



Daily News 25 / 03 / 2021

Brussels, 25 March 2021

RÉUNION DU COLLÈGE: Pacte vert pour l'Europe: La Commission présente des actions visant à stimuler la production biologique

La Commission a présenté aujourd'hui un [plan d'action pour le développement de la production biologique](#). Son objectif général est de stimuler la production et la consommation de produits biologiques, de porter à 25 % la surface agricole consacrée à l'agriculture biologique d'ici à 2030, ainsi que de développer de manière significative l'aquaculture biologique. La production biologique présente un certain nombre d'avantages importants: les cultures biologiques présentent environ 30 % de plus de biodiversité, les animaux issus de l'élevage biologique bénéficient d'un meilleur niveau de bien-être et consomment moins d'antibiotiques, les agriculteurs biologiques ont des revenus plus élevés et sont plus résilients, et les consommateurs savent exactement ce qu'ils achètent grâce au logo biologique de l'UE. Le plan d'action est conforme au [pacte vert pour l'Europe](#), à la [stratégie «De la ferme à la table»](#) et à la [stratégie en faveur de la biodiversité](#). Le plan d'action vise à doter le secteur de la production biologique, qui connaît déjà une croissance rapide, des outils appropriés pour atteindre l'objectif de 25 %. Il propose 23 actions articulées autour de trois axes: encourager la consommation, accroître la production et continuer d'améliorer la durabilité du secteur – afin d'assurer une croissance équilibrée du secteur. Un [communiqué de presse](#) et un [Q&A](#) sont disponibles en ligne. Vous pouvez revoir la conférence de presse par le Commissaire **Wojciechowski** sur [EBS](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

Erasmus+: plus de 28 milliards d'euros pour soutenir la mobilité et l'apprentissage pour tous

La Commission a adopté aujourd'hui le premier programme de travail annuel d'Erasmus+ 2021-2027. Doté d'un budget de 26,2 milliards d'euros (contre 14,7 milliards d'euros pour la période 2014-2020), auquel s'ajoutent quelque 2,2 milliards d'euros provenant d'instruments extérieurs de l'UE, le nouveau [programme](#) révisé financera des projets de mobilité à des fins d'apprentissage et de coopération transfrontière pour 10 millions d'Européens de tous les âges et de tous horizons. Il aura pour objectif d'être encore plus inclusif et de soutenir les transitions écologique et numérique, comme le prévoit [l'espace européen de l'éducation](#). Erasmus+ soutiendra également la résilience des systèmes d'éducation et de formation face à la pandémie. Margaritis **Schinas**, vice-président chargé de la promotion de notre mode de vie européen, a déclaré: « *Je me félicite du lancement du nouveau programme Erasmus+, qui s'est affirmé comme l'une des grandes réussites de l'Union européenne. Il continuera d'offrir des possibilités d'apprentissage à des centaines de milliers d'Européens et de bénéficiaires des pays associés. Tout en apportant une expérience de mobilité et de compréhension commune entre Européens qui change la vie, ce programme nous aidera également à réaliser notre ambition de bâtir une Europe plus juste et plus verte.* » Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire à l'innovation, à la recherche, à la culture, à l'éducation et à la jeunesse, s'est exprimée en ces termes: « *Le fait que le budget d'Erasmus+ pour les sept prochaines années ait presque doublé montre l'importance accordée à l'éducation, à l'apprentissage tout au long de la vie et à la jeunesse en Europe. Erasmus+ demeure un programme unique de par sa taille, sa portée et la reconnaissance mondiale qu'il a acquise, couvrant 33 pays, et étant accessible au reste du monde dans le cadre de ses activités internationales. J'invite toutes les organisations, publiques et privées, exerçant des activités dans les domaines de l'éducation, de la formation, de la jeunesse et du sport à prendre connaissance des appels à propositions qui viennent d'être publiés et à solliciter un financement. Grâce à Erasmus+, nous ferons de l'espace européen de l'éducation une réalité.* » L'adoption aujourd'hui du programme de travail annuel ouvre la voie aux premiers [appels à propositions](#) relevant du nouveau programme Erasmus+, également publiés aujourd'hui. Pour plus ample d'informations, un [communiqué de presse](#) est disponible en ligne, ainsi qu'une [fiche d'information](#). La conférence de presse de la commissaire **Gabriel** est disponible sur [EBS](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 2 29 66953 ; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten – Tél.: +32 2 29 84094)

