



## Daily News 03 / 06 / 2021

Brussels, 3 June 2021

### Vaccine disinformation: platforms monitoring program extended until the end of the year

The Commission publishes today the [reports](#) by Facebook, Twitter, TikTok, Microsoft and Google on measures taken against coronavirus disinformation as signatories of the [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#). The Commission also decided to prolong the programme until the end of the year. Věra **Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, said: *"These reports show how important it is to be able to effectively monitor the measures put in place by the platforms to reduce disinformation. We decided to extend this programme, because the amount of dangerous lies continues to flood our information space and because it will inform the creation of the new generation Code against disinformation. We need a robust monitoring programme, and clearer indicators to measure impact of actions taken by platforms. They simply cannot police themselves alone."* Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, added: *"At this crucial phase of the vaccination campaign, I expect platforms to step up their efforts and deliver the strengthened Code of Practice as soon as possible, in line with our Guidance. With the strengthened Code, and the co-regulatory framework established by the DSA we are starting a new chapter in countering disinformation in the EU."* Facebook launched vaccine profile picture frames to encourage people to get vaccinated. Twitter introduced prompts appearing on users' home timeline during World Immunisation Week in 16 countries, and held conversations on vaccines that received 5 million impressions. TikTok's report keeps on providing useful data, in particular, April shows a slight decrease of the number of COVID vaccine tags applied to videos (7,256) in the EU, while in Italy and Spain clicks and impressions on the same tag more than doubled compared to the March. Microsoft redirected users searching for "coronavirus" or "#covid" to the LinkedIn official page on COVID-19, displaying information from verified international sources. Google's Ad Grants offered to public authorities generated 470 million impressions and 83 million clicks. Despite these useful measures, these reports still lack sufficient data on the impact of the policies taken to fight coronavirus related disinformation. The recently published Guidance to strengthen the Code of Practice will setup a robust monitoring framework, with clear Key Performance Indicators, measuring also the efficiency of the actions taken by platforms as set out in the [European Democracy Action Plan](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391)

### Coronavirus response: more than €175.5 million to overcome the effects of the pandemic in Poland

The Commission has approved the modification of two operational programmes (OPs) under the Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative in Poland that will redirect more than €175.5 million cohesion funding to address the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the country's economy and health system. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira**, commented: *"I welcome these new OP amendments in Poland. To date, Poland has reprogrammed a total of €2.6 billion of EU funds, which has proved crucial not only for helping frontline workers battling the virus, but also to support Polish businesses to overcome the crisis and boost the economic recovery."* The modification of the OP 2014-2020 for Łódzkie region will make available €18.84 million in the form of subsidies and loans for over 1,675 enterprises suffering from financial loss as a result of the coronavirus outbreak. It will also provide €19.7 million to finance the extended scope of support to the diagnosis and treatment of COVID-19 patients, including the necessary personal and medical equipment as well as renovation and construction works in hospitals and social infrastructure for appropriate epidemic protection. Moreover, in the Silesia region, €43.7 million will support health workers, sanitary inspection activities and social services. Already 26 ambulances, 109 ventilators, 55 defibrillators, 382 infusion pumps, 453 hospital beds, 21 ultrasound machines, 15 x-ray machines have been bought for hospitals in the region, and personal protective equipment was purchased for 183 Regional Centers for Social Policy. Finally, €77.1 million was dedicated to support the liquidity of affected micro, Small and Medium-sized enterprises. The modifications are possible thanks to the exceptional flexibility under the [Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative](#) (CRII) and [Coronavirus](#)

[Response Investment Initiative Plus](#) (CRII+) which allow Member States to use Cohesion policy funding to support the most affected sectors because of the pandemic, such as healthcare, SMEs and labour markets. In addition, the co-financing rate is temporarily increased to 100% to help beneficiaries overcome liquidity scarcity in the implementation of their projects. *(For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli - Tel.: +32 229 87269)*

## **Commission seeks views on data sharing**

Today, the European Commission has launched an [open public consultation](#) on the announced Data Act aiming to create a fair data economy by ensuring access to and use of data. The consultation seeks to gather views from citizens, businesses, online platforms, academics, civil society, administrations and all interested parties. It is open until 3 September. Margrethe **Vestager**, Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age, said: *"The Data Act is a new major step in building a fair and human-centred approach to digitalisation. It will clarify the rights and obligations of parties in data transactions and ensure fairness in the allocation of data value among the actors of the data economy."* Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, added: *"The Data Act will unlock vast troves of industrial data and contribute to the emergence of a sovereign single market for data. European data, in particular industrial data, needs to be shared, stored and processed in line with European rules such as data protection, respect of intellectual property and trade secrets."* The Data Act follows up on and complements the [Data Governance regulation](#) proposed in November 2020, the first deliverable under the [European strategy for data](#). The role of the Data Governance Regulation is to facilitate data sharing across the EU and between sectors by increasing trust in data intermediaries and to strengthen data-sharing mechanisms across the EU. It focuses on the processes and structures facilitating data sharing. Together with these two complementary initiatives, the Commission will also further develop and fund European data spaces as announced in the data strategy to pool data in key strategy sectors and areas of public interest, such as health, agriculture or manufacturing. As announced, a proposal for a [health data space](#) will be presented later in 2021. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: + 32 2 295 86 15; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 2 291 33 91)*

