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EU Digital COVID Certificate: European Parliament and Council reach agreement on Commission proposal

The Commission welcomes yesterday's provisional political agreement between the European Parliament and the Council on the Regulation governing the [EU Digital COVID Certificate](#). This means that the certificate (previously called the Digital Green Certificate) is well on track to be ready end of June, as planned. The agreement has been reached in record time just two months after the Commission's proposal. The negotiations on the certificate for the Commission have been led by Commissioner Didier **Reynders** in close cooperation with Vice-Presidents Vera **Jourová** and Margaritis **Schinás** and Commissioners Thierry **Breton**, Stella **Kyriakides**, and Ylva **Johansson**. Welcoming this swift progress, President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: *"We are delivering on our commitment to have the EU Digital COVID Certificate up and running before the summer. European citizens are looking forward to travelling again, and the agreement means they will be able to do so safely very soon. Work still remains. At EU level, the system will be ready in the next few days. It is now crucial that all Member States press ahead with the roll-out of their national systems to ensure that the system can be up and running as soon as possible. This is what EU citizens rightly expect."* Following the agreement, the EU Digital COVID Certificate will cover COVID-19 vaccination, test or recovery and be available in a digital and paper-based format. It will be free of charge and Member States may use it for national purposes, if this is provided for in national law. Member States shall refrain from imposing additional travel restrictions on the holders of an EU Digital COVID Certificate, unless they are necessary and proportionate to safeguard public health. Finally, the Commission will also mobilise €100 million to support Member States in providing affordable tests. The Regulation will enter into force on 1 July, with a phasing-in period of six weeks for the issuance of certificates for those Member States that need additional time. The full press release is available [online](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: +32 229 62253; Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tel.: +32 229 63444; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391)*

Security: More thorough checks for firearm licences to stop attempts to circumvent refusals from next year

The Commission adopted today [new rules](#) on the systematic exchange of information between Member States on refusals to grant authorisations to own a firearm. An estimated 30,000 refusals are issued each month within the EU on security grounds. The delegated regulation adopted today will enable the relevant national authorities to check, using the [Internal Market Information IT System](#), whether someone applying for a firearm licence has been denied a similar authorisation in another Member State. This will help stop people from attempting to go around prohibitions from owning a firearm by 'jurisdiction shopping'. Improving the legal control of firearms is a priority of the [EU Action Plan on firearms trafficking](#) for 2020-2025. The new rules will contribute to protecting Europeans from organised crime and terrorism, in line with the [Counter-terrorism Agenda](#) presented in December 2020 and the [EU Strategy to tackle organised crime](#) put forward last month. The new rules will apply as of 31 January 2022. *(For more information: Christian Wigand – Tel.: + 32 229 62253; Ciara Bottomley - Tel.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tel.: +32 229 55721)*

Natura 2000 Award application open for contributions to biodiversity and human health

Today, as we celebrate the [Natura 2000 Day](#), the Commission is launching the 2022 edition of the [European Natura 2000 Award](#). The Award, now in its sixth edition, honours and gives recognition to leading nature conservation achievements connected to Europe's Natura 2000 network of protected areas and raises awareness about the network. Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: *"With 65% of the EU population living within 5 km of a Natura 2000 site, this vast network of areas of high biodiversity value literally brings nature to our doorstep, allowing people to enjoy its multiple benefits. I would like to honour all those individuals and*

organisations who are making this happen and invite them to respond to our new Natura 2000 Award call and get the recognition they deserve." The Award is open to any organisation or person involved in Natura 2000, including public and local authorities, businesses, NGOs, landowners, educational institutions and individuals. The application period runs from today until September. This year's Natura 2000 Day pays tribute to the proximity of Natura 2000 sites to citizens across Europe, and the benefits this network brings to them and the planet, including its contribution to health. Protected areas are also becoming part of the global momentum for nature in this crucial year for biodiversity in the run up to the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CoP 15), planned for October 2021. More information about Natura 2000 and the Award's application process is in the [news item](#). *(For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664)*

Coronavirus: l'UE apporte un soutien supplémentaire au Népal et rapatrie les citoyens de l'UE

