



## Daily News 21 / 01 / 2021

Brussels, 21 January 2021

### **Climate Diplomacy: EVP Timmermans and HR/VP Borrell welcome the U.S. return to the Paris Agreement and engage with Presidential Climate Envoy John Kerry**

Following the inauguration of President Biden, the EU is immediately engaging with the new U.S. Administration on tackling the climate crisis. In a bilateral videoconference this afternoon, Executive Vice-President for the Green Deal, Frans **Timmermans**, will discuss the preparation of the COP26 climate summit with the U.S. Special Presidential Envoy for Climate, John Kerry. Executive Vice-President **Timmermans** and High-Representative/Vice-President Josep **Borrell** issued yesterday a [Joint Statement](#), welcoming the decision by President Biden for the United States to re-join the Paris Agreement: *"We are looking forward to having the United States again at our side in leading global efforts to combat the climate crisis. The climate crisis is the defining challenge of our time and it can only be tackled by combining all our forces. Climate action is our collective global responsibility. COP26 in Glasgow this November will be a crucial moment to increase global ambition, and we will use the upcoming G7 and G20 meetings to build towards this. We are convinced that if all countries join a global race to zero emissions, the whole planet will win."* The EU submitted a new [Nationally Determined Contribution](#) to the UNFCCC Secretariat in December 2020, as part of its implementation of the Paris Agreement. The EU has committed to a 55% net reduction of its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, compared to 1990 levels, as a stepping stone to achieving climate neutrality by 2050. The Joint Statement is available online [here](#). (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel: +32 229 58602; Peter Stano – Tel: +32 229 54553; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel: +32 229 74959; Adam Kaznowski – Tel: + 32 229 89359)

### **Public health: the Commission launches a consultation on the EU legislation on blood, tissues and cells**

The Commission has launched a [public consultation](#) to gather opinions on the proposed policy options for revising the directives on blood and on tissues and cells. The current legislation, adopted in 2002 and 2004, significantly improved the safety and quality of these substances. However, it is now outdated and does not adequately address new scientific and technical developments that have taken place in recent years, as documented in a 2019 [evaluation](#). Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"An evaluation of the EU legislation on blood, tissues and cells has shown that we need to update this framework as part of our effort to establish a strong European Health Union. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted that need even more given our strong reliance on third countries for plasma. Medicines made from donated plasma are critical for the treatment of a large number of patients. I am looking forward the results of this consultation which should help us to keep transfusion, transplantation and assisted reproduction safe and effective well into the future."* The consultation launched today will be a key step in the process of updating the legislation, with a view to putting in place a more flexible framework that is fit for purpose and future-proof. This will require alignment with scientific and technological developments, tackling the emergence and re-emergence of communicable diseases and protecting donors and patients in a sector with increasing commercialisation and globalisation. The process will take into account a number of lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. A proposal could be tabled by the end of this year. (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy – Tel.: +32 229 83978)

### **La Commission se félicite de l'accord sur un soutien financier supplémentaire en faveur des plus démunis dans le cadre de REACT-EU**

Le Parlement européen a voté l'accord politique auquel sont parvenus les colégislateurs sur la proposition de la Commission de fournir davantage de fonds pour soutenir les personnes les plus démunies en Europe au cours de la phase de redressement. Les États membres de l'UE pourront bientôt utiliser les fonds du paquet [« Soutien à la reprise en faveur de la cohésion et des territoires](#)

[de l'Europe](#) » ([REACT-EU](#)), qui fournit des ressources supplémentaires pour faire face aux conséquences sociales et économiques de la pandémie de coronavirus, pour des programmes financés par le [Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis \(FEAD\)](#). Nicolas **Schmit**, commissaire à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, a déclaré : « *Nous devons faire preuve de solidarité envers les personnes qui sont confrontées à la pauvreté et à l'exclusion sociale du fait de cette crise et ont un besoin urgent d'assistance. Je me félicite de cet accord qui permettra aux États membres d'axer les mesures de soutien sur les personnes qui en ont le plus besoin par l'intermédiaire du Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis (FEAD). Nous ne sommes pas tous égaux face à cette pandémie et les personnes les plus vulnérables sont les plus durement touchées. Cet accord montre clairement que l'Union européenne reste aux côtés de ceux qui en ont le plus besoin.* » La pandémie de coronavirus a exacerbé les problèmes existants et mis en péril la fourniture de services sociaux et d'assistance de base, par exemple en raison de la diminution des financements et du manque de personnel. La demande dans les banques alimentaires a augmenté jusqu'à 50 % par rapport à la période précédant le coronavirus. Le FEAD fournit déjà des denrées alimentaires et des vêtements aux personnes qui en ont le plus besoin et leur apporte d'autres formes d'assistance matérielle de base; il finance également des activités visant à soutenir leur inclusion sociale. En moyenne, depuis 2014, environ 13 millions de personnes bénéficient chaque année du soutien de ce Fonds. Grâce au nouvel accord, des crédits supplémentaires peuvent être injectés dans le Fonds, ce qui permettra aux programmes de continuer à soutenir les personnes qui en ont le plus besoin. Le [communiqué de presse](#) est disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: *Marta Wieczorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tél.: +32 229 83951*)

