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Brussels, 20 May 2021

Coronavirus: la Commission signe un troisième contrat avec BioNTech-Pfizer portant sur 1,8 milliard de doses supplémentaires

La Commission européenne a signé aujourd'hui un troisième contrat avec les sociétés pharmaceutiques BioNTech et Pfizer. Ce contrat a pour objet de réserver 1,8 milliard de doses supplémentaires, pour le compte de tous les États membres de l'Union, entre fin 2021 et 2023. Il permettra l'achat de 900 millions de doses du vaccin actuel et d'un vaccin adapté aux variants, avec une option pour l'achat de 900 millions de doses supplémentaires. La présidente de la Commission européenne, Ursula **von der Leyen**, a déclaré: « *Avec notre signature, le nouveau contrat est maintenant en vigueur; c'est une bonne nouvelle pour le combat de longue durée que nous menons afin de protéger les citoyens européens contre le virus et ses variants! La production et la fourniture, dans l'Union, d'un nombre de doses pouvant aller jusqu'à 1,8 milliard sont garanties. Les contrats potentiels avec d'autres fabricants suivront le même modèle, dans l'intérêt de tous.* »

Stella **Kyriakides**, commissaire à la santé et à la sécurité alimentaire, a ajouté: « *Nous devons avoir une longueur d'avance sur le virus. Pour cela, nous devons avoir accès à des vaccins adaptés pour nous protéger contre la menace des variants ainsi qu'à des doses de rappel pour prolonger l'immunité, et nous devons protéger les plus jeunes d'entre nous. Nous mettons l'accent en priorité sur les technologies qui ont fait leurs preuves, comme les vaccins à ARN messager, mais nous restons ouverts à d'autres options. Ces derniers mois ont clairement démontré la nécessité d'avoir accès à un large éventail de vaccins et de technologies différentes, ainsi qu'à des partenaires fiables. Alors que le rythme de vaccination augmente chaque jour et que les travaux sur des traitements efficaces s'intensifient, nous pouvons regarder l'avenir avec plus d'optimisme et de confiance.* » Le contrat exige que le site de production des vaccins soit établi dans l'Union et que ses composants essentiels proviennent de l'Union. Il statue également que la livraison aux pays de l'Union est garantie dès le début de l'approvisionnement, en 2022. Grâce à la coopération bien établie avec les fabricants dans le cadre des contrats actuels, ainsi qu'aux dispositions mises en place, des livraisons rapides de doses sont assurées. La possibilité pour les États membres de revendre des doses ou d'en faire don directement à des pays tiers qui en ont besoin ou par l'intermédiaire du dispositif COVAX a été renforcée, ce qui contribue à un accès équitable au vaccin dans le monde entier. De plus amples informations dans notre [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Stefan de Keersmaecker – Tél.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy – Tél.: +32 229 83978)

Politique de cohésion de l'UE: 908,8 millions d'euros pour la Tchéquie et la France pour lutter contre l'impact social et économique de la crise du coronavirus

La Commission a approuvé la modification de deux programmes opérationnels (PO) du [Fonds européen de développement régional](#) dans le cadre de [REACT-EU](#) afin d'augmenter de 908,8 millions d'euros le financement disponible pour les investissements pour la Tchéquie et la France afin de lutter contre les effets de la pandémie de coronavirus. En Tchéquie, la modification du « PO régional intégré » débloquera 834,8 millions d'euros supplémentaires pour renforcer le système de santé, le système de sauvetage intégré et l'infrastructure sociale, y compris l'augmentation de son efficacité énergétique. De plus, de nouveaux investissements permettront de développer, de moderniser et de renforcer la résilience du réseau de prestataires de soins de santé en mettant un accent particulier sur les patients vulnérables. Enfin, le programme soutiendra la construction et l'équipement d'installations qui augmenteront la qualité des services sociaux. En France, l'amendement du « PO Bretagne » financera avec 74 millions d'euros supplémentaires plusieurs projets contribuant aux transitions verte et numérique, des mesures pour lutter contre l'impact économique de la crise des coronavirus et favoriser la reprise économique, ainsi que des investissements dans les produits et les services de santé. Plus de 60 % du financement supplémentaire encouragera des investissements verts, notamment dans la rénovation énergétique des bâtiments, le développement et la distribution de sources d'énergie renouvelables (notamment l'hydrogène vert, les bornes de recharge électrique, les réseaux intelligents, etc.), la conversion de friches industrielles et la réhabilitation des zones

