



## Daily News 25 / 01 / 2021

Brussels, 25 January 2021

### **Recovery and Resilience Facility: Commission updates guidance for recovery and resilience plans**

Following the [political agreement on the Recovery and Resilience Facility \(RRF\)](#) reached in December, the Commission has [presented updated guidance to Member States on the preparation and presentation of recovery and resilience plans](#). The [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#) is the key instrument at the heart of NextGenerationEU, the EU's plan to emerge stronger from the coronavirus crisis. It will make available €672.5 billion in loans and grants to support reforms and investments in Member States. To benefit from the RRF, Member States must submit recovery and resilience plans which set out their national reform and investment agendas. While the core principles of the Commission's proposal were preserved, the political agreement brought some changes to the text of the Regulation. In order to assist Member States in aligning their draft recovery and resilience plans to the Regulation, the guidance originally presented in September has been updated. This updated guidance reflects the fact that the scope of the RRF is structured around six pillars: green transition; digital transformation; smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs; social and territorial cohesion; health and resilience; and policies for the next generation, children and youth, including education and skills. Member States should explain how the plans contribute to equality and the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights. They should also include a summary of the consultation process at national level as well as the controls and audit system put in place to ensure that the financial interests of the Union are protected. Member States should demonstrate that their proposed plans contribute with at least 37% of the plan's total allocation to the climate target and 20% to the digital transition. The Commission remains in intensive dialogue with Member States on the preparation of their recovery and resilience plans. Along with the updated guidance, the Commission has also published a standard template for the Member States' plans. *(For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)*

### **EU Cohesion policy: over €55 million for a more reliable and energy-efficient heating system in Croatia**

Today, the European Commission has approved an investment worth over €55 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) to replace more than 68 km of Zagreb's heating pipes with a more reliable and efficient network. This major EU project for the capital of Croatia will reduce heat and water losses and will make the system compatible with renewable heating sources. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira**, commented: *"With this investment, Cohesion policy is once again proving its value in boosting regional energy-efficiency to improve citizens' quality of life while at the same time protecting the environment and supporting the green transition"*. The modernised heating system will ensure greater comfort for Zagreb's residents especially in winter. Moreover, with a reduction of the maintenance costs and a lower consumption of natural gas for water heating, the project will contribute to lower carbon emissions. Works will be implemented over the summers of 2021-2023 to avoid inconvenience for residents. More information on EU funded investments in Croatia is available on the [Open Data Platform](#). *(For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli - Tel.: +32 229 87269)*

### **Panel of experts confirms the Republic of Korea is in breach of labour commitments under our trade agreement**

The panel report published today confirms the EU's concerns that the Republic of Korea has not acted consistently with its trade and sustainable development obligations under the EU-Republic of Korea trade agreement. The independent panel concluded that the Republic of Korea needs to adjust its labour laws and practices and to continue swiftly the process of ratifying four fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions in order to comply with the agreement. Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: *"This panel ruling*

*shows the effectiveness of our cooperation-based approach to trade and sustainable development. We have closely engaged with our Korean partners for some years, and the panel of experts process led to concrete actions by Korea. We will be working closely with Korea to ensure it effectively implements commitments on workers' rights." A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Sophie Dirven – Tel.: +32 229 67228)*

## **Plan d'action pour la démocratie européenne : La Commission lance une consultation publique sur la transparence de la publicité à caractère politique**

La Commission européenne lance aujourd'hui une consultation publique sur la transparence de la publicité à caractère politique, faisant ainsi suite aux engagements pris dans le [plan d'action pour la démocratie européenne](#). Présenté en [décembre 2020](#), le plan d'action annonçait que la Commission proposerait une législation sur la transparence des contenus parrainés à caractère politique. La proposition couvrira à la fois la publicité en ligne et hors ligne et complétera les règles énoncées dans la proposition de la Commission pour un [acte législatif sur les services numériques](#), avec pour objectif d'avoir des règles spécifiques en place suffisamment en amont des élections du Parlement européen de mai 2024. La consultation publique vise à recueillir les contributions d'un large éventail de parties prenantes, à savoir grand public, universitaires, entreprises, ONG, médias, pouvoirs publics et partis politiques. Les personnes souhaitant participer à la consultation publique peuvent remplir un questionnaire qui sera disponible [en ligne](#) jusqu'au 2 avril 2020. (Pour plus d'informations : Christian Wigand – Tél. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tél.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferroli – Tél.: + 32 229 92729)