Un aéronef espagnol transportant des bouteilles et des concentrateurs d'oxygène, des respirateurs et des tests antigéniques à résultat rapide, dont le Népal a besoin de toute urgence, est arrivé en réponse à la demande de soutien que ce pays a présentée à l'UE dans ses efforts pour enrayer la flambée rapide des infections. Cet envoi, le premier d'une série en provenance des États membres dans les jours à venir, est effectué par l'intermédiaire du mécanisme de protection civile de l'UE, coordonné par la Commission européenne. Les offres de soutien des États membres de l'UE consiste actuellement en respirateurs, oxygène, masques chirurgicaux, tests antigéniques provenant de Finlande, France, Allemagne, Espagne, Belgique. Janez Lenarčič, commissaire chargé de la gestion des crises, a déclaré à ce sujet : *« Chaque minute, la flambée de COVID-19 au Népal fait davantage de victimes à mesure qu'elle se propage dans tout le pays. Nous sommes pleinement solidaires avec le Népal dans sa lutte contre la pandémie. Je tiens à remercier la Finlande, l'Espagne, la France et l'Allemagne, qui ont réagi rapidement et ont généreusement offert leur aide par l'intermédiaire de notre mécanisme de protection civile, montrant ainsi que l'UE est un partenaire de confiance sur qui on peut compter dans les moments difficiles. Nous mobilisons également rapidement une aide d'urgence d'un montant initial de 2 millions d'euros. Nous sommes prêts à fournir une aide supplémentaire.»* Plus de détails figurent dans le [communiqué de presse](#). *(Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer - Tél.: +32 229 99075; Daniel Puglisi - Tél.: +32 229 69140)*

European Youth Week brings together young people across Europe

Starting next Monday, the [European Youth Week](#) (24-30 May) will host various events and inspiring sessions across Europe focusing on the theme "Our future in our hands". The European Youth Week creates a space for young people to discuss relevant topics, contribute to initiatives, and learn more about EU opportunities in the field of youth. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, will participate in a panel debate on Wednesday 26 May and respond to young people's questions on how the new [Erasmus+](#) and [European Solidarity Corps](#) programmes will create more opportunities for youth and boost Europe's recovery. Commissioner **Gabriel** said: *"This European Youth Week aims to foster youth participation by engaging, connecting and empowering young people. It is the perfect launch pad for their ideas on how the EU works for them, and on the role they can play in our post-COVID recovery. The new Erasmus+ and European Solidarity Corps programmes offer a wealth of opportunities that can be true game-changers for young people in this process. I am looking forward to interacting with young people, in various formats, over the coming week, and working together to shape their future."* During the panel debate ["Youth Participation starts here"](#), Commissioner **Gabriel** will discuss with Michaela Šojdřová, Member of the European Parliament, with the Vice-President of the European Youth Forum and with a former European Solidarity Corps volunteer how the new programmes can strengthen young citizens' engagement in decision-making, embrace inclusion and diversity, and strengthen the green and digital transformations. Questions for the panel debate can be posted before the event [here](#) and on social media using #EUYouthWeek. Follow the [live event](#) here, from 13:30 on 26 May. More information about the European Youth Week is available [online](#). *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten - Tel.: +32 229 84094)*

Aides d'État: la Commission invite les parties intéressées à formuler des observations sur la proposition de révision des lignes directrices relatives aux aides d'État visant à promouvoir les investissements en faveur du financement des risques

La Commission européenne a lancé aujourd'hui une [consultation publique ciblée](#) dans le cadre de laquelle elle invite toutes les parties intéressées à formuler leurs observations sur une proposition de

révision ciblée des lignes directrices relatives aux aides d'État visant à promouvoir les investissements en faveur du financement des risques (ci-après les «lignes directrices relatives au financement des risques»). Les parties intéressées disposent d'un délai de huit semaines, soit jusqu'au 16 juillet 2021, pour répondre à la consultation. Les [lignes directrices relatives au financement des risques](#) visent à faciliter l'accès au financement pour les petites et moyennes entreprises (les «PME») et les entreprises à moyenne capitalisation européennes. Elles s'adressent en particulier à les PME innovantes ayant des perspectives de croissance et certains types d'entreprises à moyenne capitalisation, qui peuvent éprouver des difficultés à se financer même lorsqu'elles recèlent un potentiel intéressant. La Commission a procédé à une [évaluation](#) des lignes directrices en vigueur dans le cadre du bilan de qualité des règles en matière d'aides d'État. Il en est ressorti que les dispositions actuelles des lignes directrices relatives au financement des risques fonctionnaient correctement et étaient globalement adaptées à leur objet. L'évaluation a montré, parallèlement, que certaines adaptations ciblées, notamment la clarification de certaines notions et une rationalisation accrue, pouvaient s'avérer nécessaires pour simplifier davantage les règles en vigueur et préciser leur application. Dans ce contexte, la Commission propose certaines modifications ciblées des règles actuelles. L'adoption des nouvelles lignes directrices est prévue pour le dernier trimestre de 2021. Margrethe **Vestager**, vice-présidente exécutive chargée de la politique de concurrence, a déclaré: *«L'accès au financement est essentiel pour les petites et moyennes entreprises européennes, afin qu'elles puissent réaliser tout leur potentiel de croissance et mener la transition écologique et numérique. Nous continuons donc de simplifier nos règles relatives aux aides d'État. Nous souhaitons que les États membres puissent plus facilement donner accès à des financements lorsque le marché n'offre pas de solutions. Mais nous veillons bien entendu à ce que les éventuelles distorsions de concurrence restent aussi faibles que possible. Toutes les parties intéressées sont à présent invitées à s'exprimer.»* De plus amples informations dans notre [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344)

