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Brussels, 11 March 2021

Commission extends transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines

The Commission has today extended until end of June the transparency and authorisation mechanism for COVID-19 vaccine exports. This follows persistent delays in some of the deliveries of vaccines to the EU. Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: *"The first weeks of the application of this instrument have shown that the trade disruption feared by many did not take place. Since the measure was introduced, shipments were authorised to more than 30 countries. This confirms that even during a very critical health situation, the EU has made a considerable effort to be a reliable and responsible trading partner."* Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella **Kyriakides**, said: *"We expect companies with which we have signed a contract to fulfil their obligations towards EU citizens. The EU exports very significant volumes of COVID-19 vaccines, true to our commitment to global solidarity. Yet, not all companies are honouring their agreements with the EU despite having received a down payment to enable sufficient production. We will insist that compliance is ensured and we will continue to work with companies to ramp up production in Europe as quickly as possible."* More information is available in the [press release](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Sophie Dirven – Tel.: +32 229 67228)

EU Solidarity in action: Commission proposes to mobilise almost €530 million to support emergency measures against the coronavirus pandemic

The European Commission has proposed today a package of almost €530 million in additional financial support under the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) (EUSF) to contribute to the efforts deployed by 17 Member States and three accession countries to safeguard public health in fighting the coronavirus. This funding will support part of their public expenditure on medical and personal protective equipment, emergency support to the population, and measures of prevention, monitoring and control of the spread of the disease. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira** said: *"The EU Solidarity Fund is a concrete demonstration of European solidarity in action. Since its creation, it has delivered effective assistance and relief to millions of people during difficult times. Last year, we extended its scope to cover major health emergencies. Now we are proposing to mobilise much needed coronavirus-related financial assistance. The EUSF is once again accomplishing its core mission."* The aid package also includes the €132.7 million of advance payments [already received](#) by Germany, Ireland, Greece, Spain, Croatia, Hungary and Portugal. The mobilisation of the EUSF final payments to the 17 Member States is based on a thorough assessment of the applications submitted. The proposed financial contribution needs to be approved by the European Parliament and the Council before the financial aid can be disbursed. More information is available in our [press release](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli – Tel.: +32 229 87269)

Digitalisation of visa procedures: Commission launches public consultation

The Commission is launching today a [public consultation](#) on making visa procedures digital. Visa applicants, the travel industry, other interested stakeholders and the general public are invited to contribute. The changes under consideration include introducing a digital visa to replace the paper visa sticker currently in use and enabling those planning to travel to the EU to submit their visa application fully online. A paperless and contactless visa procedure will save time and money to travellers and to consulates, while also ensuring the highest level of security at the external borders of the Union. This initiative is fully aligned with the Commission's objective to modernise and digitise public services in the Union. The consultation will run until 3 June and its results will feed into the preparation of a Commission proposal to be presented by the end of 2021. The [New Pact on Migration and Asylum](#) sets the objective of making the visa procedure fully digitalised by 2025. (For

more information: Adalbert Jahnz - Tel.: + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley - Tel.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tel.: +32 229 55721).

Taxation: Commission launches public consultation on extending the scope of the Directive on Administrative Cooperation to crypto-assets and e-money

The European Commission has published a [Public Consultation](#) on the future revision of the Directive on Administrative Cooperation (DAC8). The revision aims to improve cooperation between national tax authorities, particularly in emerging areas such as crypto-assets. This initiative should provide tax administrations with information to identify taxpayers who are actively using new means of payment and investment, notably crypto-assets and e-money, in order to curb tax fraud and evasion. It will also ensure consistency with ongoing work at EU level, such as the [Digital Finance Strategy](#) adopted on 24 September 2020 and the proposal for a [Regulation on Markets in Crypto-assets](#). This revision is part of the [Action Plan for Fair and Simple Taxation Supporting the Recovery](#) that the Commission presented in July 2020. Since its adoption, the original [Directive](#) 2011/16/EU has so far been amended and extended six times, to include information on financial accounts, on tax rulings and advance pricing agreements, on country-by-country reports, on beneficial ownership, on reportable cross border arrangements and on digital platforms. Stakeholders are invited to provide input by the 2 June deadline. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Nerea Artamendi Erro - Tel: +32 229 90964)

Fiscalité: la Commission lance une consultation publique sur les droits des contribuables

