



### Daily News 14 / 01 / 2021

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#### **La présidente von der Leyen et huit membres du Collège à Lisbonne pour l'inauguration de la présidence portugaise du Conseil de l'UE**

Demain, le 15 janvier, la présidente Ursula **von der Leyen** se rendra à Lisbonne pour l'inauguration de la présidence portugaise du Conseil de l'Union européenne, qui a commencé le 1 janvier 2021. La présidente s'y rendra avec le vice-président exécutif Frans **Timmermans**, la vice-présidente exécutive Margrethe **Vestager**, le vice-président exécutif Valdis **Dombrovskis**, le haut représentant/ vice-président Josep **Borrell**, le vice-président Maroš **Šefčovič**, le vice-président Margaritis **Schinas**, et les commissaires Nicolas **Schmit** et Elisa **Ferreira**. Les priorités de la présidence du Portugal – favoriser la relance européenne appuyée sur les transitions climatique et numérique, instaurer le Socle européen des droits sociaux en tant qu'élément essentiel pour mener à bien une transition climatique et numérique juste et inclusive, et renforcer l'autonomie stratégique d'une Europe ouverte au monde – correspondent pleinement aux priorités de la Commission **von der Leyen**, ce qui permettra aux deux institutions de collaborer étroitement pendant les prochains six mois. Le vendredi matin, la visite débutera avec une réunion de la présidente **von der Leyen** et du premier ministre du Portugal, António Costa. Puis, les membres du Collège et le gouvernement portugais assisteront à une session plénière, suite à laquelle la présidente **von der Leyen** et le premier ministre Costa tiendront une conférence de presse, prévue pour 15:00 CET et qui sera retransmise en direct sur [EbS](#). L'après-midi, la présidente rencontra d'abord le président de l'Assemblée nationale portugaise, Eduardo Ferro Rodrigues, pour ensuite rejoindre les Commissaires pour une entrevue avec des représentants de l'Assemblée. Après, la présidente **von der Leyen** aura encore une entrevue avec le président de la république portugaise, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. Les différents membres du Collège quant à eux auront des réunions bilatérales avec leurs homologues au cours de la journée. *(Pour plus d'informations: Eric Mamer – Tél.: +32 2 299 4073; Dana Spinant – Tél.: +32 2 299 0150)*

#### **Croatia earthquake: EU Member States offer further assistance**

Following the initial offers of assistance to Croatia – most of it dispatched in the first 24 hours after the devastating earthquake of 29 December 2020 – EU Member States are offering further in-kind assistance. Sleeping bags, housing containers, lighting systems and mattresses, provided by Germany, France and Austria, are on their way to Croatia or will be in the coming days. Slovenia delivered supplementary housing containers to Croatia on 11 January 2021. *"Once more, I would like to thank all EU Member States for their prompt response to the earthquake. The overwhelming response of 15 EU Member States and 1 Participating State helping the Croatian people in times of need is a tangible example of EU solidarity"*, said Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**. In 2020 alone, the EU's [Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) coordinated more than 100 times assistance to countries in Europe and worldwide due to crises. *(For information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi - Tel.: +32 229 69140)*

#### **Agriculture: Commission publishes list of potential eco-schemes**

The Commission published a [list of potential agricultural practices](#) that eco-schemes could support in the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Part of the CAP reform currently under negotiation between the European Parliament and the Council, eco-schemes are a new instrument designed to reward farmers who choose to go further in terms of environmental care and climate action. This list aims to contribute to the debate around the CAP reform and its role in reaching the Green Deal targets. This list also enhances transparency of the process for establishing the Strategic CAP Plans, and provides farmers, administrations, scientists and stakeholders a basis for further discussion on making the best use of this new instrument. The future CAP will play a crucial role in managing the transition towards a sustainable food system and in supporting European farmers throughout. Eco-schemes will contribute significantly to this transition and to the Green Deal targets. The Commission

published the [Farm to Fork](#) and [Biodiversity strategies](#) in May 2020. The Commission presented its [proposals for the CAP reform](#) in 2018, introducing a more flexible, performance and results-based approach that takes into account local conditions and needs, while increasing EU level ambitions in terms of sustainability. The European Parliament and Council agreed on their [negotiating positions on the reform of the CAP](#) on 23 and 21 October 2020, respectively, enabling the start of the trilogues on 10 November 2020. The Commission is determined to play its full role in the CAP trilogue negotiations as an honest broker between the co-legislators and as a driving force for greater sustainability to deliver on the European Green Deal objectives. A [factsheet](#) is available online and more information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tel.: +32 229 63303)

