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REUNION DU COLLEGE: La Commission européenne propose aujourd'hui de créer un certificat vert numérique pour faciliter la libre circulation en toute sécurité dans l'UE durant la pandémie de COVID-19

La Commission européenne propose aujourd'hui de créer un certificat vert numérique pour faciliter la libre circulation en toute sécurité dans l'UE durant la pandémie de COVID-19. Ce certificat prouvera qu'une personne a été vaccinée contre la COVID-19, a reçu un résultat négatif à un test de dépistage ou a guéri de la COVID-19. Il sera disponible gratuitement, sous forme électronique ou sur papier. Il comportera un QR code visant à garantir sa sécurité et son authenticité. La Commission mettra en place un système « passerelle » afin de garantir que tous les certificats peuvent être vérifiés dans l'ensemble de l'UE; elle soutiendra les États membres dans la mise en œuvre technique des certificats. Il incombera toujours aux États membres de décider quelles restrictions en matière de santé publique peuvent être levées pour les voyageurs, mais ils devront appliquer ces assouplissements de la même manière aux voyageurs titulaires d'un certificat vert numérique. Un [communiqué de presse](#), un [document questions-réponses](#) et une [fiche d'informations](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand - Tél.: +32 229 62253; Johannes Bahrke - Tél.: +32 229 58615; Katarzyna Kolanko - Tél.: +32 229 63444; Jördis Ferroli - Tél.: +32 229 92729; Charles Manoury - Tél.: +32 229 13391)

COLLEGE MEETING: Coronavirus: a common path to Europe's safe re-opening

Ahead of the meeting of European leaders on 25 March, the Commission is calling on Member States to prepare for a coordinated approach to a gradual lifting of COVID-19 restrictions when the epidemiological situation will allow. In a [Communication](#) adopted today, it charts the way ahead for a balanced policy and common EU approach, pointing to what we need to do to advance the time when we can recover our European way of life, and do so in a safe and sustainable way with control over the virus. Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinias**, said: "*The common path forward requires a safe and sustainable approach for the benefit of all Europeans. In lifting restrictions, we must learn the lessons of 2020 and avoid damaging and costly cycles of opening and closing. Today's Communication includes a balanced package of existing and new measures. We are looking forward to the endorsement of Member States at the upcoming European Council. Every day we get closer to achieving our vaccination goals and the recovery of our European way of life.*" Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella **Kyriakides**, said: "*Today we are proposing a common EU approach that will lead us on the way to our goal of re-opening the EU in a safe, sustainable and predictable way. The situation with the virus in Europe is still very challenging and confidence in decisions taken are crucial. It is only through a joint approach that we can return safely to full free movement in the EU, based on transparent measures and full mutual confidence.*" A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker - Tel.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy - Tel.: +32 229 83978)

REUNION du COLLEGE : Coronavirus - la Commission adopte une approche commune pour traquer la COVID-19 grâce à la surveillance des eaux usées

La Commission européenne a adopté aujourd'hui une [recommandation sur la surveillance de la COVID-19 et de ses variants dans les eaux usées de l'UE](#). L'objectif est d'exploiter davantage une nouvelle source d'informations indépendantes sur la propagation du virus et de ses variants, qui apportera une contribution significative et rentable à la prise de décision en matière de santé publique. La recommandation demande aux États membres de mettre en place des systèmes de surveillance des eaux usées, et d'assurer la fourniture rapide de données pertinentes aux autorités sanitaires compétentes. Des méthodes communes d'échantillonnage, de mesure et d'analyse des données, compilées sur une plateforme d'échange européenne, devraient être mises à disposition et utilisées pour garantir la fiabilité et la comparaison des données collectées. Le commissaire à

