



## Daily News 30 / 03 / 2021

Brussels, 30 March 2021

### **La Commission verse 13 milliards d'euros supplémentaires à six États membres au titre de SURE**

La Commission européenne a versé 13 milliards d'euros correspondant à la sixième tranche de l'assistance financière apportée à six États membres au titre de l'instrument SURE. Il s'agit du troisième versement en 2021. Dans le cadre des transactions de ce jour, la Tchéquie a reçu 1 milliard d'euros, la Belgique 2,2 milliards d'euros, l'Espagne 4,06 milliards d'euros, l'Irlande 2,47 milliards d'euros, l'Italie 1,87 milliards et la Pologne 1,4 milliards d'euros. C'est la première fois que l'Irlande reçoit un financement au titre de cet instrument. Les cinq autres pays de l'UE ont déjà bénéficié de prêts au titre de SURE. Ces prêts aideront les États membres à faire face à l'augmentation soudaine des dépenses publiques afin de préserver l'emploi. En particulier, ils aideront les États membres à couvrir les coûts directement liés au financement de régimes nationaux de chômage partiel et d'autres mesures similaires qu'ils ont mises en place en réaction à la pandémie de coronavirus, y compris pour les travailleurs indépendants. Les versements effectués aujourd'hui font suite à l'émission de la sixième obligation sociale au titre de l'instrument SURE de l'UE, qui a suscité un intérêt considérable de la part des investisseurs. À ce jour, 17 États membres de l'UE ont reçu un total de 75,5 milliards d'euros au titre de l'instrument SURE sous forme de [prêts adossés](#). Un aperçu des montants décaissés à ce jour et des différentes échéances des obligations est disponible en ligne [ici](#). A ce jour, la Commission a proposé que 19 pays de l'UE bénéficient d'un soutien financier de 94,3 milliards d'euros au titre de SURE. Les montants totaux par État membre sont disponibles en ligne [ici](#). Les États membres peuvent encore présenter des demandes de soutien financier dans le cadre de SURE, qui dispose d'une force de frappe globale pouvant atteindre 100 milliards d'euros. Plus tard dans l'année, la Commission devrait également lancer des emprunts dans le cadre de NextGenerationEU, l'instrument de relance de 750 milliards d'euros, afin de contribuer à construire une Europe plus verte, plus numérique et plus résiliente. Plus de détails figurent dans le [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari – Tél.: +32 460 760296, Marta Wieczorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Claire Joawn – Tél.: + 32 460 756859; Enda Mcnamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976)

### **SURE: Commission proposes additional €3.7 billion to six Member States to protect jobs and incomes**

The Commission has proposed to the Council to grant an additional €3.7 billion of financial assistance to six Member States under SURE, the €100 billion instrument designed to protect jobs and incomes affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The proposals follow formal requests for additional financial assistance under SURE submitted by Belgium, Cyprus, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta on top of the support that the Council has already approved. After assessing the requests submitted by the six Member States, the Commission proposes to the Council to approve the following in additional financial assistance: Belgium €394 million; Cyprus €125 million; Greece €2.5 billion; Latvia €113 million; Lithuania €355 million; Malta €177 million. This brings the total financial assistance proposed by the Commission under SURE to €94.3 billion for 19 Member States. This additional support will assist the six Member States in tackling the continued severe socio-economic impact of the crisis in light of the resurgence of infections and the containment measures introduced in response to it. The evolution of the health and economic situation has resulted in a further increase of public expenditure related to measures designed to protect workers and public health. These additional measures, and the extension of existing ones, qualify for support under SURE. A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Enda Mcnamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976; Flora Matthaes – Tél.: +32 229 83951)

### **Pacte vert européen : la Commission lance une consultation publique sur la révision de la directive sur la performance énergétique des bâtiments**

La Commission a ouvert aujourd'hui une [consultation publique](#) sur la révision de la [directive sur la performance énergétique des bâtiments](#) (DPEB). Cette législation sera remaniée afin de l'aligner sur l'ambition du [Pacte vert européen](#) pour stimuler la rénovation des bâtiments dans l'UE et aider à atteindre la neutralité climatique d'ici 2050. Tous les acteurs concernés sont invités à partager leurs points de vue au cours des 12 prochaines semaines, et ce, jusqu'au 22 juin, sur la manière d'augmenter et d'améliorer la rénovation des bâtiments, d'atteindre un parc immobilier hautement efficace sur le plan énergétique et décarboné d'ici 2050 et de permettre un financement plus accessible et abordable dans le cadre des plans de relance et de résilience en utilisant les 750 milliards d'euros du plan de relance. Les résultats de cette consultation alimenteront la proposition législative prévue avant la fin de l'année, telle qu'annoncée dans le [programme de travail de la Commission pour 2021](#). Cette révision de la DPEB est un élément essentiel de la stratégie sur la « [Vague de rénovation](#) » publiée en 2020 et fera partie des mesures que la Commission présentera pour réduire les émissions de gaz à effet de serre d'au moins 55 % d'ici 2030, par rapport aux niveaux de 1990, et sera accompagnée d'une révision de la [directive sur l'efficacité énergétique](#). De plus amples détails sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Vivian Loonela - Tél: +32 229 66712; Lynn Rietdorf - Tél: +32 22974959)