## **Chemicals: The EU protects wildlife from negative effects of lead in the environment**

Today, the Commission took firm steps to ensure that wildlife is protected from the negative effects of lead in the environment, by restricting its use in gunshot in or around wetlands. Adopted under the framework of the [EU's chemicals regulation](#), the measure will help to protect the environment by significantly reducing lead pollution while preventing the avoidable death by lead poisoning of around 1 million waterbirds every year. Lead is a highly toxic substance, which released to the environment contaminates both the soil and water. Every year, 4,000 to 5,000 tonnes of lead are released into wetlands from lead gunshot. There are affordable alternatives, for example steel gunshots, which currently cost about the same as lead gunshots. The measure adopted today will harmonise and enhance the effectiveness of national legislation limiting the use of lead gunshot in wetlands already in place in 24 Member States. It will start applying in two years' time. The restriction supports the goals of the [Chemical Strategy for Sustainability](#) and the [Green Deal](#). It also supports the objectives of the [Birds Directive](#), and is a first concrete deliverable under the new [EU 2030 Biodiversity Strategy](#). More info [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tel.: +32 229 58300)

## **Publication of latest agri-food trade figures: EU agri-food trade sustains growth between January and October 2020**

The latest monthly report on agri-food trade [published today](#) shows a sustained growth over January-October 2020. EU exports reached €151.8 billion, an increase of 0.5% compared to the same period last year, while imports totalled €102 billion, an increase of 0.1%. As a result, the agri-food trade surplus rose by 1.3%, to €49.8 billion. The strong performance of EU agri-food exports to China continued, with a growth of €3.09 billion led by pig meat, wheat, and infant food. There was also a rise in the value of EU agri-food exports to Saudi, boosted by sales of barley and dairy products. A wide range of products propelled an increase in the value of EU agri-food exports to Switzerland, while wheat and various dairy products performed strongly in Algeria and Morocco, where the agri-food export values rose by €408 million and €393 million respectively. As for trade with the UK, EU imports from the UK dropped in value by €1.56 billion, while EU exports to the UK declined by €546 million. The decline in trade affected the majority of agri-food products, most notably wine, spirits and liqueurs, poultry meat, live animals and butter. Regarding the USA, a reduction in the EU's intake of US soya beans and oilcakes contributed to an overall drop of €663 million in the value of imports, while the value of EU exports fell by €705 million, with spirits and wine the main products affected. There was, however, an increase in the export value of EU food preparations. Other countries where agri-food trade endured difficulties were Singapore, Hong Kong, Ukraine and India. With a rise of €713 million, Canada was the leading source of growth for agri-food imports to the EU, driven by intakes of rapeseed and wheat. In terms of product categories, remarkable growths were recorded in the export values of EU pig meat and wheat. Pet food, rapeseed and sunflower oil and coarse grains were amongst the other growing product categories during this period. The full report

is available [online](#) and further information on the agri-food policy can be found [here](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tel.: +32 229 63303)

### **State aid: Commission approves €642 million German federal “umbrella” scheme to compensate companies active in trade fairs and congress sector for damage suffered due to coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €642 million German federal umbrella scheme to compensate companies active in the trade fairs and congress sector for damages suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak and the specific restrictive measures put in place by the government to limit the spread of the virus. The scheme will be open to owners and operators of fairs and congress infrastructure in Germany, as well as intermediary companies that lease trade fairs and congress infrastructure from the owner to third parties, and to those third parties leasing it. Companies will be eligible if they have incurred a loss of profit between 1 March and 31 December 2020 and if this loss is linked to measures put in place by the *Länder* to limit the spread of the virus, applicable in that period. The scheme covers up to 100% of the loss of profit directly resulting either from an administrative prohibition either of all events or, at least, of all large events (defined by reference to number of attendees). In general, the damage will be calculated as the difference between the average operating profits in the reference period (from 1 March to 31 December) in 2018 and 2019, and the actual profits in the same period in 2020. A beneficiary cannot claim compensation in relation to periods when, in the *Land* concerned, there were no prohibitions on trade fairs and congresses. In case of restrictive measures affecting only large events (which could thus still take place, but with a cap on attendees), losses that may result from lower attendance than still allowed (e.g. due to general reluctance of people to attend such events) cannot be compensated since they are not linked to governmental measures. The scheme includes a claw-back mechanism, whereby any possible public support in excess of the actual damage received by the beneficiaries will have to be paid back to the relevant granting public authority. The Commission assessed the measure under [Article 107\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors for the damages caused by exceptional occurrences, such as the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the German scheme will compensate damages that are directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak. It also found that the measure is proportionate, as the envisaged compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damages. The Commission therefore concluded that the scheme is in line with EU State aid rules. 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.59173 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 AA by TowerBrook and Warburg Pincus**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over AA Plc of the UK by TowerBrook Capital Partners LP ('TowerBrook') and Warburg Pincus LLP, both of the U.S. AA's main activity is the provision of road assistance services in the UK. In addition, AA provides insurance distribution services, insurance underwriting services and certain other financial services products. TowerBrook is an investment management firm with a focus on European and North American companies. Warburg Pincus is a private equity firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that the companies are not active in the same markets or in markets upstream or downstream of each other. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10091](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over BP Sinopec Marine Fuels by BP and Sinopec Fuel Oil Sales**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over BP Sinopec Marine Fuels Pte. Ltd ('BP Sinopec Marine') by BP Plc. Both of the UK and Sinopec Fuel Oil Sales Co. Ltd of the People's Republic of China. BP Sinopec Marine Fuels will be active in the wholesale and retail supply of bunker fuels in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East. BP is active in various markets related to the provision of oil, natural gas, petroleum and petrochemical