l'environnement, aux océans et à la pêche, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, a déclaré : « *L'évolution et la propagation des variants de la COVID-19 constituent une réelle menace dans notre réponse efficace à la crise. Il est important que tous les moyens disponibles soient pleinement utilisés pour détecter le virus et ses variants, afin de fournir des réponses appropriées et opportunes. Le recours à la surveillance des eaux usées peut constituer une source d'information rentable, rapide et fiable qui nous aiderait à lutter contre le virus. C'est aussi un bon exemple des avantages multiples des infrastructures environnementales modernes sur notre santé et notre bien-être.* » Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire chargée de l'innovation, de la recherche, de la culture, de l'éducation et de la jeunesse, a ajouté : « *La recommandation d'aujourd'hui est le résultat d'une alliance sans précédent entre le secteur européen de l'eau, le secteur de la santé publique et la communauté scientifique, le Centre commun de recherche de la Commission fournissant le savoir-faire et l'infrastructure scientifiques nécessaires et faisant office d'accélérateur de l'innovation. Cette impulsion scientifique a permis à la Commission de prendre des mesures rapides pour soutenir les efforts continus des États membres de l'UE en vue d'arrêter la propagation de la COVID-19.* » Il est crucial de soutenir l'échange de meilleures pratiques entre les États membres, mais aussi avec les pays tiers qui peuvent ne pas avoir facilement accès à ces données. La Commission fournira une aide financière afin de favoriser les activités de surveillance des eaux usées et l'analyse systématique des variants, en créant également une plateforme d'échanges européenne dédiée. Cette recommandation fait partie d'un ensemble de mesures COVID-19 adoptées aujourd'hui par la Commission, comme annoncé dans le [plan de préparation européen intitulé « HERA Incubator »](#). Elle s'appuie sur une initiative-cadre de la Commission visant à rassembler les connaissances et l'expérience des États membres en matière de surveillance de la COVID-19 et de ses variants dans les eaux usées. De plus amples informations sont disponibles dans la [recommandation](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Vivian Loonela - Tél.: +32 229 66712; Johannes Bahrke - Tél.: +32 229 58615; Daniela Stoycheva - Tél.: +32 229 5366; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten - Tél.: +32 229 84094)

COLLEGE MEETING: The College appoints a new Director for the department for energy

Today, the European Commission has decided to appoint Ms Paula Pinho as Director of the Directorate for Just Transition, Consumers, Energy Efficiency and Innovation in the Directorate-General for Energy (ENER). Ms Pinho, a Portuguese national and lawyer by training, will draw on her extensive knowledge of various EU policies and in particular EU energy policy, as well as on her leadership, management and negotiation skills towards her commitment to Europe's clean and just energy transition. Since 2015, she has been Head of Unit in DG ENER, and acting Director between 2019 and 2020, in charge of energy strategy and coordination of energy policy in the context of the Green Deal and Recovery. She has been monitoring the implementation of the Energy Union and the 'Clean Energy for all Europeans' legislative package. From 2008 until 2015, she was a member of various Cabinets and notably of the one in charge of energy from 2010 until 2014. Prior to that, she worked in the Directorates-General for Trade and for Internal Market. She joined the Commission in 2000. (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075, Claire Joawn – Tel.: +32 460 756859)

Les commissaires Schmit et Breton ont organisé une table ronde sur le Pacte européen pour les compétences avec des représentants du secteur textile

Hier, les commissaires **Schmit** et **Breton** ont organisé une table ronde sur le Pacte pour les compétences avec des représentants du secteur textile. Cette table ronde s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une série d'échanges visant à encourager la participation de l'industrie au [pacte sur les compétences](#). Annoncé dans le cadre de la [stratégie européenne pour les compétences](#) adoptée par la Commission le 1^{er} juillet 2020, le pacte a été lancé le [10 novembre](#). Son objectif est de mobiliser tous les acteurs concernés — partenaires industriels, sociaux, régionaux et éducatifs — afin d'aider les travailleurs à développer les compétences nécessaires à une reprise durable, sociale et résiliente à la suite de la pandémie de coronavirus. Les partenariats établis dans le cadre du pacte bénéficieront du soutien de la Commission sous la forme d'une plateforme de partenariat ou encore de conseils sur les options de financement de l'UE. Le secteur textile est directement impacté par la pandémie. Il a par ailleurs réalisé d'importants progrès dans le cadre de l'[initiative actuelle de coopération sectorielle en matière de compétences](#). Il a en conséquence été identifié comme un écosystème prioritaire à associer au pacte. Les commissaires ont entendu le besoin d'attirer les jeunes dans le secteur textile. L'amélioration des compétences existantes et le développement des nouvelles compétences sont des moteurs importants pour la relance économique ainsi que pour la restructuration à long terme du secteur. L'enseignement et la formation professionnels sont plus importants que jamais pour atteindre ces objectifs. (Pour plus d'informations: Marta Wieczorek – Tél. +32 229 58197; Sonya Gospodinova – Tél. +32 229 66953)

Investment Plan for Europe backs the largest impact venture capital fund for start-ups in Spain

