



### Daily News 28 / 01 / 2021

Brussels, 28 January 2021

#### **Coronavirus: Member States adopted guidelines on proof of vaccination for medical purposes**

Following the conclusions of the European Council of [10-11 December 2020](#) and of [21 January 2021](#), the EU Member States, with the support of the European Commission, adopted [guidelines on proof of vaccination for medical purposes](#). These guidelines aim to support the interoperability of vaccination certificates, meaning the contents of the vaccination certificates is uniform, and establish a minimum dataset for each certificate. They also set out the basis for a trust framework to ensure the authenticity and integrity of certificates, on which work will continue in the eHealth Network, including to further specify necessary data protection and security measures. The guidelines aim for a scheme that can accommodate both paper and digital means, ensuring flexibility and compatibility with existing national solutions, and a rigorous protection of personal data. Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"I welcome the adoption of the guidelines on the proof of vaccination for medical purposes. We need a common approach to vaccination certificates, and I am looking forward to continuing cooperation with the World Health Organization to scale up this tool at global level. Interoperable vaccination certificates will be an important tool for citizens during the pandemic but also after we have overcome it."* The guidelines are the result of the discussions and reflections in the [eHealth Network](#), as well as first consultations with the [Health Security Committee](#), [EMA](#), [ECDC](#) and [WHO](#). The guidelines are mostly targeting COVID-19 vaccination but might be used in the future as a basis for proving vaccination status. The guidelines can be found [here](#). (For more information: Stefan de Keersmaecker - Tel.: +32 229 62253; Darragh Cassidy - Tel +32 229 83978)

#### **Coronavirus disinformation: extended platforms' monitoring programme with focus on vaccines**

The Commission [publishes](#) a set of reports on further actions taken by the signatories of [the Code of Practice on Disinformation](#) to fight coronavirus disinformation. They show that platforms have enhanced the visibility of authoritative content with millions of users directed to dedicated informative resources. They also included policies in their terms of services to remove disinformation on vaccines, notably blocking hundreds of thousands accounts, offers and advertiser submissions related to coronavirus and vaccine-related misinformation and stepped up their work with fact checkers to make fact-checked content on vaccination more prominent. This batch of reports marks the end of the initial 6 months reporting period. Given the relevance of this reporting in the current epidemiological context, the programme will continue for the next 6 months. The Commission also asked online platforms to provide more data on the evolution of the spread of disinformation during the coronavirus crisis and on the granular impact of their actions at the level of EU countries. Věra **Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, said: *"The pandemic has become a breeding ground for false claims and conspiracy theories and platforms are important amplifier of this type of messages. We must continue working together to improve our fight with disinformation, but we need more transparency and better effort from the online platforms. The extension of the monitoring programme is a valuable lesson in our work to overhaul the Code of Practice against Disinformation."* Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, said: *"The COVID 19 pandemic has highlighted the societal role platforms play, which comes with corresponding responsibilities. Substantial steps need to be taken to prevent disinformation from hampering the common efforts of all EU countries regarding vaccination. Platforms have to become more transparent, including on the effectiveness of the measures taken."* This monthly reporting programme was created under the [10 June 2020 Joint Communication](#) to ensure accountability towards the public of the efforts made by platforms and relevant industry associations to limit online disinformation related to the coronavirus. Today's reports focus on actions taken in December 2020 by Facebook, Google, Microsoft, Twitter and TikTok. (For more information: Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: +32 229 58615; Charles Manoury - Tel.: +32 229 13391)

## La Commission prolonge le paquet de mesures de soutien au secteur vitivinicole

Aujourd'hui, la Commission a adopté la prolongation d'un an des mesures exceptionnelles de soutien au secteur vitivinicole, les rendant applicables jusqu'au 15 octobre 2021 et rétroactives au 16 octobre 2020. Durement touché par les conséquences de la crise de la Covid-19, le secteur vitivinicole a souffert la fermeture de restaurants et de bars dans toute l'UE, les restrictions et annulations de célébrations ainsi que l'évolution rapide de la demande. Les tarifs américains sur le vin de l'UE ont également contribué aux difficultés rencontrées par le marché, limitant les exportations vers les États-Unis, dans le contexte du différend Boeing / Airbus à l'OMC. Adoptées en 2020, les mesures visent à maximiser l'utilisation du budget disponible dans le cadre des programmes nationaux de soutien au vin, à apporter une aide financière aux bénéficiaires et à minimiser les impacts négatifs sur les prix du marché. Les mesures prolongées comprennent le recours à une aide à la distillation et au stockage de crise, une contribution européenne plus élevée - de 50 à 70% - aux programmes nationaux de soutien et une flexibilité accrue des programmes de soutien du marché. Ce dernier comprend des outils de maîtrise du potentiel de production plus flexibles et la possibilité pour les États membres d'adapter leurs programmes de soutien. Parmi les mesures prolongées, un [premier paquet de mesures](#) a été adopté en mai 2020, complété par un [deuxième paquet pour le secteur vitivinicole](#) adopté en juillet 2020. Plus d'informations sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