dégradées en vue de restaurer la biodiversité. REACT-EU fait partie de [NextGenerationEU](#) et fournit un financement supplémentaire de 50,6 milliards d'euros (en prix courants) au cours de 2021 et 2022 aux programmes de la politique de cohésion. Les mesures visent à soutenir la résilience du marché du travail, les emplois, les PME et les familles à faible revenu, ainsi que la mise en place de fondations à l'épreuve du temps pour les transitions vertes et numériques et une reprise socio-économique durable. (*Pour plus d'informations: Vivian Loonela – Tél.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli – Tél.: +32 229 87269*)

Public Health: EU Tobacco Products Directive is delivering but stronger action is needed

The European Commission is [publishing its first report](#) on the Tobacco Products Directive. Five years after it became applicable, the Directive contributed to a steady decrease in smoking rates and tobacco use, the report finds. It also points out two main areas where we need to see improvements: enforcement at national level and better consideration of new market developments. Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "*With Europe's Beating Cancer Plan we are proposing bold and ambitious actions to reduce the use of tobacco. We have set a very clear objective - to create a tobacco-free generation in Europe, where less than 5% of people use tobacco by 2040. This means enforcing EU tobacco legislation more strictly and helping it keep pace with new developments. EU legislation on tobacco has clearly had a positive impact on smoking rates in the EU, but to meet our target, we must set our sights higher. The upcoming reviewing of the Tobacco Products Directive will be an important part of this work.*" [Europe's Beating Cancer Plan](#) – a key pillar of the European Health Union – aims at creating a 'Tobacco-free Generation' by 2040. To reach this highly ambitious goal we need timely mobilisation of the complete available arsenal of tobacco control tools at all levels. The Directive has put in place comprehensive EU tobacco control policy rules, notably through enlarged combined health warnings, a track and trace system, a ban on characterising flavours, the creation of an ingredients database and the regulation of electronic cigarettes. However, due to market developments, there is scope for improvement in certain essential areas such as labelling, assessment of ingredients, cross-border distance sales and novel and emerging products. A press release is available [here](#) (For more information: Stefan de Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy – Tel.: +32 229 83978)

Commission launches Digital Skills and Jobs Platform to accelerate digital upskilling in Europe

The Commission, together with various partners in the Member States, launched today the [Digital Skills and Jobs Platform](#), a one-stop shop for high-quality information, initiatives and resources on digital skills. At a time when 42% of Europeans lack basic digital skills, the new platform will help close the digital skills gap in Europe and strengthen the European [Digital Skills and Jobs Coalition](#) and its [25 National coalitions](#). It is funded by the [Connecting Europe Facility](#). Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: "*Whether looking for a new job or starting a business, digital skills are key to success. Bringing together hundreds of initiatives from around Europe, the Digital Skills and Jobs Platform is a unique place for citizens to enhance their learning experiences and to discover new opportunities.*" As the EU's central hub for digital up-skilling and re-skilling, the platform bundles best practices in digital skills, resources and the main actors in the field, to make a tangible impact on both basic and advanced digital skills. It will also navigate users through curated national and EU initiatives, opening up a community space for discussions and collaboration. In the near future, smart functionalities, such as a self-assessment tool and online courses on emerging technologies, will make it easy for anyone to find the right resource or service. Jointly with the [Digital Europe Programme](#) and the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), the platform will contribute to the objectives of [Europe's Digital Decade](#), namely that 80% of Europeans will have at least basic digital skills and that there will be 20 million employed digital technology experts by 2030. It will also contribute to the [Pact for Skills](#), a shared engagement model for skills development in Europe. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Johannes & Marietta) (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

