



## Daily News 12 / 04 / 2021

Brussels, 12 April 2021

### **Hydrogen: Commission launches project collection for European Clean Hydrogen Alliance investment pipeline**

The Commission has launched an invitation to all 1000+ members of the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance to submit projects for renewable and low-carbon hydrogen technologies and solutions. This is an important step in building a pipeline of viable investment projects to deliver the objectives set out in the [Hydrogen Strategy for a climate-neutral Europe](#). The deadline for submitting projects is 7 May. The next Hydrogen Forum meeting on 17-18 June will review the projects and provide opportunities for matchmaking. Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: *"Clean hydrogen plays a key role in the race to decarbonise numerous sectors of our economy, while contributing to a more resilient and competitive EU industry. This call is an important step forward in the work of the Alliance. It will help build the project pipeline and assess and address gaps and bottlenecks in the clean hydrogen value chain."* The objective of the EU Hydrogen Strategy is to scale up the deployment of clean hydrogen in Europe. The Strategy sets the strategic objective to install 6 GW of renewable hydrogen electrolyzers and produce up to 1m tonnes of renewable hydrogen by 2024, and 40 GW of renewable hydrogen electrolyzers and 10m tonnes renewable hydrogen by 2030. The key aim of the European Clean Hydrogen Alliance, launched in July 2020, is to identify and build up a pipeline of viable investment projects along the hydrogen value chain, with a view to a green transition, create a clean hydrogen market contributing to growth and jobs, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The [European Clean Hydrogen Alliance](#) brings together industry, national and local public authorities, civil society and other stakeholders. It is strongly anchored in the hydrogen value chain, covering renewable and low-carbon hydrogen from production via transmission to mobility, industry, energy, and heating applications. [Six roundtables](#) operate in thematic working groups, responsible for the operational work of the alliance. (For more information: *Sonya Gospodinova - Tel.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli - Tel.: +32 229 58300*)

### **European Commission registers Χαλλούμι/Halloumi/Hellim as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO)**

Today, the European Commission adopted a package of two measures regarding an important Cypriot heritage: Χαλλούμι/Halloumi/Hellim. First, the Commission registered Χαλλούμι/Halloumi/Hellim as a Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), protecting the valuable name against imitation and misuse across the EU. Only Χαλλούμι/Halloumi/Hellim produced in Cyprus according to the product specification is now allowed to use the registered name, bringing clear economic benefits to the island. The registration allows producers of this iconic Cypriot cheese, famous around the world for its characteristic texture, folded appearance, and suitability for serving grilled or pan-fried, based anywhere on the island of Cyprus to benefit from the PDO status. Secondly, to facilitate that producers in the Turkish Cypriot community draw full benefits from the protection, the Commission has adopted a measure allowing the PDO product to cross the Green Line, provided that the cheese and milk from which it was made has met all EU animal and public health standards. The measure accompanying the registration of Χαλλούμι/Halloumi/Hellim as a PDO aims at ensuring that the animal and public health situation in the EU as well as food safety are not compromised. It also establishes the conditions for trade to take place including provisions on controls. In addition, the milk processing establishments will have to be in compliance with the relevant public health rules. The registration of Χαλλούμι/Halloumi/Hellim as a PDO – equally available to producers from both Cypriot communities – is also a highly symbolic step to bring the two communities closer, working together to build confidence. A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: *Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Miriam Garcia Ferrer - Tel.: +32 229 99075; Claire Joawn - Tel.: +32 229 56859; Thérèse Lerebours - Tel.: +32 229 63303*)