With the support from the European Investment Fund (EIF), which is backed by the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#) Equity social impact pilot, the BSocial Impact Fund has reached €38 million in its second closing and aims to exceed €45 million. The BSocial Impact Fund will be the largest impact venture capital fund for start-ups in Spain. It will focus on seed and early-stage social businesses that aim to improve the quality of life of vulnerable people, improve access to education, and mitigate the effects of climate change. With this transaction, the EU and the EIF support social entrepreneurship and social impact investors, aiming to develop and scale up the European social impact ecosystem. Executive Vice-President for An Economy that Works for People, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: "*Thanks to the support of the Investment Plan and of the European Investment Fund, the Spanish BSocial impact fund will invest in early-stage social businesses. The new fund will be the largest impact venture capital fund for start-ups in Spain and address some of the main challenges of our times: increasing the quality of life for vulnerable people, mitigating the effects of climate change, and improving access to education for all.*" The European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) is the main pillar of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#), which has so far mobilised €546.5 billion of investment, supporting over 1.4 million SMEs and start-ups across the EU. The press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wiczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

Space: 10th Anniversary of the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) Safety of Life (SoL) Service

Today, we are celebrating the 10th Anniversary of the European Geostationary Navigation Overlay Service (EGNOS) Safety of Life (SoL) Service. The service was declared operational by the Commission in March 2011. In nearly 400 airports across Europe, the EGNOS SoL Service is supporting civil aviation precision approaches thanks to improved navigation based on GPS. It makes the aviation sector safer and more efficient for the European operators, while significantly contributing to the reduction of the aviation environmental footprint. The SoL Service is also intended to support applications in a wide range of other domains such as maritime, rail and road. Commissioner Thierry **Breton**, in charge of Internal Market, said: "*Implementing innovation is at the heart of the European Union space programme, allowing many different sectors to take advantage of the space-based services to develop their activities, having at heart the well-being of citizens. The EGNOS SoL is a successful example of this approach.*" EGNOS is Europe's regional satellite-based augmentation system. It has been Europe's first venture in the world of satellite navigation and is used to improve the performances of global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), such as GPS and Galileo in the future. EGNOS improves the accuracy and reliability of GNSS positioning information, while also providing a crucial integrity message to confirm the usability of the GNSS signal. EGNOS is currently managed by the European GNSS Agency (GSA) under the leadership of the Commission. More info on EGNOS can be found [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tel.: +32 229 88199)

La Commission se félicite de l'accord politique provisoire sur la nouvelle enveloppe de 1 milliard d'euros destinée à financer les équipements de contrôle douanier dans les États membres de l'UE

La Commission se félicite de l'accord politique provisoire intervenu hier entre le Parlement européen et les États membres de l'UE sur le nouvel [instrument relatif aux équipements de contrôle douanier pour la période 2021-2027](#). Dans le cadre de ce nouvel instrument, les pays de l'UE recevront un milliard d'euros pour l'achat, la modernisation et la maintenance d'équipements de contrôle douanier de pointe. Il contribuera à la mise en œuvre du [plan d'action des douanes](#) adopté en septembre dernier. La mise à disposition d'équipements de contrôle douanier modernes et fiables permettra de remédier aux points faibles identifiés aux frontières extérieures de l'UE, qui sont préjudiciables à la protection des intérêts financiers de l'UE, et à la sûreté et à la sécurité des citoyens de l'UE. Cela devrait aider les autorités douanières à garantir le recouvrement adéquat des droits de douane et des taxes, à protéger les citoyens de l'UE contre les marchandises dangereuses et les contrefaçons et à favoriser le commerce légitime. Paolo **Gentiloni**, commissaire chargé de l'économie, a déclaré à ce propos: « *À mesure que nos sociétés et nos économies évoluent, les autorités douanières sont confrontées à de nouveaux défis tels que l'augmentation considérable du volume des échanges internationaux, les risques accrus de fraude et le nombre croissant d'importations de marchandises dangereuses. Une fois opérationnelle, l'enveloppe d'un milliard d'euros approuvée ce jour permettra*

aux États membres de disposer d'outils de pointe pour aider les agents des douanes de première ligne à relever efficacement ces défis pour notre union douanière. » Un [communiqué de presse](#) et une [fiche d'information](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'information : Daniel Ferrie – Tél.: +32 229 86500; Nerea Artamendi Erra – Tél.: +32 229 90964)

EU, Norway and the United Kingdom conclude key fisheries arrangements on North Sea