2021 EU Blue Economy report: Emerging sectors prepare blue economy for leading part in EU green transition

On the occasion of the [European Maritime Day](#), the Commission released today the fourth edition of its 'EU Blue Economy Report', providing an overview of the performance of economic sectors related to oceans and the coastal environment in the European Union. The sector directly employed close to 4.5 million people in 2018 and generated around €650 billion in turnover. Emerging activities such as ocean energy, marine biotechnology and robotics will play an important role in the EU's transition

towards a carbon-neutral, circular and biodiverse economy. Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: "This report shows that the blue economy is an important driver of today's European economy, in coastal communities and beyond. Moreover, with the European Green Deal, its importance will only grow in the future. The sector will contribute to decarbonisation and other European environmental objectives with innovative solutions and by reducing its own footprint. I call on Member States and private investors to support this transformation and invest in a sustainable blue economy." Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: "The EU Blue Economy report marks an important milestone towards establishing the European Blue Observatory, a knowledge sharing platform that will enable near real-time monitoring of decarbonisation efforts across Europe's blue economy sectors." The report shows an acceleration in the growth of the most established sectors in the blue economy from 2013 to 2018 - seven large sectors ranging from maritime transport and shipbuilding over offshore wind energy to coastal tourism. Gross value added from coastal tourism, the largest blue economy sector in the EU, increased by 20.6% compared to 2009. However, nearly all of them have suffered severely from the COVID-19 crisis with coastal tourism seeing a decrease in activity of around 60 to 80%. The European Maritime Day is the annual EU meeting point for those active in the blue economy. The Commission published earlier this week its proposal for a [Sustainable Blue Economy](#). You can find the 2021 EU Blue Economy report [here](#). More information is in the [news item](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: +32 229 58615; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664; Sinéad Meehan-Van Druten - Tel.: + 32 229 84094)

Commissioner Breton meeting with European leaders in processors and semiconductors technologies to discuss furthering Europe's global competitiveness and resilience

This morning, Commissioner for Internal Market Thierry **Breton** visited the headquarters of the Dutch company ASML and met with the CEO Peter Wennink, as well as Luc Van den Hove, CEO of the international research and development organisation IMEC, both European leaders in processors and semiconductors technologies. They held a constructive exchange on advancing Europe's ambition in the production of next-generation processors and semiconductors. The Commissioner has discussed Europe's ambition to strengthen its technological leadership, strategic autonomy and security of supply in the most advanced semi-conductors. In this perspective, the Commissioner mentioned the need for enhanced coordination in Europe, and the role of the upcoming alliance on processors and semiconductor technologies. The alliance will bring together key actors of the electronics value chain in Europe in order to boost Europe's capacity to design and produce advanced trusted microelectronics chips (including below 5nm semiconductors). These semi-conductors, including processors, are essentials in the fields of automotive, edge-AI, secure connectivity and defence. As announced in the [Digital Decade strategy](#), the ambition is to increase Europe's production of cutting-edge and sustainable semiconductors in Europe to at least 20% of world production in value, from 10% today. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: +32 229 58615; Charles Manoury - Tel.: +32 229 13391)