President von der Leyen on the EU's role in Global Health": "Europe has chosen to build a global alliance"

President Ursula **von der Leyen** delivered a speech today at the "Conference on strengthening the role of the EU in Global Health" organised by the Portuguese presidency of the Council. The speech was an occasion for the President to highlight that fighting the pandemic must be a global effort. She said that *"we can only contain the virus by joining forces with our friends in other countries and continents. Instead of competing with others, Europe has chosen to build a global alliance. Almost one year ago, we joined forces with the WHO, with other governments and with charitable foundations. Together we created the ACT-Accelerator, the global initiative to help all countries get access to tests, treatments and vaccines."* President **von der Leyen** also made reference to the need for the world to improve its readiness for such challenges: *"We must step up the world's capacity to produce vaccines, as well as our collective preparedness against health crises. The world was not prepared for a global pandemic of this unprecedented scale. But we have acted. Last year, we went from hearing for the first time about COVID-19, to fast-tracking R&D. We expanded our testing capacity exponentially, and managed to bring several vaccines to the market. We did this in record time."* Finally, in that sense, she underlined the importance of the upcoming Global Health Summit: *"We must now move from the ad-hoc solutions of this year, towards a sustainable system. This will help us manage and prevent health crises in the future. This is exactly the goal of the Global Health Summit, that I will co-host with Italy on 21 May. At this Summit, we will agree on principles that can guide our future responses."* The President's speech is available [here](#) and it can be rewatched [here](#). (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150)

Coronavirus vaccine disinformation: new reports from online platforms to inform Code of Practice revamp

The Commission publishes today the [new reports](#) by Twitter, TikTok, Google, and Microsoft on measures they took in February 2021 against vaccine disinformation as signatories of the [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#). Věra **Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, said: *"Disinformation erodes our democratic debate. Transparency is a pre-condition to understand and counter online disinformation and the reports go in the right direction. Going further, we will revamp the code of practice against disinformation with practical guidance and a permanent monitoring framework."* Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, added: *"Vaccination is our utmost priority for Europeans. Fighting disinformation on COVID-19 vaccines is essential to complement our production and vaccination efforts. Safe and efficient vaccines are being produced and administered in Europe and we cannot let disinformation undermine trust. Platforms have a responsibility in this regard and they have to live up to this responsibility."* The reports show that Twitter updated its COVID-19 search prompts in the EU to include authoritative information on vaccines, and activated the hashtag #Vaccinated 🇪🇺 in 24 languages for users to show their support for vaccination. TikTok launched a new feature placing a banner across videos warning users they may contain unverified content and prompting a message before they share the flagged video. Google's Search feature, showing reliable information on vaccines and statistics in response to related searches, is now active in all 27 EU countries and YouTube removed 30,000 videos that included claims contradicting consensus among health authorities. Microsoft's Bing search engine deployed a new feature showing countries' vaccination progress, and the Bing COVID-19 experience had more than 2,300,000 visits. The Commission is in continuous contact with the platforms to further address the large amount of vaccine disinformation that keeps circulating online and fine-tune the monitoring process, including on the impact of the signatories policies also to ensure sufficient transparency and public accountability. To this end, the Commission will issue guidance in spring aiming at strengthening the Code of practice and building the bridge with the future [Digital Services Act obligations](#), as set out in its [European Democracy Action Plan](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391)

Environmental Liability: Commission announces guidelines to identify how environmental damage needs to be prevented and remediated

The Commission adopted today guidelines which clarify the scope of the term 'environmental damage' in the [Directive on environmental liability](#). These [guidelines](#) will help Member States to better assess in which ways damage to water, land and protected species and natural habitats must be prevented or restored by explaining the scope of each of these categories in detail. They will provide greater legal clarity and harmonisation of its interpretation and application. Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius** said: *"Nature is under severe pressure*

from human activity and pollution, and halting the loss of biodiversity is a huge challenge for us all. These new guidelines will help towards achieving the objectives of our Biodiversity Strategy and the upcoming Zero Pollution Action Plan by making it clearer when operators are liable for environmental damage that they cause." The Directive on environmental liability aims at establishing a framework of environmental liability, based on the 'polluter pays' principle - operators become thus liable to prevent and restore any environmental damage caused by their activities. An earlier Commission evaluation showed that a lack of common understanding among Member States and stakeholders on the application of the term 'environmental damage' was weakening the Directive's implementation. The notion of 'environmental damage' is also closely related to other EU legal requirements, notably in the [Birds Directive](#), [Habitats Directive](#), the [Water Framework Directive](#) and the [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#). The guidelines therefore also contribute to fulfilling the objectives of these laws, as well as of the Biodiversity Strategy by clarifying the links with environmental damage. More information available in this [news item](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Reinforcing trust in scientific studies on food products: new rules for more transparency and independence

