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Sahel et Afrique centrale: 210 millions d'euros d'aide humanitaire de l'UE

L'UE réaffirme sa solidarité envers les populations vulnérables dans les pays du Sahel et d'Afrique centrale grâce à un budget humanitaire de 210 millions d'euros en 2021. Les fonds seront alloués à des projets humanitaires dans les huit pays suivants: Burkina Faso (24.3 millions d'euros), Cameroun (17.5 millions d'euros), République centrafricaine (21.5 millions d'euros), Tchad (35.5 millions d'euros) Mali (31.9 millions d'euros), Mauritanie (10 millions d'euros), Niger (32.3 millions d'euros) et Nigeria (37 millions d'euros). Le commissaire chargé de la gestion des crises, Janez **Lenarčič**, a déclaré: « *L'aggravation de l'instabilité et des conflits armés, conjuguée à la pandémie de COVID-19 et aux risques naturels, a des conséquences dévastatrices au Sahel et dans les pays d'Afrique centrale. L'UE reste déterminée à contribuer à réduire les souffrances parmi les personnes dans le besoin dans la région. Si l'aide humanitaire est destinée à apporter une aide d'urgence, des améliorations durables ne peuvent être apportées que grâce à la volonté politique des gouvernements nationaux et à la bonne gouvernance.* » Le financement humanitaire de l'UE dans les pays du Sahel et d'Afrique centrale vise, entre autres, à apporter une aide vitale aux populations touchées par le conflit et aux communautés et à faire face aux crises alimentaires et à la malnutrition aiguë sévère chez les enfants de moins de 5 ans. Cette aide s'inscrit dans le cadre plus large du soutien apporté par l'UE à la région, notamment par l'intermédiaire des contributions de Team Europe à la réponse mondiale au coronavirus, du soutien à l'effort de distribution de vaccins par l'intermédiaire de la facilité COVAX et d'autres actions apportant un soutien à plus long terme au renforcement des systèmes de santé fragiles. Plus de détails figurent dans le [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari – Tél.: + 32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi- Tél.: +32 229 69140)

Coronavirus: Health Security Committee updates the common list of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests

The Health Security Committee (HSC) has agreed to update the common list of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests (RATs), including those whose results are mutually recognised by EU Member States for public health measures. Following the update, 83 RATs are now included in the common list, of which the results of 35 tests are being mutually recognised. Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella Kyriakides, said: "Rapid antigen tests play a crucial role to slow down the spread of COVID-19. Diagnostics are a central element for Member States in their overall response to the pandemic. Having a wider list of recognised rapid antigen tests will also make it easier for citizens to benefit from Digital Green Certificates and to facilitate safe free movement inside the EU in the coming months." In addition, the Commission and the Joint Research Centre have agreed on a new procedure for updating the list of common and mutually recognised RATs in the future. From today onwards, RATs manufacturers will be able to submit data and information for certain tests that meet [the criteria](#) agreed by the Council on 21 January 2021. This includes only those rapid tests that are being carried out by a trained health professional or other trained operator and excludes rapid antigen self-tests. Moreover, as part of the new procedure, the HSC is setting up a technical working group of national experts to review the data submitted by countries and manufacturers and to propose updates to the HSC. They will also work with the JRC and the ECDC on a common procedure for carrying out independent validation studies to assess the clinical performance of RATs. The updated common list of COVID-19 RATs is available [here](#). Manufacturers can submit data on rapid antigen tests available on the market [here](#). The Council Recommendation on a common framework for the use and validation of RATs and the mutual recognition of COVID-19 test results in the EU can be found [here](#). (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy – Tel.: +32 229 83978)

Retail investment: Commission launches public consultation to prepare future retail

investment strategy

The European Commission has today launched a public consultation on the upcoming retail investment strategy, which is planned for adoption in early 2022, as announced in last year's [Capital Markets Union Action Plan](#). The Commission is seeking views on how to improve the EU's existing retail investor protection framework. The aim is to ensure that retail investors, i.e. consumers wanting to invest their money, can take full advantage of the EU's capital markets. The investor protection framework should create an environment of trust so that these consumers have the confidence to take advantage of the potential that capital markets offer. Mairead **McGuinness**, Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union, said: *"People are at the heart of my vision for financial services. I want to establish a framework that empowers retail investors to take the right financial decisions, a framework they can trust because it gives them sufficient protection. By contributing to this public consultation, you can have your say on issues relevant to the development of an investor protection framework in the EU that helps unlock the potential of our capital markets and ensures that it delivers for retail investors."* The public consultation will run for 12 weeks. You can have your say [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

Competition: Commission adopts Recommendation for Council Decision authorising negotiations for EU-UK Competition Cooperation Agreement