### **Coronavirus Response: Commission proposes to exempt vital goods and services**

## **distributed by the EU from VAT in times of crisis**

The European Commission has today [proposed](#) to exempt from Value Added Tax (VAT) goods and services made available by the European Commission, EU bodies and agencies to Member States and citizens during times of crisis. This responds to the [experience gained](#) during the course of the coronavirus pandemic. Today's initiative will maximise the efficiency of EU funds used in the public interest to respond to crises, such as natural disasters and public health emergencies. Once in place, the new measures will allow the Commission and other EU agencies and bodies to import and purchase goods and services VAT-free when those purchases are being distributed during an emergency response in the EU. The recipients might be Member States or third parties, such as national authorities or institutions (for example, a hospital, a national health or disaster response authority). Goods and services covered under the proposed exemption include, for instance: diagnostic tests and testing materials, and laboratory equipment; personal protective equipment (PPE); tents, camp beds, clothing and food; development, production and procurement of necessary products, research and innovation activities, strategic stockpiling of products; pharmaceutical licences, quarantine facilities, clinical trials, disinfection of premises, etc. Commissioner for the Economy, Paolo **Gentiloni** said: *"The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us that these kinds of crises are multifaceted and have a wide-ranging impact on our societies. A rapid and efficient response is essential, and we need to provide the best response now in order to prepare for the future. Today's proposal supports the EU's goal to react to crises and emergencies in the EU. It will also ensure that the financial impact of EU-level relief efforts to fight the pandemic and support the recovery is maximised."* A [press release](#) and [more information](#) are available online. (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Nerea Artamendi Erro - Tel: +32 229 90964)

## **Infringements: Commission adapts its calculation methodology for financial sanctions**

Today, the Commission decided to adapt its calculation method when proposing financial sanctions to the Court of Justice of the EU in infringement proceedings, following the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the Union. When the Commission refers a Member State to the Court of Justice of the EU for having infringed EU law, the Court may, in certain situations, impose [financial sanctions](#). The Commission proposes an amount to the Court, which then takes the final decision. When calculating the proposed financial sanction, in addition to the seriousness of the infringement and its duration, the Commission has always taken into account both the institutional weight of the Member State concerned, and its economic situation. The formula previously used by the Commission included the United Kingdom. This formula has now been recalculated and an adjustment factor applied. In the future, there can also be situations where, under the Withdrawal Agreement and its Protocols, the Commission will need to refer the United Kingdom to the Court of Justice with a request for financial sanctions. The formula used for this event has also been modified in order to take into account the fact that the United Kingdom no longer has an institutional weight that can be measured in terms of seats in the European Parliament. The Commission will apply the adapted calculation method from the date today's Communication will be published in the Official Journal. The decision is available [online](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel.: + 32 229 62253; Daniel Ferrie — Tel.: +32 229 86500; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferrolli — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

## **Lutte contre la criminalité organisée : la Commission se félicite du rapport d'Europol sur l'évaluation de la menace**

La commissaire chargée des affaires intérieures, Ylva **Johansson**, a prononcé un discours inaugural ce matin lors de l'événement de lancement du dernier [rapport](#) d'Europol concernant l'évaluation de la menace que représente la grande criminalité organisée dans l'Union européenne. Ce rapport, publié tous les 4 ans, analyse la menace que représentent les réseaux criminels, en particulier ceux qui commettent des actes de violence, recourent à la corruption et blanchissent leurs activités criminelles. Il orientera les travaux communs des services répressifs européens dans le cadre de la plateforme pluridisciplinaire européenne contre les menaces criminelles (EMPACT) jusqu'en 2025. Le rapport prête une attention particulière aux cyberattaques, aux crimes contre les personnes (tels que la traite des êtres humains à des fins de travail et d'exploitation sexuelle, au trafic de migrants, aux abus sexuels et à l'exploitation sexuelle des enfants), à la fraude, à la criminalité organisée contre les biens, ainsi qu'à la criminalité environnementale. Le rapport aborde également l'impact de la pandémie de COVID-19 sur le paysage criminel de l'UE et l'évolution des méthodes employées par les réseaux criminels pour tirer parti de la situation. La grande criminalité organisée représente une menace importante et persistante pour la sécurité des citoyens de l'UE, et la Commission présentera cette semaine une nouvelle stratégie de l'UE pour lutter contre la criminalité organisée, qui définira les outils et les mesures à prendre au cours des 5 prochaines années pour démanteler les modèles économiques et les structures des organisations criminelles par-delà les frontières, tant en ligne

qu'hors ligne. De plus amples informations sur le rapport publié aujourd'hui par Europol sont disponibles sur [leur site web](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Adalbert Jahnz — Tél.: + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley — Tél.: + 32 229 69971; Laura Bérard — Tél.: + 32 229 55721)