products and alternative energy. Sinopec Fuel Oil Sales provides oil products and service to trading vessels. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited overlaps between the activities of the companies. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.9837](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over TIKI by Syskron, Samhammer and Zollner**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Technologisches Institut für angewandte künstliche Intelligenz GmbH ('TIKI') by Syskron Holding GmbH, Samhammer AG and Zollner Elektronik, all of Germany. TIKI is a company active in the development of software in connection with procedural research and development services in the area of artificial intelligence. Syskron is a subsidiary of Kronos AG, a manufacturer of systems and machines for the production, filling and packaging of beverages and liquid foods, and provides digitisation and intralogistics solutions as well as aftersales services for the Kronos group. Samhammer provides helpdesk services as well as branch and terminal services. Zollner is a provider of services from development and production to after-sales service and the trade of electronic components for electronic manufacturing services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the marginal activities of TIKI in the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10053](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **La présidente von der Leyen à la Semaine de l'Agenda de Davos 2021**

La présidente de la Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, participera demain, le 26 janvier, à la [Semaine de l'Agenda de Davos 2021](#), qui cette année se tient entièrement en ligne. La présidente **von der Leyen** prononcera un discours lors de la session consacré à « l'état du monde » à 11h00 CET, que vous pouvez suivre en direct sur [EbS](#). Cinq autres membres du Collège participeront également à différents événements thématiques au cours de la semaine. Le mercredi, la commissaire **Simson** fera un discours à la session sur l'accélération des transitions à l'énergie propre. Toujours mercredi, les commissaires **Sinkevičius** et **McGuinness** interviendront lors de tables rondes sur l'économie à zéro émissions, et sur le financement de la transition à une telle économie, respectivement. Puis, le vendredi, le vice-président exécutif **Timmermans** participera à une discussion sur les efforts pour stimuler la transition verte en Europe. Le vice-président exécutif **Dombrovskis** quant à lui interviendra lors de deux sessions le vendredi, axées sur le système international du commerce, et l'avantage européen dans la transition verte. Plus d'informations sont disponibles sur le [site web](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Eric Mamer – Tél.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tél.: +32 229 90150)

### **European Commission launches Green Consumption Pledge**

Today, Didier **Reynders**, Commissioner for Justice and Consumers, will present the first Green Consumption Pledges with representatives of different European companies. The Green Consumption Pledge is the first initiative delivered under the [New Consumer Agenda](#). This pilot project is part of the [European Climate Pact](#) which is an EU-wide initiative inviting people, communities and organisations to participate in climate action and build a greener Europe. With their signatures, these companies promise to accelerate their contribution to a green transition. The press conference with Commissioner **Reynders** and industry representatives will take place today at 14:30. Follow live on [EbS](#). More information can be found [here](#). A press release on the Green Consumption Pledge will be available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand - Tel.: +32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko - Tel.: +32 229 63444; Jördis Ferroli – Tel: +32 229 92729)

## **EU Internet Forum Ministerial meeting: Fostering coordination to counter terrorist content and child sexual abuse online**

This afternoon, Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, will host the 6th Ministerial meeting of the EU Internet Forum to discuss the challenges posed by malicious content online. The virtual meeting will gather national authorities, the online industry, academia, law enforcement, European agencies and international partners. Participants will exchange views on the EU and industry response to recent terrorist attacks in France and Austria (including the Europol report on the first activation of the EU Crisis Protocol), collaboration with Internet platforms, and moderation of terrorist content in the context of the [Global Internet Forum to Counter Terrorism](#). Participants will also debate challenges in the fight against child sexual exploitation online, emerging threats posed by violent right-wing extremist content online and algorithmic amplification on social media. Opening remarks by Commissioner **Johansson**, Portugal's Minister of Internal Administration Eduardo Cabrita and Germany's State Secretary at the Federal Ministry of the Interior, Building and Community Markus Richter will be available live [online](#) starting from 15.00 today. The EU Internet Forum was launched in December 2015 to address Internet misuse by terrorist groups, and is now also addressing child sexual abuse online. It meets annually to assess the progress made in removing terrorist content online and to discuss emerging challenges. *(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

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