The European Commission has adopted a Recommendation for a Council Decision authorising negotiations for an EU-UK Competition Cooperation Agreement. The EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement (TCA), which entered into force on 1 May 2021, foresees the possibility for a separate agreement on cooperation in competition matters between the Commission and the competition authorities of the Member States, on the one hand, and the competition authorities of the UK on the other hand. The Recommendation to Council proposes to proceed with implementation of this point of the TCA. The envisaged competition cooperation agreement may include conditions for the exchange and use of confidential information in the context of antitrust and merger control matters. From the EU side, the agreement will relate to the application of EU competition law. Proper coordination of competition enforcement between the EU and UK will benefit European consumers and businesses. The Commission has already negotiated several formal international competition cooperation agreements with third countries: with the US (1991), Canada (1999), Japan (2003), South Korea (2009) and Switzerland (2013). The Commission has transmitted the Recommendation to the Council and the European Parliament, as well as to the European Data Protection Supervisor. It is now for the Council to consider whether and under which conditions to allow for the start of negotiations on an EU-UK competition cooperation agreement. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves €1.9 billion Czech scheme to support companies in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved an approximately € 1.9 billion (CZK 50 billion) Czech scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The measure is addressed to companies of all sizes and active in all sectors, except the financial sector. Under the scheme, the aid will take the form of direct grants, guarantees or loans to compensate beneficiaries for the expenditures incurred in the period February 2020 to December 2021. Eligible companies are those that experienced a minimum decline in turnover in the range of 25% to 50% during the relevant period, if compared to the same period before the coronavirus outbreak. In the particular case of companies active in the cultural sector, the eligible ones are those that have been prevented or restricted from providing cultural services to the public because of the measures put in place by the government to limit the spread of the virus. The aim of the scheme is to provide the beneficiaries with sufficient liquidity to continue their activities during and after the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the Czech measure 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 measure under EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Many EU companies have seen their revenues and activities significantly decline because of the restrictive measures put in place to limit the spread of the coronavirus. This €1.9 billion Czech scheme will ensure liquidity support to companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. 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."* 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 €11.6 million Czech scheme to support travel agencies in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €11.6 million Czech scheme to support businesses active in the travel services sector in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The measure was approved under the State Aid [Temporary Framework](#). The public support will take the form of bank guarantees, securing these beneficiaries' co-participation under a compulsory insurance against bankruptcy. Guarantees will be issued by Czechia's promotional bank, the Czech-Moravian Guarantee and Development Bank, on behalf of the Ministry of Industry and Trade. The support will help beneficiaries that are facing a lack of liquidity to obtain such an insurance, allowing them to continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the Czech scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed the maximum amount per company provided by the Temporary Framework; 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 of the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. More information on the Temporary Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.61837 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)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of AT&T's U.S. video business by TPG and AT&T

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over AT&T's U.S. video business by TPG Capital ('TPG') and AT&T Inc., all of the U.S. AT&T's U.S. video business, which is currently solely controlled by AT&T, is a provider of direct broadcast satellite services, multichannel television services and digital video services to customers in the U.S. AT&T's U.S. video business also sells advertising on its distribution platforms. TPG is a private investment firm that manages a family of funds that invest in a variety of companies worldwide through acquisitions and corporate restructurings. AT&T is a provider of telecommunications, media and technology services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that AT&T's U.S. video business does not carry out any activities, nor has any assets in the European Economic Area ('EEA'). Therefore, the proposed acquisition does not give rise to any horizontal overlaps or vertical relations in the EEA. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10220](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over PQ Performance Chemicals by Cerberus and Koch Industries

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over PQ Performance Chemicals of the Netherlands and Hong Kong, by Cerberus Capital Management L.P. ('Cerberus') and Koch Industries, both of the U.S. PQ Performance Chemicals is a producer of sodium silicas, downstream specialty silicas, zeolites and other derivatives. Cerberus is active in investments, among others in financial services, manufacturing, building materials and real estate. Koch Industries controls a diverse portfolio of companies involved, among others, in refining and chemicals, minerals, fertilizers, commodity trading and services, polymers and fibers, glass, printing and packing, enterprise software and investments. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the absence of horizontal overlaps or vertical links 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.10219](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

EU Cohesion policy: Kick-off of the 6th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region

Today, Commissioner **Ferreira** will open the [6th Annual Forum](#) of the [EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region](#) (EUSAIR). The two-day discussions will focus on a green and smart recovery for the Adriatic and Ionian macro-region. Prior to the official opening, Ministers of the 9 participating countries will adopt the 'Izola Declaration', laying the foundations for a more resilient and sustainable Adriatic-Ionian Region. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira**, said: *"The adoption of the Izola Declaration will lead the way towards a green and digital recovery and will further facilitate the enlargement process of our close neighbours in the Western Balkans. EUSAIR plays an important role in increasing multi-level regional cooperation, resolving bilateral issues, bringing stability and fostering EU integration. This has been once more demonstrated by today's agreement to include San Marino to become the tenth member, one year after North Macedonia has joined the Strategy."* The EUSAIR, launched in October 2014, covers a macro-region of more than 70 million people in four Member States (Croatia, Greece, Italy, Slovenia) and five countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia) cooperating to overcome common challenges in four pillars: Blue Growth, Connecting the Region (Transport and Energy), Environmental Quality and Sustainable Tourism. See also the [programme](#) of the event. You can register [here](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712, Veronica Favalli - Tel.: +32 229 87269)

La Task Force sur l'application des règles du marché unique se réunit pour s'attaquer aux restrictions transfrontalières et discuter de la mise à jour de la stratégie industrielle

Cet après-midi, la Commission et les États membres tiendront la cinquième réunion formelle de la Task Force sur l'application des règles du marché unique (SMET). La Task Force examinera, entre autres, les mesures prises pour lutter contre les restrictions transfrontalières dans le domaine des professions réglementées ainsi que les mesures restrictives dans le secteur agroalimentaire. La réunion sera une première occasion pour la Commission de présenter aux membres la [mise à jour de la stratégie industrielle de l'UE](#) récemment adoptée. La Task Force a été mise en place en avril 2020, à la suite de son annonce dans le [plan d'action sur l'application des règles du marché unique](#) dans le cadre du [paquet de stratégie industrielle de la Commission](#) de mars 2020. Elle constitue une plateforme permettant aux États membres et à la Commission de travailler ensemble à l'élimination des obstacles concrets au sein du marché unique et d'assurer le bon fonctionnement du marché unique. (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tél.: +32 229 58300)

[Tentative agendas](#) for forthcoming Commission meetings

Note that these items can be subject to changes.

[Eurostat](#) press releases

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