World Bee Day: New handbook to help develop European nature restoration targets

Bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects are vital for healthy ecosystems and their capacity to provide us with food, clean water, medicine, materials, recreation and wellbeing. Yet, with three-quarters of the Earth's surface altered by human influence and one million species at risk of extinction, nature conservation alone is no longer enough. We also need restoration work to bring back what we have lost. Today, on World Bee Day, the Commission's Joint Research Centre has published a [summary for policymakers of the first EU-wide ecosystem assessment](#). The report, developed jointly with the European Environment Agency, provides science-based advice on restoring degraded ecosystems, improving the monitoring of their health, and defining methods to assess their condition. One year on from the launch of [the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#), the report supports efforts to put Europe's biodiversity on a path to recovery. Executive Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, for the European Green Deal, commented: "Healthy, thriving and resilient nature is at the core of healthy lifestyles, thriving economies and resilient societies. However, Europe's ecosystems are under increasing pressure, putting us all at risk. Nature restoration will be essential to deliver win-win solutions for climate, biodiversity and human wellbeing by 2030." Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, responsible for the Joint Research Centre, Mariya **Gabriel** said: "Science has a crucial role to play in protecting biodiversity and safeguarding precious ecosystems. This report provides valuable input to help ensure a firm evidence base for the policies needed to achieve these goals." The assessment reveals that the condition of all Europe's ecosystems – from forests to agricultural lands, urban areas, wetlands,

rivers, lakes and seas – needs to improve significantly in order to halt and reverse biodiversity loss. It provides scientific evidence to inform the Commission's upcoming proposal for nature restoration targets, which is due by the end of this year. Read the news release [here](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: +32 229 58615; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664; Sinéad Meehan-Van Druten - Tel.: + 32 229 84094)

Antitrust: Commission fines investment banks € 371 million for participating in a European Governments Bonds trading cartel

The European Commission has found that Bank of America, Natixis, Nomura, RBS (now NatWest), UBS, UniCredit and WestLB (now Portigon) have breached EU antitrust rules through the participation of a group of traders in a cartel in the primary and secondary market for European Government Bonds ('EGB'). Fines totalling € 371 million are imposed on Nomura, UBS and UniCredit. NatWest was not fined as it revealed the cartel to the Commission. Bank of America and Natixis are not fined either because their infringement falls outside the limitation period for imposition of fines. Portigon, the legal and economic successor of WestLB, received a zero fine as it did not generate any net turnover in the last business year which served as a cap to the fine. The seven investment banks participated in a cartel through a group of traders working on their EGB desks and operating in a closed circle of trust. These traders were in regular contact with each other mainly in multilateral chatrooms on Bloomberg terminals. In these chatrooms, the relevant traders exchanged commercially sensitive information. They discussed and provided each other with recurring updates on their bidding strategy in the run up to the auctions of the Eurozone Member States when issuing Euro denominated bonds on the primary market, and on trading parameters on the secondary market. The conduct partially took place during the financial crisis and more specifically between 2007 and 2011, and affected the entire European Economic Area ('EEA'). The behaviour of the seven banks violates EU rules that prohibit anticompetitive business practices such as collusion on prices ([Article 101](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 53 of the EEA Agreement). Executive Vice-President of the Commission Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: "*A well-functioning European Government Bonds market is paramount both for the Eurozone Member States issuing these bonds to generate liquidity and the investors buying and trading them. Our decision against Bank of America, Natixis, Nomura, RBS, UBS, UniCredit and WestLB sends a clear message that the Commission will not tolerate any kind of collusive behavior. It is unacceptable, that in the middle of the financial crisis, when many financial institutions had to be rescued by public funding these investment banks colluded in this market at the expense of EU Member States.*" A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €22.5 billion Polish scheme to support offshore wind farms