La Commission européenne a lancé une [consultation publique](#) sur une recommandation aux États membres visant à améliorer les droits des contribuables et à simplifier les obligations fiscales. Elle fait suite à la [communication](#) sur le même sujet, proposé par la Commission en octobre 2020. Les réponses reçues lors de cette consultation contribueront à une recommandation aux États membres qui fera le point sur les droits des contribuables en vertu du droit de l'UE. La communication et la recommandation constitueront ensemble la charte des droits des contribuables telle qu'annoncée dans le [plan d'action pour une fiscalité équitable et simplifiée à l'appui de la stratégie de relance](#) de juillet dernier. Ces initiatives visent à répertorier les droits existants basés sur la jurisprudence et la pratique, et à sensibiliser les contribuables et les administrations fiscales à ces droits et obligations. La recommandation pourrait également aider les États membres à améliorer leur administration et leurs pratiques fiscales afin de mieux respecter les droits des contribuables. Ceci pourrait favoriser les relations entre les contribuables et les administrations fiscales et mieux soutenir le processus de recouvrement des impôts. Les intéressés peuvent participer à la [consultation](#) jusqu'au 2 juin. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Nerea Artamendi Erro - Tel: +32 229 90964)

Crisis management: emergency aid and medical staff mobilised via EU Civil Protection Mechanism

The Commission continues to coordinate assistance to countries requesting EU support on various fronts. Responding to Slovakia's request for medical staff to help treat COVID-19 patients, Denmark has offered to send three doctors and five nurses via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Belgium has offered to deploy one doctor, two nurses and a team leader to Slovakia. Commissioner **Lenarčič** welcomes these offers as another tangible example of EU solidarity in the face of the coronavirus pandemic. Furthermore, Spain and France are sending emergency support to Equatorial Guinea, following the country's request through the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#) following the series of fatal explosions at a military base in Bata, Equatorial Guinea, on 7 March. The blasts have caused loss of life, left hundreds of people wounded and led to extensive damage to residential buildings and a newly built hospital. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič** said: "I would like to express my condolences to those that lost family members and friends in the tragic explosions in Equatorial Guinea. I thank Spain and France for their prompt offers of the much-needed assistance. The EU stands ready to provide further support as needed." The assistance by Spain and France will support health services in first aid response. It includes a Spanish medical team specialised in trauma and surgery, medical equipment, and medicines, and a French medical post with capacity to treat 250 heavily wounded people, emergency medical material and kits, personal protective equipment and tents equipped with kitchen kits. In addition to coordinating the dispatch of the material through the Mechanism, the EU will be covering up to 75% of the transport costs of the consignment. The EU is also providing support with expertise from EU Member States to be associated to United Nations relief efforts in Bata. (For more information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi - Tel.: +32 229 69140)

L'UE alloue 17 millions d'euros pour venir en aide aux populations les plus vulnérables d'Haïti et des Caraïbes

La Commission européenne a annoncé aujourd'hui une aide humanitaire de 17 millions d'euros pour répondre aux besoins des plus vulnérables d'Haïti et des Caraïbes, qui ont été aggravés par la pandémie de la COVID-19. Le commissaire chargé de la gestion des crises, Janez **Lenarčič**, a déclaré: « *L'UE continue d'apporter une aide humanitaire vitale directement aux populations les plus vulnérables. En Haïti et dans le reste des Caraïbes, les risques naturels récurrents renforcent encore les vulnérabilités, tout en étant exacerbés par le coronavirus. En cette période difficile, l'UE intensifie son aide humanitaire de longue date aux personnes qui en ont le plus besoin.* » En Haïti, 14 millions d'euros permettront de sauver la vie de personnes souffrant d'une extrême insécurité alimentaire, d'apporter une protection aux migrants et aux victimes de la violence des gangs et d'accroître la résilience face aux catastrophes. Entre-temps, pour d'autres îles des Caraïbes, trois millions d'euros seront alloués à la préparation des interventions destinées à faire face aux catastrophes et aux opérations de résilience dans les communautés à risque. Le communiqué de presse complet est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari – Tél.: + 32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi- Tél.: + 32 229 69140)

Biodiversité: Changement révolutionnaire dans les rapports économiques pour mieux tenir compte de la contribution de la nature à l'économie