### **Épidémies : L'Union européenne renforce les capacités de riposte de la République du Congo avec la Croix Rouge**

Aujourd'hui, la Commission européenne a annoncé un soutien de 1,5 million d'euros au Plan national de réponse sanitaire du gouvernement congolais, en partenariat avec la Croix Rouge. Le projet, d'un montant total de 2,6 millions d'euros, est cofinancé par la France, à travers l'Agence française de développement (AFD). Il s'agit de réduire la vulnérabilité de la population congolaise aux épidémies en renforçant les capacités de riposte aux épidémies dans le contexte de la COVID-19 dans 47 centres de santé du pays, couvrant trois millions de personnes. La commissaire aux partenariats internationaux, Jutta **Urpilainen**, a souligné : « *Au-delà de la crise du coronavirus, l'un des principaux risques pour la République du Congo est la survenance régulière d'épidémies. L'Union européenne soutient non seulement la lutte contre la propagation du virus, mais renforce aussi la prévention et le contrôle des infections de la part des travailleurs de la santé et des communautés locales, avec l'expertise de la Croix Rouge. Cela permettra d'améliorer la santé de la population congolaise.* » Dans les dix dernières années, le Congo a confronté l'apparition de nombreuses épidémies, comme le choléra, l'Ébola, la rougeole, la grippe H1N1, la fièvre jaune et le Chikungunya. Plus de détails sont disponibles [ici](#) et sur les sites web consacrés à [la coopération de l'UE dans la République du Congo](#) et à [la réponse de l'UE face à la crise de la COVID-19](#). (Pour plus d'informations: *Ana Pisonero – Tél.: +32 229 54320; Gesine Knolle – Tél.: +32 229 54323*)

### **State aid: Commission approves €325 million public support to provide schools in Italy with very high internet speeds**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, €325 million of public support to connect 12,000 schools in Italy to very high-speed internet. The schools that will benefit from the measure are located in areas with insufficient connectivity in Italy, in line with the EU broadband connectivity objectives. The scheme aims to promote the deployment of a network able to provide upload and download speeds of 1 gigabit per second (Gbps) to Italian schools. The measure notified by Italy to the Commission only targets schools where no broadband network offering download speed above 300 megabits per second (Mbps) is currently in place or planned in the near future. Italy considers that very high-speed internet connection is necessary to provide online educational services, which have become essential in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The Italian authorities have developed a comprehensive mapping of available infrastructure and public consultation in order to determine the target areas and the eligible schools. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules, in particular its [2013 Broadband Guidelines](#). Taking into account the above-mentioned elements, the Commission concluded that the scheme's positive effects on competition and on broadband connectivity, in particular for schools, outweigh potential negative effects brought about by the public intervention. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the scheme is in line with EU State aid rules and contributes to the EU strategic objectives set out in the [Digital Agenda for Europe](#) and in the Communication "[Towards a European Gigabit Society](#)". Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*This*

*€325 million Italian scheme will ensure that 12,000 schools will be connected to very high-speed internet. The measure will help students and educators also in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, by giving them access to current and future online educational tools. This decision enables the use of public funds to provide very high-speed internet services to schools in areas of Italy where private investment is insufficient.” The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