On 27 March 2021, the [Regulation on the transparency and sustainability of the EU risk assessment in the food chain](#) becomes applicable. The Commission's proposal for this Regulation was adopted in 2019, following a European Citizens' Initiative. The Regulation's entry into force does not only mark an important step forward in the modernisation of the EU food safety policy, it is also a great example of the direct political impact of a European Citizens' Initiative. The new rules will improve the transparency of the EU risk assessment regarding food and cover a wide range of products of great concern for citizens. The Regulation will strengthen the reliability, objectivity and independence of studies submitted to the [European Food Safety Authority \(EFSA\)](#) and give a greater role to Member States in EFSA's governance. Commissioner Stella **Kyriakides**, in charge of Health and Food Safety, said: "More transparency on EU scientific work in the area of food will reinforce consumer trust. These new transparency rules directly respond to calls from our citizens. We are putting them in place at a time when the Commission has taken a strong commitment, through our Farm to Fork Strategy, in ensuring greater sustainability so that the way we produce and consume our food is healthy not just for us, but also for our planet." To mark the upcoming entry into application of the Transparency Regulation, the European Commission and the Portuguese Presidency, in collaboration with EFSA, will organise a joint celebratory virtual event on Tuesday 30 March 2021, from 10:00 until 12:30 CET. The event will be web-streamed [here](#). A [press release](#) is available on Press Corner, as well as a [Q&A](#) on the website of DG SANTE. (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker - Tel.: +32 229 84680; Stephan Meder - Tel.: +32 229 13917)

Agriculture : la Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique de Hongrie

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription de la « Vasi vadkörte pálinka » de Hongrie dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). La « Vasi vadkörte pálinka » est une eau-de-vie produite à partir de poires sauvages, dans les comtés de Vas et de Zala, à l'ouest de la Hongrie. Les caractéristiques organoleptiques de la « Vasi vadkörte pálinka » expliquent son caractère unique: sa saveur fraîche, caractéristique, légèrement acidulée, avec des notes d'agrumes, d'épices et de miel, et une texture plus rustique que lisse grâce à la poire sauvage utilisée dans le moût de la « Vasi vadkörte pálinka ». L'acidité piquante et la fraîcheur de la « Vasi vadkörte pálinka » se développent grâce à la faible teneur en sucre et à l'acidité de la poire sauvage, cultivée dans la région. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre les 249 indications géographiques de boissons spiritueuses déjà enregistrées dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [eAmbrosia](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer - Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours - Tél.: +32 229 63303)

EU provides €500,000 in emergency funding for victims of Cox's Bazar fire in Bangladesh

The European Commission has announced €500,000 in emergency funding to respond to the consequences of the massive fires in Cox's Bazar refugee camps in Bangladesh on 22 March. The fire affecting one of the largest refugee camps in the world has caused several deaths and injuries. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič** said, "The devastation caused by the terrible fire in Cox's Bazar has worsened the already dire humanitarian situation faced by almost one million Rohingya refugees living in the camps. We extend our deepest sympathies to all those who have suffered terrible loss in this tragedy. We also commend the bravery of the emergency services, aid agencies, volunteers, and all those who fought tirelessly to contain the blaze and prevent further loss

of lives. At this challenging time, the EU is stepping up its long-standing humanitarian assistance to those most in need. And we will continue to provide strong humanitarian aid support directly to the most vulnerable population." This funding will target the most urgent humanitarian needs of over 10,000 affected families, with a focus on shelter, water, sanitation, and hygiene, and non-food items. As the damage to vital camp infrastructures is extensive, with almost total destruction of hospitals, health centres, distribution centres, water network, learning centres and other key infrastructure in the most affected camps, this emergency support is an immediate first response. The full press release is available [online](#) (For more information: Balazs Ujvari – Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Speech by President von der Leyen at the High-level Conference 'Investing in climate action: The Make-or-Break Decade'