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a Polish scheme to support offshore wind technology. Poland notified the Commission of its intention to introduce a new scheme to support offshore wind farms. The aid will be granted in the form of a two-way contract-for-difference premium, during 25 years, but only up to 100,000 full load hours per MegaWatt of installed capacity. The scheme will roll out in two phases. During the first phase of the scheme, offshore projects will be granted aid using the exception to the auction requirement, due to the existence of a very limited number of projects. The reference price for projects in the first phase will be administratively fixed based on their costs, with a maximum set at 319,60 PLN/MWh (€71,82/MWh). Based on the respective business plan, the Commission will assess individually the specific level of operating aid. Under the second phase of the scheme, aid will be granted through open and competitive auctions which will be organised as of 2025, and the reference price of projects will be fixed based on the respective bid. The scheme has a total maximum budget of €22.5 billion and will run until 2030. The Commission assessed the scheme under EU State aid rules, in particular the [2014 Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy](#). The Commission found that the aid is necessary and has an incentive effect, as the offshore wind projects would not take place in the absence of public support. Furthermore, the aid is proportionate and limited to the minimum necessary. The Commission concluded that the Polish scheme is in line with EU State aid rules, as it supports offshore wind farm projects, which will facilitate the development of renewable energy production from offshore wind technology in Poland and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, in line with the [European Green Deal](#), and without unduly distorting competition. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*This Polish scheme is a very good example of how competition policy can enable Member States to support green energy projects, such as offshore wind farms. It gives the incentive to companies to invest in such green projects where they would otherwise not have invested. We hope that we will see many such initiatives in the*

future, which contribute to the EU's Green Deal, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market." A full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of joint venture by The Coca-Cola Company and Coca-Cola HBC

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by The Coca-Cola Company of the U.S. and Coca-Cola HBC AG of Switzerland. The joint venture will be active in providing digital marketplace services connecting wholesalers, retailers, suppliers and consumers of consumer packaged goods. The Coca-Cola Company mainly holds the worldwide brand ownership and licences of various trademarks used to market and sell non-alcoholic commercial beverages. Coca-Cola HBC is active in producing, marketing and selling The Coca-Cola Company-branded beverages and other beverages. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the joint venture has limited actual and foreseen activities in the European Economic Area. In addition, the acquisition does not result in 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.10208](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Sanden by Hisense Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Sanden Holdings Corporation ('Sanden') of Japan by Hisense Group Holdings Co. Ltd. ('Hisense Group') of China. Sanden manufactures and supplies climate control components and compressors constituting automotive air-conditioning systems, and climate control systems for construction and agricultural machinery. Hisense Group manufactures and supplies major domestic appliances, small domestic appliances, televisions and residential and commercial air conditioners and dehumidifiers. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited horizontal overlaps and 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.10265](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition de Technosens Evolution par Korian Solutions et VYV Invest

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle en commun de Technosens Evolution SAS, par l'entreprise Korian Solutions SAS, appartenant au Groupe Korian, et l'entreprise VYV Invest SAS, appartenant au Groupe VYV, toutes les trois basées en France. Technosens Evolution, déjà contrôlée par Korian Solutions, est principalement active en France dans la recherche, le développement et l'installation de solutions digitales ergonomiques à destination des établissements d'accueil de personnes âgées. Le Groupe Korian est actif dans le secteur des services de soin et d'accompagnement adaptés aux personnes âgées et fragilisées en Allemagne, en Belgique, en Espagne, en France, en Italie et aux Pays Bas. Le Groupe VYV est un acteur mutualiste de santé et de protection sociale qui regroupe des activités allant de l'assurance à l'offre de soins en France. Il est aussi actif dans le domaine de l'habitat et du logement social en France et de manière plus marginale en Espagne, en Italie et au Portugal. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence compte tenu de son impact limité sur la structure du marché. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du 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.10020](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Daniel Ferrie – Tél.: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

STATEMENTS

Célébration de la Journée mondiale de la diversité culturelle pour le dialogue et le développement