## Screening of websites for 'greenwashing': half of green claims lack evidence

Today, the European Commission and national consumer authorities released the results of a screening of websites ("sweep"), an exercise carried out each year to identify possible breaches of EU consumer law in online markets. This year, for the first time ever, the sweep focused on 'greenwashing', the practice by which companies claim they are doing more for the environment than they actually are. The "sweep" analysed green online claims from various business sectors such as garments, cosmetics and household equipment. National consumer protection authorities had reason to believe that in 42% of cases the claims were exaggerated, false or deceptive and could potentially qualify as unfair commercial practices under EU rules. 'Greenwashing' has increased as consumers increasingly seek to buy environmentally sound products. Didier **Reynders**, Commissioner for Justice, said: *"More and more people want to live a green life, and I applaud companies that strive to produce eco-friendly products or services. However, there are also unscrupulous traders out there, who pull the wool over consumers' eyes with vague, false or exaggerated claims. The Commission is fully committed to empowering consumers in the green transition and fighting greenwashing. This is precisely one of the main priorities of the [New Consumer Agenda](#) adopted last autumn."* The full press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferroli — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

## Commission proposes new measures to ban trade in ivory

The Commission has today published draft measures aimed to effectively ban EU trade in ivory and is submitting them for public feedback. While the EU is not identified as a region of concern regarding illegal ivory trade, the revision of the existing EU rules on ivory trade reaffirms and delivers on the EU's commitment to take further action against elephant poaching and ivory trafficking globally. This also follows the commitment made in the [EU Biodiversity Strategy](#) to further tighten the rules on EU ivory trade. Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal, Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The world is losing wildlife populations at an incredible speed. To reverse this global trend and to protect biodiversity, we must also do our work at home. With the new rules, the European Union will send a clear signal that ivory is not a commodity and that we must ban its trade."* Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius** added: *"Thousands of elephants are killed every year for their ivory. This is an unacceptable situation. Illegal ivory trade is an international problem and we are committed to lead by example and play our role in solving this global problem. Today's proposal for stricter rules reflects this ambition."* The Commission proposal effectively bans the trade in ivory with limited exceptions only for musical instruments legally acquired before 1975 and for internal EU trade in antiques, which will only be possible with a permit. The proposal simplifies the rules and facilitates the work of enforcement agencies, with the aim of ensuring that the very limited remaining legal trade in ivory in the EU does not contribute to poaching or illegal trade. The proposal is put forward after thorough consultations with Member States and stakeholders which included a [public consultation](#) attracting more than 90,000 responses.

The draft Commission regulation and [guidance](#) are now open for [final public feedback](#) before final adoption by the Commission. The period of public feedback will last until 26 February 2021 starting today. More information in the [news release](#) (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664)

### **Antitrust: Commission opens formal investigation into possible trade restrictions by Mondelēz**

The European Commission has opened a formal antitrust investigation to assess whether Mondelēz has restricted competition in a range of national markets for chocolate, biscuits and coffee by hindering the cross-border trade of these products between EU Member States, which would be in breach of EU antitrust rules. **Mondelēz** is one of the largest producers of chocolate, biscuits and coffee in the European Union. The Commission is concerned that Mondelēz may have restricted the so-called 'parallel trade' of its chocolates, biscuits and coffee between EU Member States through agreements and unilateral practices. Restrictions to such parallel trade can lead to the isolation of a national market whereby the manufacturer or supplier can charge higher prices to the detriment of consumers. In particular, the Commission will investigate certain potentially anti-competitive practices by Mondelēz. If proven, the agreements and practices under investigation may create anticompetitive obstacles to trade within the EU Internal Market in breach of Articles 101 and/or Article 102 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU). The Commission will now carry out its in-depth investigation as a matter of priority. The opening of a formal investigation does not prejudice its outcome. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*Chocolates, biscuits and coffee are products consumed by European citizens daily. We are opening a formal investigation to see whether Mondelēz, a key producer of these products, might have restricted free competition in the markets concerned by implementing various practices hindering trade flows, ultimately leading to higher prices for consumers. Trade in the internal market can lower prices and increase the variety of products offered across Member States.*" The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta - Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Danish resolution scheme for small banks**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, the prolongation of a Danish resolution scheme for small banks with total assets below €3 billion for 12 months, until 28 January 2022. The scheme was originally approved in [September 2010](#) and has been prolonged and amended several times, most recently in [August 2019](#). The measure will continue to be open to banks that are found to be in distress by the competent national authorities. The objective of the scheme is to facilitate the liquidation of small banks by the Danish resolution authorities, should the need arise. The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme to be in line with EU State aid rules, in particular the [2013 Banking Communication](#) and EU banking rules. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the [public case register](#) under the case number SA.58478 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 Hema by Mississippi Ventures and Parcom**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of HEMA B.V. by Mississippi Ventures B.V. and Parcom Buy-Out Fund VI Coöperatief U.A., all of the Netherlands. HEMA is active in the retail sales of a wide range of non-food products, including clothing, home textiles, cosmetics, personal care, bicycle equipment, gardening tools, and office supplies, through its department stores in the Netherlands and other countries. Mississippi Ventures makes investments on behalf of the Dutch entrepreneurial Van Eerd family, who also owns Jumbo Supermarkets in the Netherlands. Parcom is a private equity firm investing mainly in medium-sized companies in the Benelux. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the transaction results in only minor horizontal overlaps in the market for food services and the retail markets for food and non-food products. 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.10044](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta - Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of control over Skanska Infrastructure Services Business by M Group Services Ltd**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of control over Skanska Construction UK Limited's Infrastructure Services Business ('SIS') by M Group Services Ltd, both of the UK. SIS provides infrastructure maintenance services, design and civil engineering capabilities across the highways, street lighting and rail sectors in the UK. M Group Services, controlled by PAI Partners SAS of France, provides various types of services to the regulated utilities, telecom and transport sectors in the UK, including installation and maintenance of network infrastructure, metering and related data services, and the construction, maintenance and repair of roads, railway and other infrastructure. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of its limited impact on the market. 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.10040](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

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