The trilateral arrangement between the EU, the United Kingdom and Norway on jointly managed fisheries stocks in the North Sea for 2021, signed yesterday, establishes the total allowable catches (TAC) and quota sharing covering over 636,000 tonnes of fish. In parallel, the EU and Norway have concluded bilateral consultations for the shared stocks in the North Sea, Skagerrak and quota exchanges. Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius** said: "*I am pleased that we were able to reach agreements with Norway on one side, and Norway and the United Kingdom on the other, which allow European fishermen to restart fishing in the North Sea, Skagerrak and Kattegat for many stocks that we share with these two countries. As always for the catch limits we have followed scientific advice, so that fishing activities happen in a sustainable manner allowing for stocks to recover and remain in good health. We also agreed to continue implementing additional measures, in particular to protect adult and juvenile cod.*" Following the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU, after two months of negotiations, the three parties signed yesterday an agreement, allowing for the joint management of the following stocks: cod, haddock, saithe, whiting, plaice and herring. The agreement on quotas for 5 out of these 6 stocks have been set at maximum sustainable yield (MSY) levels, in line with the scientific advice from the [International Council for the Exploration of the Seas \(ICES\)](#). The three parties have also agreed to cooperate on monitoring, control and surveillance, organised in a trilateral setting for the first time. Additionally, the EU and Norway also signed yesterday three bilateral agreements relating to the quota exchanges and reciprocal access in the North Sea, and to the pelagic stocks. Both parties have thus renewed the arrangement on reciprocal access for the jointly managed stocks in the North Sea. One of those bilateral arrangements relates to the setting of the total allowable catches (TACs) and quota sharing for Skagerrak and Kattegat for cod, haddock, whiting, plaice, pandalus, herring and sprat, as well as the bilateral reciprocal access in the area. The agreements reached today will enable the much anticipated restart of the EU's fishing operations in Norwegian waters, and vice-versa, which had been partially discontinued since 31 December 2020. More information is in the [press release](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Competition: The European Commission forms a Multilateral Working Group with leading competition authorities to exchange best practices on pharmaceutical mergers

The European Commission's Directorate General for Competition together with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC), the Canadian Competition Bureau, the UK's Competition and Markets Authority, the U.S. Department of Justice, and three Offices of Attorneys General launched today a Multilateral working group to analyse the effects of mergers in the pharmaceutical sector. The working group was initiated by the FTC and is in line with close cooperation between national competition authorities. The joint project will build further on the expertise from the competition authorities as well as other stakeholders with relevant experience, to ensure the most effective enforcement in this crucial market. The goal of the working group is to identify concrete and actionable steps to update the analysis of pharmaceutical mergers. It will bring enhanced scrutiny and more detailed analysis of these kinds of mergers in the future, for the benefit of consumers. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*An innovative and well-functioning pharmaceutical sector is essential for meeting the needs of our citizens. Over the past years the European Commission has taken new initiatives in scrutinising global pharmaceutical mergers to ensure effective competition in the sector. We have contributed to fair prices for vital medicines and we have protected the development of new, life saving drugs. I therefore warmly welcome this initiative, which brings together some of our closest partners worldwide to take stock of the lessons learned in recent years and explore new ways to foster vibrant competition to the benefit of citizens.*" The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsioni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Antitrust: Commission opens investigation into PPC's behaviour in the Greek wholesale electricity market

The European Commission has opened a formal antitrust investigation to assess possible abusive behaviour by Public Power Corporation ('PPC') in the wholesale Greek electricity sector. PPC is the largest supplier of retail and wholesale electricity in Greece. PPC is majority owned by the Greek

State. The Commission is concerned that PPC may have restricted competition in the Greek wholesale electricity markets with its bidding behaviour. In particular, in light of PPC's position both at wholesale and retail levels, it may have adopted predatory bidding strategies hindering the ability of PPC rivals to compete in the wholesale and related electricity markets. If proven, this behaviour may constitute an exclusionary predatory practice, which is in breach of EU antitrust rules, specifically on the abuse of a dominant market position (Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). The opening of proceedings means that the Commission will examine the cases as a matter of priority. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: "*We all rely on well-functioning electricity markets. Today we are launching an investigation of PPC's behaviour in wholesale electricity markets in Greece that might have distorted competition and slowed down investment into the generation of greener energy. Greece has recently embarked on an ambitious plan to exit from lignite. Ensuring effective competition is the best way to deliver competitively priced electricity, both for citizens and businesses, as well as to stimulate investment in less polluting energy sources.*" The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Commission approves €3 million Latvian scheme to support cultural institutions affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €3 million Latvian scheme to support companies active in the country's cultural sector that have been affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The measure was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The aim of the scheme is to mitigate the sudden liquidity shortages that these companies are facing due to the restrictive measures implemented by the Latvian government to limit the spread of the virus. The support will take the form of direct grants. The measure is open to companies active in the country's cultural sector. Beneficiaries include businesses active in arts and entertainment, libraries and museums. The support will serve to cover paid expenses for the period from 1 January 2021 till 30 June 2021. It will cover monthly payments, *inter alia* for the lease of premises, public utilities, and communication and IT services. It may also serve to cover salaries and related taxes for the employees. The Commission found that the Latvian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the overall aid cap of €1.8 million per company will be respected; and (ii) the aid will be granted no later than 31 December 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 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 non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.61769 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 a newly established JV by CDP Venture Capital and Generali Welion