### **State aid: Commission approves €1.9 billion Polish scheme to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €1.9 billion (PLN 8.6 billion) Polish scheme to support companies operating in certain sectors affected by the coronavirus-outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Poland notified to the Commission, under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#), a scheme that will provide support to companies of all sizes operating in several sectors affected by the coronavirus outbreak, including gastronomy, fitness, fairs, stage, film, entertainment and recreation, photography and physiotherapy. These companies could not provide services due to the measures introduced by the Polish government to limit the spread of the virus, or had to bear costs related to sanitary restrictions resulting in a decrease in attendance. Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants and exemptions from payment of contributions. Aid in the form of grants will be available to companies that declare a decrease: (i) in revenues in October or in November 2020 by at least 40% compared to revenues in the same period of 2019; (ii) in income in one of the three months preceding the application for aid by at least 40% compared to the income obtained in the previous month or in the same month of the previous year. Aid in the form of exemptions from payment of contributions (e.g. social or health insurance contributions) for the period from 1 to 30 November 2020 will be available to companies that declare a decrease in revenues in November 2020 of at least 40% in comparison to revenues in November 2019. The Commission found that the scheme notified by Poland is in line with the conditions set out in the [Temporary Framework](#). 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: *“Companies active in sectors such as tourism, entertainment and sport have been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak. This Polish scheme will facilitate access to liquidity for companies operating in these sectors in these difficult times and will help ensure the continuity of their economic activity. We continue to work in close cooperation with Member States to find workable solutions to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak, 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 modification of Portuguese scheme and new measure to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has found the modification of an existing Portuguese scheme to support the economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, as well as a new measure, to be in line with the [State aid Temporary Framework](#). The existing scheme was approved on [27 November 2020](#) under case number [SA.59450](#). Portugal notified the following modifications to the scheme: (i) an increase in the total budget, from €750 million to €1.2 billion; (ii) an increase in the maximum amount that can be granted per beneficiary under the two measures included in the scheme, (“Apoiar.PT” and “Apoiar Restauração”); and (iii) the modification of the eligibility conditions for beneficiaries of one of the measures available under the scheme (the so-called “Apoiar.PT”), which will now include medium and large companies (as long as not already in difficulty on 31 December 2019). Portugal also notified a new measure called “Apoiar Rendas”, which will be funded from the budget of the amended scheme. Under the measure, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The new measure is intended to compensate companies for a certain percentage of their rental payments and aims at providing financial support in order to preserve jobs and avoid lay-offs. The Commission found that the amended scheme and the new measure are in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support per company will not exceed €120,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, €100,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products and €800,000 per company active in all other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted before 30 June 2021. The Commission concluded that the amended scheme and the new scheme 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. 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 numbers SA.61048 and SA.61209 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 prolongation of Danish scheme to compensate damages caused by cancellation of public events due to coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has found the prolongation of an existing Danish scheme to compensate companies for damages caused by the cancellation of public events due to the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with EU State aid rules. The scheme was originally approved on [12 March 2020](#) under case number [SA.56685](#). The Commission approved amendments to the scheme on [18 May \(SA.57209\)](#) and 30 November 2020 ([SA.59667](#)). The scheme enables Denmark to compensate organisers of events for the losses suffered due to the restrictive measures that the Danish government had to implement to limit the spread of coronavirus, which led to the cancellation, postponement or significant modification of planned events. Denmark notified the following further modifications to the scheme: (i) an extension of the period in relation to which the aid may be granted until 28 February 2021 (previously 3 January 2021); and (ii) an increase in the budget of the measure from €372 million (DKK 2.8 billion) to €425 million (DKK 3.2 billion). The increase in the budget results from the prolongation of the scheme. The Commission assessed the scheme under [Article 107\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors (in the form of schemes) for the damage directly caused by exceptional circumstances, such as the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the amended Danish aid scheme will compensate damages that are directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictive measures necessary to limit its spread. It also found that the amended measure is proportionate, as the foreseen compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. The Commission therefore concluded that the amended scheme is in line with EU State aid rules, in particular Article 107(2)(b) TFEU. More information on the 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.61056 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 prolongation of Danish scheme to compensate companies for damages still suffered due to coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, the prolongation of a Danish scheme to compensate companies whose activities are still subject to restrictive measures implemented by the Danish Government to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The existing scheme was approved on [13 July 2020](#) under case number [SA.57930](#) and was first amended on 13 November 2020 ([SA.59055](#)). The scheme enables Denmark to compensate companies that are still not allowed to carry out their activities and to compensate suppliers of goods and services for events that have been cancelled due to the necessary restrictive measures. Denmark notified the following further modifications to the scheme: (i) an extension of the duration of the scheme in relation to damages suffered until 28 February 2021 (previously 3 January 2021); and (ii) the budget of the scheme is accordingly increased by approximately €47 million (DKK 350 million) per month for the period of the prolongation. The Commission assessed the scheme under [Article 107\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors (in the form of schemes) for the damage directly caused by exceptional circumstances, such as the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the amended Danish aid scheme will compensate damage that is directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictive measures adopted by Danish authorities. It also found that the amended measure is proportionate, as the foreseen compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. The Commission therefore concluded that the amended scheme is in line with EU State aid rules, in particular Article 107(2)(b) TFEU. More information on the 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.61044 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. *(For more*

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Commissioners Gabriel and Schmit discuss role of education & training in implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights with Education Ministers**

Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, and Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas **Schmit**, will represent the Commission at an informal meeting of Education Ministers, taking place via videoconference tomorrow. Discussions will provide a contribution to the [Social Summit](#) in Porto on 7 May, organised together with the Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the EU. An inclusive, sustainable and resilient recovery from the coronavirus pandemic requires equal focus on the social and the economic response. The education and training sector has a valuable contribution to make to the recovery and to the implementation of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which has education, training and lifelong learning at its very foundation. Upskilling and reskilling is one of the flagship actions of the €672.5 billion Recovery and Resilience Facility. The Commission's communications on the [European Education Area](#), the [Digital Education Action Plan](#) and the [Skills Agenda](#) reflect the ambitions set out in the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Commission's upcoming Action Plan to implement the Pillar will set out a concrete agenda for a stronger social Europe. It will support the recovery, and reinforce resilience. It will equip people with the strong skills sets they need to seize the opportunities brought about by the shift to a climate-neutral and digital society and economy. A [press conference](#) will follow the meeting, around 14:00 and can be followed on [EbS+](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Sinéad Meehan - van Druten - Tel.: +32 229 84094)

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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