### **Foresight report: How might the European bioeconomy look in 2050?\***

Experts gathered by the Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) and DG Research and Innovation have built four alternative scenarios for the EU bioeconomy in 2050. They follow the European Commission's 2020 [Strategic Foresight Report](#) which mentioned the potential of sustainable bioeconomy to transform Europe's agricultural and industrial base and to create new jobs whilst enhancing our natural resources and ecosystems. Each scenario describes the world, Europe and the bioeconomy in 2050, but with political and policy variations, and consider the contributions to the objectives of the EU Bioeconomy Strategy and to selected United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič for Interinstitutional Relations and Foresight said: "*Strategic foresight helps identify future challenges and ways to prepare for them, by supporting decision-making in an impactful way. Applied to bioeconomy, it is therefore vital, as we live in a world of limited resources. Deploying a sustainable and circular bioeconomy will help us create new bio-based value chains across Europe, while showing that prosperity and the health of our environment can go hand in hand.*" Mariya Gabriel, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: "*Policies addressing all sectors of activity are more robust if supported by collective intelligence. The foresight process carried out by the European Commission provides scenarios alongside the opportunities and challenges they represent and helps to shape the future we want. This study by the Joint Research Centre is an important contribution and I invite all to enjoy the reading.*" The Commission plans to further explore these scenarios, in order to facilitate and strengthen strategic and systemic reflections amongst key stakeholders of the European bioeconomy. For more information on the scenarios and the [report](#), read the JRC [press release](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten – Tel.: +32 229 84094)

### **State aid: Commission approves €120 million Lithuanian scheme to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €120 million Lithuanian aid scheme to support companies that had to suspend or reduce their activities due to the restrictive measures that the Lithuanian government had to introduce to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The scheme consists of two separate measures: (i) direct grants in limited amounts for the first measure and (ii) support for uncovered fixed costs for the second measure. The scheme will be open to companies active in sectors most affected by the coronavirus outbreak, with the exception of the companies in the agriculture, forestry, fishing, credit, insurance, pension funding, and financial sectors. Beneficiaries eligible for the first measure will be able to select the aid of limited amounts in the form of a direct grant which will be calculated based on their turnover decline and their number of employees; or a direct grant that cannot be higher than 70% of total uncovered costs, and does not exceed €40,000 per company. The beneficiaries eligible for the second measure will receive an aid of maximum of 70% of their uncovered fixed costs. The aim of the scheme is to help the beneficiaries to address their liquidity needs and continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the Lithuanian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) with regard to the first measure, the aid will not exceed €1.8 million per company; (ii) with regard to the second measure, the support will not exceed 70% of the company's uncovered fixed costs. The Commission concluded that the measures are necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the scheme under EU State aid rules. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.62306 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)

### **Aides d'État : La Commission autorise un régime belge de 1,3 million d'euros en faveur des opérateurs d'attractions touristiques de Wallonie touchés par la crise du coronavirus**

La Commission européenne a autorisé un régime belge d'un montant de 1,3 million d'euros visant à soutenir les opérateurs d'attractions touristiques de Wallonie touchés par la crise du coronavirus. Le régime a été autorisé sur la base de [l'Encadrement temporaire en matière d'aides d'État](#). Le soutien

prendra la forme de subventions directes. L'objectif de ce régime est d'atténuer la soudaine pénurie de liquidités à laquelle les bénéficiaires font face à la suite des mesures restrictives imposées par les autorités belges pour limiter la propagation du virus. Les opérateurs d'attractions touristiques situées en Wallonie recevront un montant fixe, calculé sur la base (i) du nombre moyen de visiteurs par jour pour l'année 2019 ; (ii) de la part du prix du ticket allouée à l'entretien des infrastructures touristiques ; et (iii) du nombre de jours pendant lesquels l'attraction a été fermée. Le montant de l'aide octroyée sera de minimum 1.000 euros et de maximum 200.000 euros par entreprise. La Commission a estimé que le régime belge est conforme aux conditions énumérées dans l'Encadrement temporaire. En particulier, (i) le montant de l'aide n'excèdera pas 1,8 million d'euros par bénéficiaire ; et (ii) l'aide sera accordée au plus tard le 31 décembre 2021. La Commission a conclu que la mesure était nécessaire, appropriée et proportionnée pour remédier à une perturbation grave de l'économie d'un État membre, conformément à l'article 107 paragraphe 3, point b) du TFUE et aux conditions énoncées dans l'Encadrement temporaire. Sur cette base, la Commission a autorisé la mesure conformément aux règles en matière d'aides d'État. De plus amples informations sur l'Encadrement temporaire et les autres mesures prises par la Commission pour faire face aux conséquences économiques de la pandémie du coronavirus sont disponibles [ici](#). La version non confidentielle de la décision sera publiée sous le numéro d'affaire SA.62336 dans le [registre des aides d'État](#) figurant sur le site web de la Commission consacré à [la concurrence](#), dès que les éventuels problèmes de confidentialité auront été résolus. (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