Un nouveau cadre statistique visant à mieux prendre en compte la biodiversité et les écosystèmes dans la planification économique nationale et la prise de décision politique, approuvé hier aux Nations unies (ONU), permet aux pays du monde entier d'utiliser un ensemble commun de règles et de méthodes pour suivre l'évolution des écosystèmes et de leurs services. La Commission européenne a soutenu les Nations unies dans l'élaboration de ce cadre grâce aux contributions de scientifiques, de statisticiens et de décideurs politiques. Le nouveau cadre va au-delà des données communément utilisées du produit intérieur brut (PIB) et garantit que le capital nature -les contributions des forêts, des océans et des autres écosystèmes- s'ajoute aux comptes économiques existants. Le vice-président exécutif Frans **Timmermans** a déclaré: « *Pour faire face aux crises climatiques et à la biodiversité, nous devons transformer notre modèle économique. Ce nouveau cadre statistique va au-delà du PIB et tient mieux compte de la biodiversité et des écosystèmes dans la planification économique nationale* ». Le commissaire chargé de l'environnement, des océans et de la pêche Virginijus **Sinkevičius** a ajouté: « *Il s'agit d'une évolution majeure dans le changement de notre façon de concevoir la prospérité et le bien-être. Bien que la nature contribue de manière substantielle à notre économie, elle est largement invisible dans nos statistiques économiques. Nous devons transformer notre vision et notre appréciation de la nature et faire de sa contribution à notre vie une partie de l'équation économique. Pour cela, nous devons recourir à des méthodes rigoureuses afin de contrôler les investissements, les impacts et les dépendances en rapport avec la nature. Le nouveau cadre constitue un pas important dans cette direction, car il pourrait réorienter fondamentalement la planification économique et politique vers le développement durable* ». La Commission va proposer la révision du règlement relatif aux comptes économiques européens de l'environnement (CEEE) afin d'étendre sa couverture pour y inclure un nouveau module sur la comptabilité du capital naturel, entièrement compatible avec le cadre des Nations unies. Le pacte vert pour l'Europe appelle à la gestion et à l'intégration des risques climatiques et environnementaux dans le système financier, tandis que la stratégie européenne en faveur de la biodiversité à l'horizon 2030 souligne la nécessité de mieux intégrer les considérations relatives à la biodiversité dans le processus décisionnel des pouvoirs publics et des entreprises à tous les niveaux. De plus amples informations sont disponibles dans cette [communication](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Vivian Loonela - Tél.: +32 229 66712; Arianna Podesta - Tél. +32 229 87024; Daniela Stoycheva - Tél.: +32 229 53664; Maria Tsoni - Tél.: +32 229 90526)

« Juvenes Translatores »: 27 élèves de toute l'Europe remportent un prix

La Commission européenne a félicité aujourd'hui les 27 lauréats du concours de traduction « Juvenes Translatores » qu'elle organise pour les élèves de l'enseignement secondaire. Les participants pouvaient choisir de traduire à partir de n'importe quelle langue officielle de l'UE vers n'importe quelle autre. Les traducteurs en herbe ont utilisé 150 des 552 combinaisons linguistiques possibles. Le thème choisi cette année, « Tenir la barre en eaux troubles – ensemble, nous sommes plus forts », a trouvé un écho particulier en Europe au cours de l'année écoulée. Le commissaire au budget et à l'administration, Johannes **Hahn**, a fait la déclaration suivante: « *J'adresse mes félicitations aux élèves qui ont relevé ce défi de traduction dans des conditions aussi difficiles. Je*

félicite également les enseignants pour leur détermination à organiser le concours en pleine période d'enseignement en ligne. Tous ont démontré une véritable passion pour les langues et le multilinguisme. » Les traducteurs de la Commission européenne ont sélectionné les 27 gagnants (un par État membre) parmi environ 2 800 participants issus d'écoles de toute l'Europe. En outre, 248 élèves se sont vu décerner des [mentions spéciales](#) pour des traductions remarquables. Le meilleur jeune traducteur ou la meilleure jeune traductrice de chaque pays de l'UE sera invité(e) à une cérémonie de remise des prix en ligne qui aura lieu le vendredi 2 juillet 2021. Les lauréats et leurs enseignants pourront également rencontrer un traducteur ou une traductrice professionnel(le) de la Commission européenne pour en apprendre davantage sur la traduction et les langues. La direction générale de la traduction de la Commission européenne organise le concours « Juvenes Translatores » (« jeunes traducteurs » en latin) chaque année depuis 2007. Plus de détails figurent dans le [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari – Tel.: +32 229 54578; Claire Joawn – Tel.: +32 229 56859).