### **Privacy of international data flows: Commissioner Didier Reynders and Yoon Jong In, Chairperson of the Personal Information Protection Commission of the Republic of Korea seal adequacy talks**

This morning Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders**, had a virtual meeting with the Chairperson of the Personal Information Protection Commission of the Republic of Korea, Yoon Jong In, to conclude the successful adequacy talks at technical level. At the end of their meeting, they issued a [joint statement](#) welcoming today's milestone towards the final adoption of the adequacy decision and confirming their intention to push ahead with its adoption as soon as possible in the coming months. The negotiations reflected both parties' strong commitment to shared values concerning their citizens' rights to data privacy. Based on a high level of protection of personal data, this adequacy decision, once adopted, will greatly benefit the EU and the Republic of Korea by facilitating cross-border data flows in trading relations between businesses. Upon its adoption, the adequacy decision will enable personal data to flow freely between the EU and the Republic of Korea, without the need to put in place any additional safeguards. More information on the EU's adequacy decisions is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Jördis Ferrolí — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

### **Migration management: Commission awards funding for new reception centres in Lesbos and Chios**

Yesterday, the Commission awarded a grant of €155 million to the Greek authorities to build new reception centres on the Greek islands of Lesbos and Chios. This award comes on top of €121 million awarded in [November 2020](#) for the construction of reception centres on the islands of Samos, Kos and Leros. This funding will finance the construction of new reception facilities that will provide adequate living conditions and operate with fast, fair and effective procedures, in accordance with EU law and European Asylum Support Office [standards](#) on reception facilities. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, announced the award during her visit to the Greek islands of Lesbos and Samos. Together with the Greek Minister of Migration and Asylum, Notis Mitarachi, they assessed progress of construction works of the new reception and identification centres on both islands. The Commissioner and the Minister participated in a joint press conference which is available to watch on [EbS+](#). The multi-purpose reception centres will include accommodation facilities, with a designated area to support the needs of new arrivals, medical containers for immediate health care, safe zones for unaccompanied children and teenagers, recreational spaces for sports, playgrounds and spaces for education. The centres will operate an entry-exit control system. There will also be an adjacent, clearly separated closed detention area to ensure effective return operations. Now that the award is granted, the next step is for the Greek authorities to obtain the necessary permits and ensure swift preparation of the procurement process to contract the construction works. The project is part of a [detailed plan](#) agreed between the Commission, the Greek authorities and EU agencies to establish a new, up-to-standard reception centre on the island of Lesbos signed on 3 December 2020 and financed under the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund. A more detailed overview of the Commission's support in managing the situation on the Greek islands is available in the [Q&A](#) and further details of financial support to Greece are available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel.: +32 229 62253; Ciara Bottomley - Tel.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tel.: +32 229 55721)

## **Agriculture: Short-term outlook report favourable for EU agricultural sectors**

Today, the Commission has published the latest [short-term outlook report](#) for EU agricultural markets. This regular publication presents a general and sector-by-sector overview of the latest tendencies and further prospects for agri-food markets. The first 2021 edition concludes that the EU agricultural sector has shown resilience throughout the COVID-19 crisis. The sector performed relatively well thanks to increased retail sales and home consumption. In addition, prospects are favourable with a dynamic global demand and the reopening of food services (restaurants, bars, cafés) expected once the vaccination campaign is sufficiently advanced. Recent trade developments will reduce uncertainties around the EU's trade relations, benefitting agricultural sectors. Among those developments, the U.S. and the EU have agreed to temporarily suspend tariffs related to the civil aircraft disputes early March 2021. In addition, the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement was concluded late 2020. Still, both sides will need time to adapt and provide necessary conditions for optimal trade exchanges. For full details concerning specific markets, see the [news item](#) and the [report](#) available online. (For more information: Balazs Ujvari – Tel.: +32 229 54578; Thérèse Lerebours – Tel.: +32 229 63303)

## **Sanctions and COVID-19: Commission launches 'EU-level Contact Point' to provide practical support to humanitarian aid operators**