Yesterday afternoon, the President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen** delivered a [speech](#) at the Opening of the High-level Conference 'Investing in climate action: The Make-or-Break Decade', in cooperation with the European Investment Bank, via videoconference. President **von der Leyen** underlined that *"the next ten years must be a turning point"* in terms of global emissions: *"Today, global emissions are still rising. And this has to change as a matter of urgency. We must act now before it is too late. But there is another factor that can make a difference between 'make or break'. It is how we think about climate action. Climate action is not only a necessity. It is also the greatest economic opportunity of our time."* The President spoke about the new needs but also new opportunities this transformation represents. Europe stands ready to be the driver of this change. She outlined three crucial tasks to tackle in the immediate future: *"First, we must ensure the quality of our investment. We should try and maximise the impact of every euro we spend, in terms of environmental impact, but also of job creation and innovation. Second, we must work to mobilise as much private investment as possible. We need an 'investment revolution' that goes well beyond the public sector to catch the green opportunities of the 2020s. And third, we must look beyond Europe's borders, too. We must explore new forms of global cooperation on green finance, towards a climate-friendly economy. Europe will be the first climate neutral continent, but we do not want it to be the only one."* Looking ahead, the President closed her speech by saying: *"I want this decade to be the Roaring Twenties of climate action and climate investment. Europe must lead this change. It is our last chance to stop climate change. And it is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to become global leaders in the economy of the future."* The [European Green Deal](#) is our roadmap towards climate neutrality and new growth strategy. €280 billion from [NextGenerationEU](#) will finance climate action. The full speech is available [here](#), and you can watch it [here](#). Executive Vice-Presidents [Timmermans](#) and [Dombrovskis](#), and Commissioner [McGuinness](#) also gave speeches at the conference. (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150; Tim McPhie - Tel.: +32 229 58602)

La Commission propose d'agir pour faire respecter les droits de l'enfant et soutenir les enfants dans le besoin

La Commission a adopté hier la première [stratégie globale de l'UE sur les droits de l'enfant](#), ainsi qu'une [proposition de recommandation du Conseil établissant une garantie européenne pour l'enfance](#), afin de promouvoir l'égalité des chances pour les enfants exposés au risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale. En préparation des deux initiatives, la Commission, en collaboration avec les principales organisations mondiales de défense des droits de l'enfant, a recueilli l'avis de plus de 10 000 enfants de l'UE et d'ailleurs. Grâce à une nouvelle stratégie sur les droits de l'enfant, la Commission s'attaque aux problèmes persistants et émergents et propose des actions concrètes pour protéger, promouvoir et garantir les droits de l'enfant dans le monde d'aujourd'hui, en perpétuelle évolution. La garantie européenne pour l'enfance complète le deuxième pilier de la stratégie sur les droits de l'enfant, vise à briser le cycle de pauvreté et d'exclusions sociale et à favoriser l'égalité des chances en garantissant l'accès à un ensemble de services essentiels pour les enfants dans le besoin (enfants de moins de 18 ans exposés au risque de pauvreté ou d'exclusion sociale). Un [communiqué de presse](#) et [Q&A](#) sont disponible en ligne, ainsi que des fiches d'information sur la stratégie [ici](#) et sur la garantie [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Daniel Ferrie – Tél.: +32 229 66953 / Marta Wieczorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten – Tél.: +32 229 84094 / Flora Matthaes – Tél.: +32 229 83951)

Work begins on the Conference on the Future of Europe

The work on the Conference on the Future of Europe has officially started, with the first meeting of

its Executive Board yesterday evening, two weeks after the Joint Declaration was signed by European Parliament President, David Sassoli, Portuguese Prime Minister António Costa, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council, and by Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen**. The Executive Board, composed of representatives from the three institutions, on an equal footing, will oversee the work, process and organisation of the Conference. At the meeting, the Executive Board agreed on a series of essential items needed to get started. The first steps were taken to ensure that citizens can soon start to contribute to the Conference, in particular, via a multilingual Digital Platform. Commission Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, and co-chair of the Executive Board, Dubravka **Šuica**, said *"The Conference will enable citizens from every corner of the EU, and from all backgrounds, to share their ideas, hopes and dreams in shaping their Union's future. This is a unique and historic moment for citizen engagement in the European Union."* Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 2 29 66953; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten – Tel.: +32 2 29 84094)