À l'approche de la Journée mondiale de la diversité culturelle pour le dialogue et le développement, le 21 mai, le haut représentant/vice-président Josep **Borrell**, la commissaire Mariya **Gabriel** et la commissaire Jutta **Urpilainen** ont publié une [déclaration commune](#). Dans cette déclaration, ils soulignent la valeur centrale de la diversité culturelle pour l'Union européenne, les difficultés rencontrées par le secteur culturel durant la pandémie de coronavirus, et le rôle de la culture dans le cadre des efforts de réconciliation et d'intégration. «*En tant qu'Européens, nous avons la chance d'avoir à notre porte certains des artistes les plus talentueux, les plus créatifs et les plus diversifiés du monde. Nous jouissons de sites culturels d'une remarquable beauté, tant architecturale, que naturelle. L'Europe elle-même est à la fois une mosaïque et un creuset de cultures, de peuples et de langues. Alors que nous ouvrons nos sociétés dans le cadre de la reprise socio-économique après le coronavirus, nous sommes impatients de découvrir à nouveau l'ensemble du patrimoine culturel que l'Europe, et le monde, ont à offrir.*» Du programme [Europe créative](#) à la collaboration avec des organisations internationales telles que l'UNESCO, en passant par [Erasmus+](#), les [Capitales européennes de la culture](#), les [Espaces culturels de l'UE](#) et la récente initiative en faveur d'un [nouveau Bauhaus européen](#), l'Union européenne s'engage à préserver et à promouvoir la culture, et à la rendre accessible à tous, tant dans l'UE que dans le monde. Le texte intégral de [la déclaration](#) est disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Nabil Massrali – Tél.: +32 229 88093; Ana Pisonero – Tél.: +32 229 54320 ; Adam Kaznowski – Tél.: +32 229 89359; Gesine Knolle Tél.: +32 229 54323 ; Sinéad Meehan - van Druten – Tél.: +32 229 84094)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

President von der Leyen hosts the Global Health Summit in Rome together with the Italian Presidency of the G20

On Friday, 21 May 2021, President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, will host the Global Health Summit in Rome jointly with Prime Minister Mario Draghi, for the Italian Presidency of the G20. The Summit will bring together G20 and invited leaders, heads of international and regional organisations, and representatives of global health bodies, to share lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic. It will develop and endorse a 'Rome Declaration' of principles that will guide a truly global response to future health crises. President **von der Leyen** and Prime Minister Draghi will open the Summit at 13:30 CET, followed by a plenary session, and closing speeches by both hosts will take place at 17:15 CET. At the end of the Summit, at around 17:30 CET, the President and Prime Minister Draghi will also hold a joint press conference. You can follow the whole Summit and the press conference live on [EbS](#). The following day, on Saturday, President **von der Leyen** will have an audience with His Holiness Pope Francis, followed by a meeting with Cardinal State Secretary Pietro Parolin. More information is available on the Summit [website](#). (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150)

Vice-President Šefčovič in Spain to develop the European Battery Alliance skills agenda

Vice-President in charge of Institutional Relations and Foresight, Maroš **Šefčovič**, has been in Spain to participate at the signature ceremony of the first-ever Memorandum of Understanding to implement the EBA250 Battery Academy, a public-private partnership on learning services, covering the entire battery value chain. The MoU between InnoEnergy and the Escuela de Organización Industrial is a significant concrete step in developing our skills agenda for the battery sector. In Spain, some 150,000 people are expected to be part of reskilling and upskilling training by 2025, while other EU Member States are set to follow. On this occasion, Vice-President **Šefčovič** took stock of the [European Battery Alliance](#)'s overall progress, which is the result of close cooperation between the Commission, Member States and the industry. He also supported flagship industrial projects in Spain, while welcoming another MoU between Scoobic, urban electric vehicle company, and Correos, Spanish National Mail service to deliver electric last-mile vehicle for post office. This is set to help transform urban mobility and improve air quality. Vice-President **Šefčovič** said: "The European Battery Alliance continues to lead the green transition with high-level of ambition and resolute collective action." Yesterday's signature ceremony with the speech and press conference by Vice-

President **Šefčovič** can be re-watched on [EbS](#). Today, the Vice-President is holding a meeting with Pedro Sánchez, President of the Government, with whom he will participate in the presentation of ES2050, a document presenting the guidelines for the long-term vision for Spain. You can watch the interventions and presentation on [EbS](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Célia Dejond – Tel.: +32 229 88199; Federica Miccoli – Tel.: +32 229 58300)

Executive Vice-President Timmermans, and Commissioners Simson and Sinkevičius at the G7 Climate and Environment Ministerial Meeting