### **Aides d'État: La Commission autorise la prolongation et la modification d'un régime belge visant à soutenir les aéroports wallons dans le contexte de la pandémie du coronavirus**

La Commission européenne a estimé que la prolongation et modification d'un régime belge visant à soutenir les aéroports de Wallonie dans le contexte de la pandémie du coronavirus étaient conformes à l'[Encadrement temporaire en matière d'aides d'État](#). Le régime existant a été approuvé le **11 avril 2020 (SA.56807)**. La Belgique a notifié à la Commission son intention de prolonger la mesure existante, sous la forme d'un moratoire permettant aux exploitants des aéroports wallons de reporter le paiement des redevances de concession dues pour l'année 2021, en contrepartie du paiement d'intérêts sur les sommes dues. Les aéroports wallons étant des infrastructures de transport essentielles pour la Belgique, cette mesure leur permet de bénéficier de liquidités à court terme pour leur éviter tout risque de défaillance. Le budget potentiel de la mesure pour 2021 est d'environ 17,5 millions d'euros, ce qui porte le budget total potentiel de l'aide à environ 34,7 million d'euros depuis 2020. La Commission a considéré que la mesure est compatible avec les conditions prévues par l'Encadrement temporaire. En particulier, (i) les moratoires, équivalents à des prêts, seront accordés avant le 31 décembre 2021 et auront une durée de 6 ans maximum, (ii) pour les prêts arrivant à échéance après 2021, le montant des redevances bénéficiant du moratoire n'excède pas les limites fixées par l'encadrement temporaire, (iii) les moratoires couvrent partiellement les besoins en fonds de roulement des bénéficiaires et (iv) les bénéficiaires ne sont pas des entreprises en difficulté. La Commission a conclu que la mesure était nécessaire, appropriée et proportionnée pour remédier à une perturbation grave de l'économie d'un État membre, conformément à l'[Article 107, paragraphe 3, point b\)](#) du traité sur le fonctionnement de l'Union européenne (TFUE) et aux conditions énoncées dans l'Encadrement temporaire. Sur cette base, la Commission a autorisé la mesure en vertu des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État. De plus amples informations sur l'Encadrement temporaire et les autres mesures prises par la Commission pour faire face aux conséquences économiques de la pandémie du coronavirus sont disponibles [ici](#). La version non confidentielle de la décision sera publiée sous le numéro SA.60682 dans le [registre des aides d'État](#) figurant sur le site web de la Commission consacré à la [concurrence](#), dès que les éventuels problèmes de confidentialité auront été résolus. (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Migration: Vice-President Schinas and Commissioner Johansson participate in informal Ministerial meeting on integration**

Tomorrow, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Margaritis **Schinas**, and Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, will join the Minister of State for the Portuguese

Presidency, Mariana Vieira da Silva, in opening the virtual informal Ministerial meeting on integration, organised by the Portuguese Presidency. The meeting will focus on the impact of the pandemic on migrants' living and working conditions and on the role of labour market integration policies in economic recovery. The meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss the role of social partners and local authorities in forming integration policies. Vice-President **Schinás** said: *"Inclusion means having the same opportunities and ensuring that people are equipped to thrive as our society and our labour market evolve. Better access to education, jobs, healthcare and housing is key for people coming to Europe, for local communities, and for a healthy society and economic recovery."* Commissioner **Johansson** said: *"COVID-19 has emphasised the key role that migrants play in our society, even though the pandemic has deepened existing inequalities. Integration policies are today more important than ever and this is why we need to focus on the impact of the pandemic on the migrants' living conditions and on how to build an inclusive recovery."* (For more information: Adalbert Jahnz - Tel.: + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley - Tel.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tel.: +32 229 55721)

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

\*Modified on 12-04-2021, at 15:53

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