State aid: Commission approves €511 million Italian scheme to compensate commercial rail passenger operators for damages suffered due to coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, €511 million in Italian support to compensate providers of commercial, long-distance rail passenger services for the damage suffered between 8 March and 30 June 2020 due to the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictive measures that Italy had to implement to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Under the notified measure, the beneficiaries will be entitled to compensation in the form of direct grants for the damage suffered between 8 March 2020 and 30 June 2020. Italy will ensure that no individual beneficiary receives more in compensation than what it suffered in damages. The Commission assessed the measure under Article [107\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors (in the form of schemes) for the damages directly caused by exceptional occurrences. The Commission found that the Italian aid scheme will compensate damages that are directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak. It also found that the measure is proportionate, as the envisaged compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. It therefore concluded that the scheme is in line with EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *“Competition in the high-speed segment in Italy has been key to develop services with more capacity, frequency and connections, leading to lower prices and better quality for consumers. This €511 million aid measure will enable Italy to support long-distance rail passenger operators on commercial lines in these difficult times, by compensating them for the damage suffered as a result of the emergency measures that Italy put in place during the first wave of the pandemic. We continue to work with all Member States to ensure that national support measures can be put in place as quickly and effectively as possible, in line with EU rules.”* The full press release is available [online](#). (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 €16.3 Swedish subsidised loan scheme to support air traffic control services affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a SEK 164 million (approximately €16.3 million) Swedish scheme to support air traffic control services affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). In the context of the coronavirus outbreak, Sweden introduced restrictions to avoid the spread of the virus, which has caused dramatic drops in air travel. Specifically in 2020, the number of air passengers in Sweden was 75% lower than in 2019. The aim of the scheme is to cover the losses for the years 2020 and 2021 incurred by small and medium sized companies active in air traffic management, which have suffered significant losses in revenues due to these drops in the number of flights performed. Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of loans provided by the Swedish National Transport Administration ('Trafikverket') with subsidised interest rates. The Commission found that the Swedish scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the maturity of the loans is limited to six years, (ii) a 1% flat rate interest rate applies for the entire duration of the loans, (iii) the amount of the loans corresponds to the level foreseen in the Temporary Framework, (iv) the loans relate to working capital needs, and (v) the loan contracts will be signed by 31 December 2021 at the latest. 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 of 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 full decision will be made available under the case number SA.61298 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)

Mergers: Commission clears the joint acquisition of Caruna Group by OTPP and KKR

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the joint acquisition of Caruna Group of Finland, by Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board ('OTPP') of Canada and KKR & Co. Inc. ('KKR') of the U.S. Caruna Group distributes electricity and maintains the electricity network in parts of Finland. OTPP administers the pension benefits and invests pension plan assets of teachers in the Canadian province of Ontario. KKR is a global investment firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because it would not result in any overlaps between the activities of the companies. 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.10190](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control of Tikkurila by PPG

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control of Tikkurila Oyj ('Tikkurila') of Finland by PPG Industries, Inc. ('PPG') of the U.S. Both companies are active in the manufacturing and supply of decorative coatings, used in house and building construction or refurbishment. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns thanks to the presence of a sufficient number of alternative suppliers of decorative coatings in the European Economic Area (EEA) and the EEA countries where both Tikkurila and PPG are active, such as Poland and Denmark. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction is unlikely to foreclose competitors from access to inputs and/or customers. The proposed transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10123](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Simson to discuss energy cooperation with US Energy Secretary Granholm

Today, Energy Commissioner Kadri **Simson** will hold a virtual meeting with Jennifer Granholm, the United States Secretary of Energy. The video conference follows the US Special Presidential Envoy for Climate John Kerry's visit to the Commission earlier this week and focuses on the green energy transition, bilateral energy relations and cooperation in international fora. The EU and the US have committed to working together to tackle the climate crisis and to implement the Paris Agreement. Energy will play a central role in reducing emissions and achieving climate neutrality, through an increased share of renewables, improved energy efficiency and new technologies. The US is a key partner for the EU in the just transition and in investment, innovation and job creation in the energy sector. This is the first bilateral meeting between Commissioner **Simson** and Secretary Granholm, after she took office at the end of February. (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel: +32 229 58602; Ana Crespo Parrondo – Tel: +32 229 81325)

Commissioner Sinkevičius speaks up for forests

Tomorrow, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, is participating in two events where he will stress the role of forests in tackling the twin climate and biodiversity crises. At 11:00 CET he will host a virtual citizens' dialogue with Slovak citizens where he will answer questions by eco-activists, students, green influencers, representatives of NGOs on biodiversity, circular economy, the European Green Deal, climate adaptation and how forests are sustaining healthy ecosystems and helping the regulation of the climate cycle. The Minister of