Investment Plan for Europe supports better water supply and waste management services in Portugal

The European Investment Bank (EIB) will provide up to €28.2 million in financing to support the water distribution optimisation investments of Águas do Interior – Norte (AdIN), a company that exclusively provides water supply and waste management services to eight municipalities in the north of Portugal. The project is backed by a guarantee from the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#), the main pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. Thanks to this EU support, AdIN will be able to carry out its five-year investment programme aimed at improving water supply and waste management services for about 95,000 people. This includes the company's rehabilitation of water supply systems to reduce water losses as well as the upgrading and rationalisation of wastewater collection and treatment systems to comply with EU and regional environmental requirements. Overall, the investment will help to reduce pollution and contribute to increased resilience against climate-related risks. Commissioner for the Economy, Paolo **Gentiloni**, said: *"This agreement between the EIB and Águas do Interior – Norte, backed by the Investment Plan for Europe, will help to improve water supply and waste management services for the benefit of about 95,000 people in the north of Portugal. This is an important contribution from the European Union to safeguard Portugal's water resources, which is especially important in the context of increasing climate-related risks."* The [Investment Plan for Europe](#) has so far mobilised €546 billion of investment across the EU, of which €14 billion in Portugal. The press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

State aid: Commission approves €270 million Italian measure to support rail freight and commercial passenger operators affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €270 million Italian measure supporting both the rail freight sector and the rail commercial passenger sector in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The measure aims at preserving the competitiveness of rail passenger operations and maintaining a stable, reliable and sufficient service offer. The measure, with a total budget of €270 million, enables Italy to relieve rail freight operators and rail commercial passenger operators of part of the costs related to track access charges (i.e. the charges that railway companies have to pay for the use of the rail network) during the period from 10 March to 31 December 2020. This support helps rail operators in Italy to cope with the difficult situation caused by the coronavirus outbreak, preventing the loss of market shares to road operators and preserving the benefits of the shift of traffic from road to rail achieved prior to the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the measure is beneficial for the environment and for mobility as it supports rail transport, which is less polluting than road transport, while also decreasing road congestion. As a result, the Commission concluded that the measure complies with EU State aid rules, in particular the [2008 Commission Guidelines on State aid for railway undertakings](#) ("the Railway Guidelines"). Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Also in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, it is important to maintain the competitiveness of rail freight and commercial passenger operators with respect to other modes of transport, in line with the EU Green Deal objectives. The measure approved today enables the Italian authorities to further support this sector in the current challenging situation. We continue working 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 €20 million Cypriot subsidised loan scheme to support SMEs affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €20 million Cypriot scheme to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The public support, which will take the form of loans with subsidised interest rates, will be open to SMEs active in all sectors of the economy, except for the financial sector. The aid will be provided by the resources of the Cypriot Energy Fund of Funds (co-financed by the European Regional and Development Fund and the State), established by an agreement between Cyprus and the European Investment Bank (EIB) and managed by the EIB. Under the scheme, the beneficiaries will be able to obtain the subsidised loans from a financial intermediary that will be selected by the EIB through an open and non-discriminatory selection procedure. The purpose of the measure is to help the beneficiaries address the liquidity shortages they face and enhance their access to financing, thus helping them continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the 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) the annual interest rates on the loans respect the minimum levels set out in the Temporary Framework, (iii) the loan amount per beneficiary is in line with what is foreseen by the Temporary Framework, (iv) the loans relate to investment and/or working capital needs, and (v) the loan contracts will be signed by 31 December 2021 at the latest. In addition, the measure includes safeguards to ensure that the selected financial intermediary passes on, to the largest extent possible, the advantage of the measure to the final beneficiaries. 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 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.61515 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 modification of Belgian scheme to support companies in Flanders affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found the modification of an existing Belgian scheme to support companies in Flanders affected by the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The existing scheme was approved by the Commission on [29 January 2021 \(SA.60524\)](#). Under the existing scheme, eligible beneficiaries could apply for aid in relation to the turnover loss registered in January and/or February 2021, compared to the same reference period in 2020. Belgium notified the following modification to the scheme: (i) eligible beneficiaries will now be able to apply for additional aid in relation to the turnover losses registered in March and/or April 2021, compared to the same reference period in 2019; and (ii) an increase in the budget, from €200 million to €440 million. The Commission found that the amended scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €225,000 per company active in the primary production of agriculture products, €270,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and €1.8 million per company active in other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted before 31 December 2021. The Commission concluded that the scheme, as modified, remains 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, 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.62156 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 €9.9 million Estonian scheme to support companies active in tourism and directly related sectors affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved an Estonian scheme, with a maximum total budget of €9.9 million, to support companies active in the tourism and directly related sectors affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The aid