## **EU Cohesion policy: Commission supports the development of the Bulgarian research and innovation ecosystem**

Today, the Commission has published a set of [strategic recommendations](#) to 14 newly created research and innovation (R&I) centres, co-funded by the [EU Cohesion policy in Bulgaria](#). The recommendations aim at improving the management and helping the centres reach financial sustainability. They were elaborated by a team of internationally renowned experts during 1.5-year-long fieldwork, coordinated by the [Joint Research Centre](#), as well as through [exchanges with peers](#) from Spain, Lithuania and Czechia. They will support the Bulgarian authorities and researchers in strengthening the country's R&I ecosystem, building up capacity for transfer and dissemination of knowledge, and strengthening the cooperation between research institutions and businesses in areas like green and digital transitions as well as in advanced medicine. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira**, said: *"Thanks to EU support, these Centres will provide scientific infrastructure and equipment, making them attractive for young Bulgarian researchers. I urge all actors involved to make use of the experts' work, laying the ground for an efficient and modern research and innovation system."* Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"The EU's investment in the 14 Centres of Competence and Centres of Excellence has a great potential for transformation of the country's economy and its integration in Global Value Chains. I am confident that the findings of the JRC report will be well received by the Centres, and that the government, academia and industry stakeholders will take action to promptly implement its recommendations."* The initiative has been [launched](#) in 2019 and will be extended to other European countries. The Commission is also assisting Member States and regions in designing and implementing their smart specialisation strategies and through the [smart specialisation platform](#). The EU is currently investing €160 million in the centres, in the framework of [the 2014-2020 Bulgarian 'Science and Education for Smart Growth' programme](#). In 2021-2027 Bulgaria will receive more than €10 billion under Cohesion policy, with a substantial part dedicated to supporting innovation and competitiveness and green and digital transitions. (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712, Veronica Favalli - Tel.: +32 229 87269)

## **State aid: Commission approves two Czech employment schemes to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has found the modification of an existing scheme as well as a new measure to support Czech employers to be in line with the [Temporary Framework](#). The existing scheme, approved on [27 July 2020](#) under case number [SA.57102](#), consists in grants covering up to 80% of the employers' wage costs. Czechia notified the following modifications to the scheme: (i) a prolongation of the scheme until 30 June 2021, (ii) an increase in the estimated total budget of the scheme, from €866 million to €970 million, (iii) an extension of the period in relation to which the aid may be granted, until 28 February 2021, and (iv) an introduction of co-financing of the scheme from the European Social Fund. It is estimated that around 280,000 businesses will benefit from the modified scheme. The Commission found that the modification is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the modified measure will finance part of the wage costs for employees who would otherwise have been laid off, (ii) the aid is proportionate as it does not exceed 80% of the gross salaries, and (iii) the scheme respects the maximum duration of 12 months. Czechia also notified a new €160 million scheme to provide a higher level of support to businesses who were prohibited or substantially restricted in carrying out economic activities due to the coronavirus outbreak. This new scheme, consisting in financing up to 100% of the employers' wage costs, is accessible to businesses of all sizes and covers the wages incurred between 1 October and 28 February 2021. The measure is expected to support around 27,000 businesses. The Commission found that the scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €100,000 per company active in the primary agricultural production, €120,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector

and €800,000 per company active in all other sectors, and (ii) the aid will be granted before 30 June 2021. Employers can only benefit from one of the two approved schemes. The Commission concluded that both the amended scheme and the new measure are 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 measures 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 numbers SA.59889 and SA.59334 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 Refinitiv by London Stock Exchange Group, subject to conditions**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Refinitiv by the London Stock Exchange Group ('LSEG'). The approval is conditional on full compliance with a commitments package offered by LSEG. Following its in-depth investigation, the Commission had concerns that the transaction, as initially notified, would have harmed competition in the following markets: a) Horizontal concerns in electronic trading of European Government Bonds ('EGBs'), b) Vertical concerns in trading of dealer-to-customer over-the-counter interest-rate derivatives ('OTC IRDs'), c) Vertical concerns in consolidated real-time datafeeds ('CRTDs') and desktop services, and d) Vertical concerns in index licensing. To address the Commission's competition concerns, LSEG offered the following commitments: (a) To divest its 99.9% stake in the Borsa Italiana group, which includes MTS (LSEG's trading venue for EGBs), to a suitable purchaser. (b) To continue offering its global OTC IRD clearing services performed by LCH Swapclear on an open access basis and to not engage in commercial strategies that would discriminate customers based on the source of their OTC IRD trade submitted to LSEG for clearing. (c) To provide access to the LSE venue data, FTSE UK Equity Indices, and WM/R FX Benchmarks to all existing and future downstream competitors. The duration of the OTC IRD and financial data commitments is ten years. The commitments offered by LSEG fully address the competition concerns raised by the proposed transaction. The Commission therefore concluded that the transaction, as modified by the commitments, would no longer raise competition concerns. This decision is conditional on full compliance with the commitments. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*Infrastructure competition in trading services and access to financial data products on fair and equal terms is essential for the European economy and in particular for consumers and businesses. Today, we can approve the proposed acquisition of Refinitiv by LSEG because LSEG offered commitments that will ensure that the markets will remain open and competitive and the acquisition will not lead to higher prices or less choice and innovation for these products.*" The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of sole control over G4S by Allied Universal**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over G4S plc of the UK by Allied Universal Topco LLC ('Allied Universal') of the U.S. G4S is a global integrated security business, offering a broad range of security services around the world. Allied Universal is a security services and facilities management company mainly active in the US and to a lesser extent in other countries, including the UK. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of the limited impact it would have 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.10038](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of a joint venture by Ube Industries and Mitsubishi Materials**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of a newly created company constituting a joint venture by Ube Industries, Ltd. and Mitsubishi Materials Corporation, all of Japan. The joint venture will be active in the manufacture, process, sale, purchase, import and export of cement and other ceramic products, civil engineering and construction materials. Ube Industries is active in the manufacture and sale of chemicals, construction materials and machinery. Mitsubishi Materials Corporation is active, among others, in

the manufacture and sale of copper and copper alloy products, and cement and ready-mixed concrete, smelting, refining and sale of copper, gold and silver. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the joint venture has only negligible, actual or foreseen activities within 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.10030](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Lahti (Finland) starts its European Green Capital year

An [opening ceremony](#) that starts tomorrow at 11:00 CET will officially mark the start of the European Green Capital year 2021 for Lahti in Finland. Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said on the occasion: *"The European Green Capital title is a recognition, but it is at the same time a responsibility for the cities receiving it that they will continue working for green policies and actions and will set a good example to follow. I am convinced that Lahti has lessons to share in its management of air quality, its ambitious climate goals of becoming carbon neutral by 2025 and how it works to change people's behaviour to more sustainable."* Carrying the title of European Green Capital, Lahti will drive the implementation of the European Green Deal at local level, support local climate mitigation targets and the objectives of the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 or the Circular Economy. The [European Green Capital](#) designation is awarded by the European Commission following a stringent international competition. Lahti - Finland's eighth largest city - is the 12th European Green Capital, taking the turn from Lisbon, Portugal. In the competition for the title it performed strongly across all environmental thematic areas covered by the award, most notably in air quality, waste, green growth & eco-innovation and governance. To follow the ceremony, register [here](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

[Eurostat](#) press releases

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