Environment of Slovakia, Ján Budaj will also be part of the citizens' dialogue. You can join the citizens' dialogue [here](#), livestreamed in Slovak language. Commissioner **Sinkevičius** will then around 18:30 CET close the [Global Forest Summit](#) – a virtual high-level event organised under the patronage of the President of France, Emmanuel Macron with the motto 'Protect Faster, Restore Stronger'. The Summit will highlight the role of forests in addressing global warming, reducing CO2 emissions, and preserving our nature ecosystems, acting this way also as a barrier against future pandemics. The Summit will gather high-level speakers such as ministers, CEOs and representatives of United Nations and international nature-focused organisations. In the run-up to COP 15 on Biodiversity, the IUCN World Conservation Congress and COP 26 on Climate, the panelists of the closing session of the Global Forest Summit will discuss the path to follow to definitively make forests one of the priority subjects on the international agenda for the next ten years. You can follow the Commissioner's speech [here](#). The European Commission is currently preparing its Forest Strategy, part of the new [Biodiversity Strategy](#), and a [public consultation](#) is ongoing until 19 April. (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Le vice-président Schinas et la commissaire Johansson participeront à la session des affaires intérieures de la visioconférence informelle des ministres de la justice et des affaires intérieures

Une visioconférence informelle des ministres de l'intérieur de l'UE aura lieu le vendredi 12 mars. La Commission sera représentée par la commissaire **Johansson** tout au long de la journée, et conjointement avec le vice-président **Schinas** pour le point sur le nouveau pacte sur la migration et l'asile. Les ministres débattront d'abord de la [proposition de directive](#) relative à la résilience des entités critiques, point qui sera suivi d'une mise à jour par la présidence portugaise sur les propositions législatives actuelles. Les ministres discuteront ensuite de l'état d'avancement et des prochaines étapes concernant le nouveau pacte sur la migration et l'asile. Plus tard dans la matinée, les participants échangeront leurs points de vue en ce qui concerne la communication sur le renforcement de la coopération en matière de retour et de réadmission. Dans l'après-midi, une discussion sur le renforcement de la coopération UE-Afrique du Nord aura lieu. Enfin, la présidence et la Commission fourniront des informations sur l'évaluation Schengen de la Croatie, suivies d'une mise à jour par la Commission sur la situation aux frontières due à la COVID-19 et la voie à suivre. Une conférence de presse avec la commissaire **Johansson** aura lieu le 12 mars à +/- 17h00 HEC, que vous pouvez suivre en direct sur [EBS](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Adalbert Jahnz - Tél. : + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley - Tél. : +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tél. : +32 229 55721).

Vice-President Schinas and Commissioner Gabriel open the EU Youth Conference and digital Hackathon to increase youth participation in political processes

Tomorrow, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinas**, together with Prime Minister of Portugal António Costa, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and Minister of education, Tiago Brandão Rodrigues will open the [EU Youth Conference](#) in Portugal. Commenting before the event, Vice-President **Schinas** said: "*Youth is at the heart of the European project. This project is not a given, but is constantly evolving. We should strive to improve it continuously for, and with, the next generations. We need young people who are committed to building and shaping the world we want to live in. We need young people who carry high the values and ideals that inspire them, those of a more united, resilient and prosperous Europe.*" The Conference is part of the 8th Cycle of the EU Youth Dialogue, and has the theme: "Europe and youth, youth and Europe: a space for democracy and participation". As a side-event of the Conference, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, will open a [48-hour digital hackathon "Solve the gap"](#). The Hackathon, open to all EU residents between 16 and 30 years-old, will seek innovative digital solutions to tackle barriers to youth participation in political processes. Participants will have 48 hours to present ideas to address challenges like youth abstention or youth engagement in policy. Winners will be announced on 15th March, receiving a €10,000 and technical support to finalise their project prototype by the next EU Youth Conference in October 2021. Commissioner **Gabriel** said: "*I welcome this initiative, which will encourage young people to take an active part in society and have a say in the political processes in Europe. This Hackathon demonstrates the enormous potential of young people across Europe to create positive change. It promotes and supports youth-led digital innovations which are crucial to advance our European project. I wish all the participants the best of luck and look forward to seeing the results of their work.*" Empowering youth participation in the democratic political decision-making process is one of the objectives of the Commission's [EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027](#). The strategy focuses on fostering youth participation in democratic life, supporting social and civil engagement and ensuring that all young people have the

necessary resources to take part in society. The event can be followed on social media with the hashtags #SolveTheGap and #EUIHackathon. (*For more information: Sonya Gospodnova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Sinéad Meehan–van Druten – Tel.: +32 229 84094*)

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