will take the form of direct grants. The scheme will be open to companies active in accommodation, travel and food services, as well as shops selling handicraft, souvenirs or Estonian design, that have experienced a significant loss of revenue due to the coronavirus outbreak. The purpose of the scheme is to help the beneficiaries address their liquidity needs and continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the Estonian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €1.8 million per company as provided by the Temporary Framework; 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.61591 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 created joint venture by Proximus and Nexus Infrastructure

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of a newly created joint venture by Proximus, NV/SA and Nexus Infrastructure, S.à r.l., all of Belgium. The joint venture will roll out and operate a passive open point-to-point Fiber-To-The-Home network in certain parts of Flanders in Belgium. Proximus is the incumbent telecommunications operator in Belgium and a provider of a full range of wholesale and retail telecommunications services. Nexus is a special purpose vehicle, which is part of the EQT Group. EQT is a global integrated alternative investments firm, which invests in infrastructure-related assets and businesses primarily in Europe and North America. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no horizontal competition concerns, given the joint venture's very limited increment on the wholesale broadband access market. The Commission also found that the vertical relationship between the upstream wholesale broadband access services, and downstream retail and wholesale telecommunications services would be unproblematic, as Proximus and the joint venture's activities are subject to Belgian sector-specific regulation. The 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.10087](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of TEDi by BH Holding

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of TEDi GmbH & Co. KG ('TEDi') by B.H. Holding GmbH ('BH Holding'), controlled by Benjamin Heinig, all of Germany. TEDi is active in the non-food retail sector at locations in Austria, Croatia, Czechia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain. The product portfolio offered by TEDi includes everyday items and consumables. Before the transaction, TEDi was jointly controlled by BH Holding and Tengelmann Warenhandels-gesellschaft KG of Germany. BH Holding is an investment holding company controlled by Benjamin Heinig, who indirectly controls Woolworth GmbH, a retail chain with over 400 stores in Germany active in the non-food retail sector. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because BH Holding already had joint control of TEDi and the change to sole control would have no significant impact on the existing competition. 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.10180](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Elections: European Cooperation Network on Elections to discuss political advertising, as more than half of Europeans feel exposed to disinformation

The European Commission convenes today the ninth meeting of the [European Cooperation Network on Elections](#) to discuss, among others, the transparency of political advertising. According to Eurobarometer figures published today, nearly four in ten Europeans saw online adverts which they could not clearly identify as political, whilst more than five in ten report to have been exposed to disinformation. As announced in the [European Democracy Action Plan](#), the Commission will present an initiative to [ensure greater transparency in political advertising](#) later this year. Věra **Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, said: *"There is a clear need for greater transparency in online political advertising. One in three Europeans could not tell if an online ad targeting them was political or not. That's not right. The same rules should apply online as offline."* Didier **Reynders**, Commissioner for Justice, said: *"The Eurobarometer shows the changing electoral trends in Europe. Given the Coronavirus pandemic, six in ten Europeans are in favour of remote voting. Making digitalisation accessible to all is already on the cards and we will push this further to ensure that no one is left behind."* The participants of the [European Cooperation Network on Elections](#) will also discuss disinformation in the context of elections and will be debriefed on the work of the Rapid Alert System. The Eurobarometer published today shows that, compared with [2018](#), fewer Europeans are concerned about elections being manipulated through cyberattacks (57%, -4pp) or fraud in remote voting (63%, -5pp). In addition, an overwhelming eight in ten Europeans consider that online social networks and Internet platforms should observe the same rules as traditional media in a pre-election period. Today's Eurobarometer and a factsheet are available [here](#). More information on the European Cooperation Network on Elections is available [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferroli — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)*

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MEX/21/1441