The European Commission has launched today a dedicated channel – [an EU-level Contact Point](#) – to help humanitarian operators obtain information and preliminary guidance on the practicalities for requesting humanitarian derogations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. When operating in sanctioned environments – and noting that under International Humanitarian Law, sanctions should not stand in the way of humanitarian aid – humanitarian operators may nonetheless encounter situations where the provision of humanitarian aid will require a prior authorisation. National competent authorities in the Member States grant such authorisations (i.e. humanitarian derogations). To facilitate the task of said national competent authorities, the EU-level Contact Point provides practical support to the actors involved in the provision of humanitarian aid – non-governmental organisations (NGOs), donors, banks and others – in identifying the national authority responsible for assessing their request and, when possible, providing preliminary, non-binding replies to queries. It will enable those seeking to obtain a derogation for humanitarian purposes to reach out to the Commission, by using a simple and tailor-made tool. The Commission will closely cooperate and regularly communicate with the Member States in order to streamline the requests and direct them to the relevant national authorities. In so doing, the Contact Point will contribute to the use of the national derogation systems and facilitate the provision of humanitarian aid to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, all the while being in compliance with EU sanctions. For more information, see [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

## **Antitrust: Commission opens investigation into possible anticompetitive behaviour by the power exchange EPEX Spot**

The European Commission has opened a formal investigation to assess whether the power exchange EPEX Spot SE ('EPEX Spot') has been taking advantage of its dominant position to hinder the activities of competitors on the market for electricity intraday trading facilitation services in at least six Member States (Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands). The Commission is concerned that EPEX Spot may have adopted behaviours aimed at foreclosing its competitors by curtailing the ability of their customers to access the entire liquidity of the intraday market. If proven, this behaviour may constitute an exclusionary practice, in breach of the EU's antitrust rules, specifically on the abuse of a dominant market position as prohibited under [Article 102](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). In particular, the behaviour may distort the prices of trading services, and could ultimately lead to higher electricity prices for consumers and a slowdown in the greening of the electricity system by preventing the cost-effective integration of renewable technologies into the electricity mix. The Commission will now carry out its in-depth investigation as a matter of priority. The opening of a formal investigation does not prejudice its outcome. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "Power exchanges are central to the efficient functioning of electricity markets. Electricity trading plays an important and growing role in the effective and safe management of electricity grids. It helps ensure that electricity flows from where it is produced to where it is most needed, to the benefit of European consumers. Preserving healthy competition between power exchanges and between traders contributes to accurate price and investment signals for new sources of energy, which are central for the cost-effective integration of renewable technologies in the electricity mix." A full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek - Tel.: +32 229 58197;

### **State aid: Commission approves €400 million Dutch loan scheme to support companies providing package travel and linked travel arrangements in context of coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €400 million Dutch loan scheme to support companies providing package travel and linked travel arrangements in the context of the coronavirus outbreak (so called "Voucherfonds"). The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The loan scheme aims at enabling the beneficiaries to provide consumers with a cash refund equal to the value of the corona voucher, should they request it. Under the scheme, the beneficiaries will be eligible for a loan covering a maximum of 80% of their outstanding corona vouchers and, in any event, not higher than €50 million per beneficiary. The loans can only be used for the redemption of corona vouchers to consumers. In this respect, other liquidity needs that the beneficiaries may face in the context of the coronavirus outbreak cannot be supported under this loan scheme. 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 aid measure under EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*Many consumers have had their package travel cancelled and received vouchers in exchange, which could not be used given the prolonged coronavirus crisis. This €400 million Dutch loan scheme will enable companies providing package travel and linked travel arrangements in the Netherlands to refund consumers the value of such vouchers in cash. We continue working in close cooperation with Member States to find workable solutions to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak, in line with EU rules.*" A full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek - Tel.: +32 229 58197; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves €22 million Czech scheme to support fairs and exhibitions sector in context of coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved an approximately €22 million (CZK 600 million) Czech aid scheme to support companies active in the organisation of fairs, exhibitions, conferences and business events, which have been severely affected in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The aim of the scheme is to mitigate the economic difficulties and the liquidity shortages that the beneficiaries are facing as a result of the suspension or reduction of their business activity due to the outbreak and the related measures to limit the spread of the virus. The public support will take the form of direct grants compensating the beneficiaries for the uncovered fixed costs incurred by during the period from March to October 2020. Eligible companies must have sustained a turnover decline of at least 30% in that period, compared to before the coronavirus outbreak. The companies will be entitled to receive support amounting to 60% of their fixed costs if they are privately owned, or to 40% of their fixed costs if they are owned by the state or a municipality. The Commission found that the scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €10 million per beneficiary; and (ii) 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 set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.59401 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek - Tel.: +32 229 58197; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves modification of Bulgarian scheme to support employment in sectors most affected by the coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has found the modification to an existing Bulgarian scheme to provide wage support for employers and wage equivalent income support to self-employed in sectors most affected by the coronavirus outbreak, such as transport, hotels, restaurants and travel agencies to be in line with the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The existing scheme was approved by the Commission on [14 July 2020](#) under case number [SA.57759](#) and was first prolonged on 18 December 2020 ([SA.60082](#)). Bulgaria notified to the Commission the following modifications to the scheme: (i) the prolongation of the duration of the scheme until December 2021; (ii) the increase of the budget from BGN 40 million (approximately €20.5 million) to BGN 150 million (approximately €76.7

