four categories: the EIT Venture Award celebrating outstanding start-ups and scaleups; the EIT Change Award recognising top graduates from EIT entrepreneurial education programmes; the EIT Innovators Award for individuals and teams that have developed high impact innovative products; and the EIT Woman Award, putting the spotlight on inspiring female entrepreneurs and leaders. In addition, the public has the opportunity to vote for their favorite innovation in the EIT Public Award. Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, responsible for the EIT, said: "Through the EIT, the EU invests in its brightest innovators as they help to create a greener, healthier, and more sustainable society for Europe's citizens. The nominees for this year's Awards are based in 13 countries and are a testament to the EIT's ability to identify and drive the most promising innovation projects. I congratulate them all on reaching this stage and I look forward to the EIT Awards 2020 ceremony in December." Each award in the four main categories comes with a monetary prize of €50,000 (first place), €20,000 (second place), and €10,000 (third place). Nominees will pitch their innovations publicly online on 8 December, and the winners in the five categories will be announced in a live award ceremony on 9 December. The full list of nominees and their innovations can be found here. Online voting for the EIT Public Award will commence on 16 November at www.eitawards.eu. More information is available in the EIT press release. (For more information: Susanne Conze - Tel.: +32 229 80236; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten - Tel.: +32 229 84094)

# REUNION DU COLLEGE : programme de travail de la Commission pour 2021 – de la stratégie à la mise en œuvre

La Commission a adopté hier son programme de travail pour 2021, qui est conçu pour rendre l'Europe plus saine, plus juste et plus prospère, tout en accélérant sa transformation à long terme en une économie plus verte, adaptée à l'ère du numérique. Il contient de nouvelles initiatives législatives couvrant les six grandes ambitions énoncées dans les orientations politiques de la présidente von der Leyen et fait suite au premier discours sur l'état de l'Union de cette dernière. Tout en mettant en œuvre les priorités fixées dans le présent programme de travail, la Commission continuera à consentir tous les efforts possibles pour gérer la crise et rendre les économies et les sociétés de l'Europe plus résilientes. Le programme de travail de la Commission pour 2021 marque le passage de la stratégie à la mise en œuvre pour l'ensemble des six priorités politiques. Il confirme la détermination de la Commission à mener la double transition écologique et numérique, qui constitue une occasion sans précédent de sortir de la situation fragile engendrée par la crise et de donner une nouvelle vitalité à l'Union. Ursula von der Leyen, présidente de la Commission européenne, a déclaré à ce propos: « Notre priorité absolue restera de sauver les vies et les moyens de subsistance menacés par la pandémie de coronavirus. Nous avons déjà accompli beaucoup de choses. Mais l'Europe n'est pas encore sortie d'affaire et la deuxième vaque frappe durement sur l'ensemble du continent. Nous devons rester vigilants et redoubler d'efforts, tous autant que nous sommes. La Commission européenne poursuivra ses efforts pour garantir un futur vaccin aux Européens et aider nos économies à se relancer dans le cadre de la transition écologique et numérique. » Le programme de travail de la Commission pour 2021 est le fruit d'une coopération étroite avec le Parlement européen, les États membres et les organes consultatifs de l'UE. La Commission va à présent entamer des discussions avec le Parlement et le Conseil en vue d'établir une liste de priorités communes sur lesquelles les colégislateurs conviendront d'agir rapidement. Vous trouverez le communiqué de presse ici et les fiches d'information ici. (Pour plus d'informations,

## REUNION DU COLLEGE : sanctions et droits humains - vers un cadre européen pour lutter contre les abus et violations des droits humains dans le monde

La Commission européenne et le haut représentant de l'Union pour les affaires étrangères et la politique de sécurité, Josep Borrell, ont présenté hier une proposition conjointe de règlement du Conseil concernant la mise en œuvre de mesures restrictives (sanctions) en réaction aux graves abus et violations des droits humains dans le monde. La proposition de règlement du Conseil témoigne avec force de l'engagement pris par l'Union de défendre les droits humains, la démocratie, l'État de droit et les principes du droit international dans le monde entier. Il s'agit d'une étape cruciale vers la mise en place d'un régime de sanctions horizontal qui permettra à l'UE de réagir plus fermement aux graves abus et violations des droits humains dans le monde. La proposition conjointe de règlement du Conseil constitue l'un des actes juridiques exigés par le Conseil pour qu'il puisse procéder à l'instauration du nouveau régime de sanctions horizontales. Elle complète la décision du Conseil que propose le haut représentant et qui, une fois adoptée par le Conseil, instituera le régime mondial de sanctions de l'UE en matière de droits humains. De plus amples informations sont disponibles dans le communiqué de presse. Pour plus de détails, consultez le site web consacré aux sanctions de l'Union européenne, cet aperçu des sanctions actuellement en viqueur et le Plan d'action de l'UE en faveur des droits humains et de la démocratie 2020 - 2024 proposé par le haut représentant et la Commission en mars 2020. (Pour plus d'informations: Nabila Massrali - Tél: +32 229 88093; Daniel Ferrie - Tél: +32 229 86500; Xavier Cifre Quatresols - Tél: +32 229 73582; Aikaterini Apostola - Tél: +32 229 87624)