State Aid: Commission approves €58 million public support for mobile communications infrastructure in unserved areas of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania in Germany

The Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, €58 million of public support by the German state of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania for the deployment, operation, and the granting of access to state-owned passive mobile communications infrastructure. The objective of the measure is to close mobile network coverage gaps in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, where the market does not provide for any coverage. Mobile services will be provided via the new infrastructure and will be based on high-speed 4G Long-Term Evolution technology or 5G technology. Support under the measure will be granted through the establishment of dedicated trust assets at an in-house company that will deploy and operate the passive mobile network infrastructure. Once the infrastructure has been deployed, the in-house company will grant open, fair and non-discriminatory access to that infrastructure to all operators active in Germany. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules, in particular under Article 107(3)(c) TFEU and applied the [2013 Broadband Guidelines](#) by analogy. The Commission found that the measure is in line with the rules as it addresses a market failure, is an appropriate policy instrument for closing mobile network coverage gaps and is proportionate. The measure will contribute to the EU's connectivity objectives of providing access to high-speed mobile services throughout the EU territory, in all places where people live, work, travel and gather. At the same time, the scheme will help reduce important inequalities and the digital divide in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case number SA.58099 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €90 million Dutch scheme to support SMEs in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €90 million Dutch scheme to support micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The scheme will be open to SMEs that have registered in the Dutch Commercial Register between 1 October 2019 and 30 June 2020, active in all sectors, except the financial sector. Under the scheme, the support will take the form of direct grants of minimum €1,500 and maximum €124,999 to SMEs that have experienced a loss of turnover of at least 30% in January, February and March 2021, compared to the third quarter of 2020, and with fixed costs of at least €1,500 in the third quarter of 2020. The purpose of the scheme is to address the liquidity shortages that beneficiaries are facing due to the coronavirus outbreak, by contributing to the financing of their fixed costs. The Commission found that the Dutch measure is in line with the

conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €225,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products, €270,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector and €1.8 million per company active in all other sectors; 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 set out in 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.62867 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 approximately €46 million Romanian scheme to support the activity of cattle breeders affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a more than 225 million RON Romanian scheme (approx. €46 million) to support the activity of cattle breeders in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State Aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants to partially address the loss of income the cattle breeders suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the Romanian scheme is in line with the conditions of the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the aid does not exceed €225,000 per beneficiary active in the primary agricultural sector provided by the Temporary Framework; and (ii) the scheme will run until 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 set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the scheme 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.62827 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 joint control over Logoplaste by OTPP and Nikky Investments

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Logoplaste of Luxembourg by OTPP of Canada and Nikky Investments of Luxembourg. Logoplaste is active in rigid packaging solutions. OTPP and Nikky Investments are both active in equity investment and management. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the vertical links between Logoplaste and some of OTPP's portfolio companies that use rigid packaging or provide services to manufacturers of rigid packaging are limited. 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.10224](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Corialis by Astorg

The European Commission has approved under the EU Merger Regulation the acquisition of Corialis by Astorg, both incorporated in Luxembourg. Corialis is active in the production and supply of aluminium extrusion services and aluminium coated building systems and profiles for windows, doors, sliding elements, roofing systems & conservatories, curtain walls and balustrades. Astorg is an equity investing firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns due to the lack of horizontal overlap or vertical links between the activities of Astorg and Corialis. 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.10266. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Intel's NAND and SSD business by SK hynix

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of the NAND (Not And) and SSDs (Solid-State Drives) business of Intel Corporation of the U.S. by SK hynix Inc. of the Republic of Korea. Intel's NAND and SSDs business is active in manufacturing and selling products utilising the NAND flash memory. SK hynix designs and manufactures memory storage devices such as DRAM (Dynamic Random Access Memory), NAND flash memory and NAND-based SSDs, as well as CMOS (Complementary Metal-Oxide-Semiconductor). The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited horizontal overlaps and the limited effects resulting from vertical relationships between the companies. In addition, the Commission found no concerns regarding the activities of the companies in neighbouring markets, as the companies would not have the ability and/or the incentive to engage in practices to shut out competitors, and even if they did, there would be no appreciable effect on the markets. The operation was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.10059](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

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