million); (iii) other amendments extending the scope of the eligible beneficiaries, employees and self-employed persons for which aid may be granted, as well as (iv) technical modifications. 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, 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.61348 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek - Tel.: +32 229 58197; Giulia Astuti - Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Concentrations: La Commission autorise l'acquisition du port de Port-La Nouvelle par Deme Concessions, CDC et Région Occitanie**

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de l'activité d'exploitation du port de commerce de Port-La Nouvelle, situé en France, par Deme Concessions NV, basée en Belgique, la Caisse des Dépôts et des Consignations (« CDC »), basée en France, et la Région Occitanie/Pyrénées-Méditerranée (« Région Occitanie ») en France. Port-La Nouvelle est un port commercial détenu par la Région Occitanie et actuellement géré par la Chambre de commerce et d'industrie de l'Aude. Deme Concessions est active dans la gestion de concessions, notamment dans le domaine des infrastructures maritimes. CDC effectue des prêts et investissements publics, et s'occupe de la gestion de fonds privés auxquels les pouvoirs publics souhaitent apporter une protection particulière. La Région Occitanie est une collectivité territoriale française propriétaire du port de commerce de Port-La Nouvelle. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problèmes de concurrence en raison de son impact limité sur le marché. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site internet concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.10119](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Marta Wieczorek - Tél.: +32 229 58197; Maria Tsoni - Tél.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **EU support to innovation: Commissioner Gabriel welcomes CEOs of successful European unicorns**

Today, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, met the founders and CEOs of 35 EU unicorns, i.e. start-up companies with a value of over \$1 billion. The meeting comes upon the invitation of the Commissioner to listen to the experiences of these unicorns of their growth process from a small start-up to a substantial tech player. The meeting takes place against the backdrop of the new EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (Horizon Europe), the Innovation Transformation of Higher Education institutions, and the Commission's recent [Digital Decade](#) Communication that calls to double the number of unicorns in Europe by 2030, to around 250. Commissioner **Gabriel** said: "We need European unicorns to ensure EU leadership in deep tech start-ups to pave the way towards Europe's sustainable and resilient recovery, accelerate the green and digital transitions, innovation cohesion across EU, and ensure Europe's technological sovereignty." The companies – software and hardware, deep tech and green tech start-ups – shared their experiences, visions and ideas on how to achieve this target and to further strengthen the European innovation ecosystem. In January, the [European Innovation Council](#) (EIC) and the [European Institute of Innovation and Technology](#) (EIT), the two pillars of EU support to entrepreneurs, signed a Memorandum of understanding to enable innovators, innovative SMEs and start-ups, higher education institutions and research organisations to receive quality support services to deploy and scale up innovations faster and with greater impact. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou - Tel.: +32 229 83583)

### **Green Deal Diplomacy: Commission participates in Net Zero Summit and joins forces with the International Energy Agency to expand the net zero movement**

Tomorrow, Executive Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** and Commissioner Kadri **Simson** will attend the [Net Zero Summit](#) co-hosted by Mr Fatih Birol, the Executive Director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) and Mr Alok Sharma, COP26 President, as part of the Commission's climate and energy diplomacy. The Summit will bring together representatives from energy and climate ministries from more than 40 countries. Participants will discuss the essential contribution of the energy sector to achieving a climate neutral economy with net-zero greenhouse gas emissions and focus on the implementation actions necessary to turn the growing number of net zero goals into reality. Today, ahead of the summit, the Commission and the IEA agreed to join forces to expand the net zero movement of governments and companies committed to help deliver the energy sector's contribution to achieving net-zero economies and clean energy access in regions suffering from energy poverty. They will provide instruments of cooperation to feed into the UN High Level Energy Dialogue and COP26. A joint statement by the Commission and the IEA is available [online](#). *(For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Lynn Rietdorf - Tel: +32 22974959)*

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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