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly established joint venture company ('JVCo') by CDP Venture Capital SGR S.p.A. ('CDP Venture Capital') and Generali Welion S.C.A.R.L ('Generali Welion'), all of Italy. JVCo will provide residential and recreational services for the elderly, as well as wellness and assistance services. CDP Venture Capital is controlled by Cassa Depositi e Prestiti S.p.A. and provides direct and indirect investments, manages funds and supports start-ups in all phases of their life cycle. Generali Welion is controlled by Assicurazioni Generali S.p.A. and provides consultancy and management services for individual health and corporate welfare. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of the absence of overlaps 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.10194](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of FACQ by Cordes & Graefe

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of the

FACQ Group ('FACQ') of Belgium by Cordes & Graefe KG of Germany. FACQ is active in the retail supply of sanitary, plumbing, ventilation, heating and air conditioning products to professional and non-professional customers. Cordes & Graefe is active in the wholesale and retail supply of sanitary, plumbing, ventilation, heating and air conditioning products, electrical equipment, roofing, excavation and industrial technologies, mainly to professional customers. The Commission partially referred the proposed transaction to the Belgian Competition Authority on 17 February 2021, pursuant to Article 4(4) of the Merger Regulation. The Commission has now concluded that the remaining aspects of the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns because of their limited impact on the EU Member States other than Belgium. 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.9970](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the proposed acquisition of Good Host by Goldman Sachs and Warburg Pincus

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over Good Host Spaces Private Limited ('Good Host') of India by The Goldman Sachs Group Inc. ('Goldman Sachs') and Warburg Pincus LLC, both of the U.S. Good Host is a student housing company that provides high quality accommodation to students in towns and cities in India, including at Manipal University in Jaipur. Goldman Sachs is a global investment banking, securities and investment management firm that provides a range of banking, securities and investment services worldwide to a substantial and diversified client base that includes corporations, financial institutions, governments and high-net-worth individuals. Warburg Pincus is a global private equity firm with portfolio companies active in a variety of sectors, including energy, financial services, healthcare, industrial and business services and technology. 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.10161](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the proposed acquisition of joint control over Transurban Chesapeake by CPPIB, AustralianSuper and Transurban

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of joint control over Transurban Chesapeake LLC of the U.S. by Canada Pension Plan Investment Board ('CPPIB') of Canada, AustralianSuper Pty Ltd ('AustralianSuper') and Transurban International Ltd ('Transurban'), both of Australia. Transurban Chesapeake is engaged in the development, maintenance, operation and marketing of toll roads in the greater Washington D.C. area, in the U.S. CPPIB is an investment management organisation that invests the funds transferred to it by Canada Pension Plan, and principally invests in public equities, private equities, real estate, infrastructure and fixed income investments at global level. AustralianSuper is Australia's largest industry superannuation and pension fund and has primarily invested in Australia but recently expanded its global investment activities. Transurban is a toll road operator company, which manages and develops urban toll road networks in Australia, Canada and the U.S. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given its limited impact in the EEA. 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.10183](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Vaccine production: Commissioner Breton to visit Merck factory in Molsheim (France) to support expansion plans for single-use products essential for the supply chain

Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for the Internal Market responsible for the Task Force on Industrial

Scale-up of COVID-19 vaccine production and French Minister of Industry, Agnès Pannier-Runacher, will visit a production factory of the German company Merck in Molsheim (Alsace, France) and participate in the company's announcement of a multi-million euro investment in single-use products in its factory. These single use products are essential for the smooth functioning of the European vaccine supply chain. The investment will extend production capabilities in disposal bags used in bioreactors, essential for the drug substance manufacturing. The new production capabilities are expected to be operational by end of 2021. Ahead of the on-site visit, Commissioner **Breton** said: *"Our efforts to increase European production capacity and anticipate all potential bottlenecks, including single-use bags, are quickly bearing fruit. This major investment by Merck is another example of the European vaccine supply chain becoming more powerful. It is by coordinating all production efforts that we promote the industrial autonomy of our continent."* The Task Force was set up to ramp up production capacity for vaccines, acting as a one-stop-shop for manufacturers in need of support, and to identify the main bottlenecks both in terms of capacity and supply chain issues. (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tel.: +32 229 58300; Célia Dejond – Tel.: +32 229 88199)

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