On Thursday 20 and Friday 21 May, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, Frans **Timmermans**, Commissioner for Energy, Kadri **Simson**, and Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, will represent the EU at the [G7 Climate and Environment Ministerial meeting](#), hosted by the UK and taking place in a virtual format. Commissioner **Sinkevičius** is taking part in the launch session on 'The Basis for Action' with G7 members and guest countries. On Thursday afternoon, Executive Vice-President **Timmermans** and Commissioner **Simson** will take part in the session of G7 members on 'Net Zero and the Clean Energy Transition' discussing the nexus between climate and energy policies for achieving our emissions reduction targets. On Friday morning, Commissioner **Sinkevičius** will participate in the session of G7 members on 'Resetting our Relationship with Nature' and in the afternoon Executive Vice-President **Timmermans** will take part in the session on 'The Joint Track' with G7 members and guest countries, which will be dedicated to both climate and environment policies, with a view to the Biodiversity COP15 in October and the Climate COP26 in November of this year. (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Eurogroup and informal Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) meetings, 21 – 22 May 2021

Executive Vice-President **Dombrovskis**, Commissioner **Gentiloni** and Commissioner **McGuinness** will represent the Commission at the Eurogroup and the informal Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) meetings, taking place in Lisbon tomorrow and on Saturday. The Eurogroup will exchange views with Ms Irene Tinagli, Chair of the ECON Committee of the European Parliament, on the macro-economic and fiscal situation in the euro area, also on the basis of the [Commission's Spring Forecast](#). Participants will discuss the functioning of adjustment mechanisms in the euro area as an important element of the economic resilience in the euro area, with a specific focus on the COVID-19 pandemic. The Eurogroup will adopt the Work Programme for the second half of the year, covering the period from July until December. Switching to a Banking Union format, the Chair of the ECB Supervisory Board, Mr Andrea Enria, will inform the Eurogroup about the supervisory tasks carried out by ECB Banking Supervision. The Chair will notably focus on credit and climate risks and Brexit. The Chair of the Single Resolution Board (SRB), Ms Elke König, will update the Eurogroup on the recent activities undertaken by the SRB, focusing particularly on the progress made on resolvability, the minimum requirements for own funds and eligible liabilities (MREL) and the build-up of the Single Resolution Fund. Commissioner **Gentiloni** will represent the Commission at the [press conference](#) following the meeting. On Friday afternoon, ECOFIN Ministers and Central Bank Governors will share views on how to enhance the effectiveness of monetary and fiscal policies to promote economic growth in the short and long term. Ministers and Governors will discuss strategies on how the financial and non-financial sectors of the economy can support each other both at the current juncture, as well as at the upcoming recovery stage. On Saturday, Ministers will hold a thematic discussion on the future of green taxation policies in the EU and their role in the recovery of the economy. Ministers will also address key challenges in achieving a balanced recovery, highlighting the role of NextGenerationEU and its interaction with national instruments. A [press conference](#) with Executive Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will follow the meeting. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

Commissioner Várhelyi and Portuguese Minister of State and Foreign Affairs visit Bulgaria and North Macedonia

Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér **Várhelyi**, and the Portuguese Minister of State and Foreign Affairs, Augusto Santos Silva, on behalf of the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, will visit Bulgaria and North Macedonia on 21 May, to discuss topics related to the EU enlargement process with the authorities of both countries. In the morning, they will be in Sofia to meet President Rumen Radev, as well as the Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the new government, while in the afternoon, in Skopje, they will meet President Stevo Pendarovski, as

well as Prime Minister Zoran Zaev together with Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs and the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The official launch of the accession negotiations with Albania and North Macedonia is a key priority for the EU and the first Intergovernmental Conferences with both countries should be organised as soon as possible after the adoption of the Negotiating Frameworks by the Council. Images will be available on [EbS](#). (For more information: Ana Pisonero – Tel.: +32 229 54320; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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