## State aid: Commission approves €39.6 million Greek scheme to support certain vegetable producers affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €39.6 million Greek scheme to support producers of certain vegetables in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State Aid Temporary Framework. The public support will take the form of direct grants. The scheme will be open to producers of 'Kalamon' table olives, early watermelon of low coverage and spring potatoes. It will be also open to producers of greenhouse crops of tomatoes, cucumbers and eggplants in Crete. The scheme aims at addressing the liquidity needs of the beneficiaries, thus helping them continue their activities during and after the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the Greek scheme is in line with the conditions of the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the aid does not exceed €100,000 per beneficiary as provided by the Temporary Framework for undertakings in the primary agricultural sector and (ii) the scheme will run 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 scheme 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.58929 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 €450 million Greek scheme to support companies active in certain sectors affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €450 million Greek scheme to support companies active in the tourism, transport, construction and energy sectors that have been particularly affected by the measures imposed to limit the spread of the coronavirus outbreak. The measure was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework. The support, which will take the form of subsidised loans, will be open to companies with up to 3,000 employees in the sectors concerned. The scheme will be financed with the resources of the Greek Infrastructure Fund (also called 'InfraFoF'), which is cofinanced by the European Regional Development Fund and the Greek State. The Greek Infrastructure Fund is managed by the European Investment Bank. The scheme will be implemented through local banks on behalf of the Greek Infrastructure Fund, which also requires the banks to provide complementary financing to the public loans. The measure aims at helping the beneficiaries address their liquidity needs and continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In

particular, i) the support can be granted only in relation to new loans; ii) the interest rates applied to the subsidised loans are in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework; and iii) the subsidised loans may be granted until 30 June 2021. The Commission concluded that the scheme is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the Greek economy, 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 <a href="here">here</a>. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.58368 in the State aid register on the Commission's competition website. (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 €9.35 million Portuguese employment aid scheme to preserve jobs on the Azores Islands during the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €9.35 million Portuguese aid scheme for preserving employment on the Azores Islands during the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework. It follows two measures approved by the Commission in May 2020, which have expired. The scheme aims at compensating the wage costs of companies in the Region of the Azores, which would otherwise have laid off personnel due to the coronavirus outbreak and the emergency measures taken by the State to limit its spread. The period for aid applications is 20 July to 31 December 2020 and aid can be granted as from April 2020. The maximum subsidy period is eight months. For the employers, there are two support options under the notified measure. Under the first option, the wage subsidy will amount to €111.13 per month and employee corresponding to 13.47% of the regional minimum gross monthly salary (including employer's social security contributions) and will be paid in one instalment. Under the second option, the wage subsidy will amount to €196.38 per month and employee, corresponding to 23.8% of the regional minimum gross monthly salary (including employer's social security contributions) which will be paid in three instalments. The Commission found that the Portuguese measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, employers commit to keep the employees covered by the subsidies for the period during which they receive aid. The Commission concluded that the Portuguese 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.58658 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 IMA by Sofima Holdings and BC Partners

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Industria Macchine Automatiche S.p.A. ('IMA') of Italy by Sofima Holdings of Italy and BC Partners LLP of the UK. IMA is active in the development and manufacturing of machinery and equipment for the automated packaging of goods. Sofima Holdings is active in real estate. BC Partners is a private equity firm providing investment advisory services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited overlaps between the companies' activities. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's competition website, in the public case register under the case number M.9937. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

#### Mergers: Commission clears the creation of a joint venture by Volvo and SCUK

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly-created joint venture, namely Volvo Car Financial Services ('VCFS'), by Santander Consumer (UK) PLC ('SCUK') of the UK and Volvo Car Corporation ('Volvo Cars') of Sweden. The new joint venture will provide automotive financing solutions to Volvo Cars' clients in the UK, such as loans and leases, and related services, such as distributing insurance. SCUK's activities focus on retail banking, asset management, corporate and investment banking, treasure and insurance. Volvo Cars' activities consist mainly in the development, production and sales of

automotive vehicles. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns, given the very limited horizontal overlaps and vertical relationships between the companies' activities. 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.9904. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

# Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control over Hermes UK by Advent and of joint control over Hermes Germany by Advent and Otto

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Hermes Parcelnet Limited ('Hermes UK') of the UK, belonging to the Otto group, by Advent International Corporation ('Advent') of the U.S., and the acquisition of joint control over Hermes Germany GmbH ('Hermes Germany'), belonging to the Otto group, by Advent and Otto GmbH & Co KG ('Otto') both of Germany. Hermes UK and Hermes Germany operate multi-channel delivery and collection services (i.e. courier services) in the UK and in Germany, respectively. Advent is a private equity investment business, focused on the acquisition of equity stakes and the management of investment funds in various sectors. Its portfolio companies have global activities, including in Asia, Europe, South America and the US. Otto is the holding company of various companies forming the Otto group. The Otto group is globally active in the area of retail and retail-related services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of its limited impact on the relevant markets. 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.9957. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

#### **STATEMENTS**

## Cyprus: Joint Statement by High Representative Borrell and Commissioner Ferreira on the electoral process in the Turkish Cypriot community

High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, and Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa Ferreira, have today issued the following statement on the election of Mr Ersin Tatar as the new leader of the Turkish Cypriot community: "It is important now to see a constructive engagement with a view to reaching a comprehensive settlement and reunification. The European Union supports the resumption of negotiations, under the auspices of the United Nations and remains fully committed to a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem, and of reunification based on a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, within the UN framework and in accordance with the relevant UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions, including UNSC resolutions 550 and 789, and in line with the principles on which the EU is founded. A solution to the Cyprus problem would be to the benefit of Cyprus and the EU in general. The EU stands ready to play an active role in supporting these negotiations. A stable and secure environment in the Eastern Mediterranean and the development of cooperative and mutually beneficial relationships amongst all partners in the region, bilaterally and multilaterally, is in the EU's strategic interest." The full statement is available online. (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli - Tel.: +32 229 87269; Peter Stano - Tel.: +32 229 54553; Zoï Muletier - Tel.: +32 229 94306)