## **Combating antisemitism: New study shows rise in antisemitic online content during the pandemic**

Today the Commission has published the findings of the study ["The rise of Antisemitism online during the pandemic"](#), conducted by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (ISD), which analyses online content in French and German. Comparing the first two months of 2020 with the first two of 2021, the findings show a seven-fold increase in antisemitic content on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram in French, and over a thirteen-fold increase in antisemitic content in German. Antisemitic content in French on Facebook was also liked, commented on and shared over half a million times between 1 January 2020 and 8 March 2021. Content in French received over three million retweets and likes on Twitter. Antisemitic content in German on Telegram was viewed over two billion times in the same period. The study also found a proliferation of 'grey area' content, which likely did not contravene legal thresholds around hate speech or Holocaust denial in France or Germany, but which nonetheless has the potential to be harmful. The study is published on the occasion of the 5<sup>th</sup> European Commission Working Group on Antisemitism, during which Vice-President Margaritis **Schinas** will deliver keynote remarks and have an open discussion with the participants. More information on the Commission's work to combat antisemitism in the EU is available [here](#). *(For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferrolí — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)*

## **Toy Safety: Commission limits the presence of a harmful substance in toys**

The Commission has today adopted an amendment of the [Toy Safety Directive](#) to limit the presence of aniline, a substance suspected of carcinogenic properties in certain coloured toy material. The new limits will help significantly reduce children's exposure to this substance, which is a component of dyes for textile, leather and finger paints and can therefore be present in toys. The youngest children could put those in the mouth. Today's amendment proposes a limit of 10 mg/ kg for aniline found in finger paints, where it exists in free form, and 30 mg/ kg for aniline detected in textile or leather toy material, which is the lowest concentration at which it can be detected with a specialised test to identify the substance when part of other mixtures. The Toy Safety [Directive](#) lays down the safety criteria that toys must meet before they can be marketed in the EU. Today's amendment follows a public consultation on aniline limits that took place in 2020. Following a favourable vote by the Toy

Safety Committee on 16 December 2020 and a 3-month scrutiny period for the European Parliament and Council, the Commission has now adopted the amendment. Following the adoption of the new limit values, these are published in the Official Journal of the EU and will apply 18 months later in all Member States alike. (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tél.: +32 229 58300)

### **Initiative citoyenne européenne: La Commission accorde encore une fois une nouvelle prolongation aux initiatives citoyennes en raison de la pandémie de COVID-19**

La Commission a décidé aujourd'hui d'accorder de nouveau une prolongation de trois mois aux délais pour les initiatives citoyennes européennes enregistrées en raison des défis actuels causés par la pandémie de COVID-19. La prolongation est à l'attention de six initiatives qui recueillent actuellement des déclarations de soutien. Six autres initiatives pour lesquelles la collecte est encore en cours ont déjà bénéficié d'une prolongation totale maximale de 12 mois, les précédentes prorogations ayant été accordées en [juillet 2020](#), [décembre 2020](#) et [février 2021](#). Les initiatives citoyennes européennes sont l'un des outils uniques par lesquels les citoyens européens peuvent influencer directement les politiques de l'UE et demander de nouvelles lois. Le texte de la décision de la Commission est disponible [en ligne](#) et de plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site web des [initiatives citoyennes européennes](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Christian Wigand — Tél. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tél.: + 32 229 63444; Jödis Feroli — Tél.: + 32 229 92729)

### **L'UE et le Royaume-Uni parviennent à un accord de principe sur les possibilités de pêche pour le reste de l'année 2021**

L'UE et le Royaume-Uni ont conclu hier soir les négociations sur un accord de principe fixant le total autorisé de captures pour les espèces de poissons gérés conjointement pour 2021. Le commissaire à l'environnement, aux océans et à la pêche, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, a déclaré : « *Nous avons conclu un accord avec le Royaume-Uni sur les possibilités de pêche dans le cadre de l'accord de commerce et de coopération entre l'UE et le Royaume-Uni. Cet accord assure la prévisibilité et la durabilité pour nos flottes avec des TAC définitifs pour le reste de l'année. C'est une bonne chose pour les pêcheurs et les femmes-pêcheurs, pour nos communautés côtières et pour nos ports, ainsi que pour l'utilisation durable de nos ressources marines. Cela prouve également que deux partenaires de part et d'autre de la Manche peuvent trouver des accords et aller de l'avant s'ils travaillent ensemble* ». L'accord clôt les toutes premières consultations annuelles sur les possibilités de pêche entre l'UE et le Royaume-Uni, conformément aux dispositions de l'accord de commerce et de coopération (ACC) entre les deux pays. L'issue positive de ces négociations, qui ont débuté en janvier, pose des fondations solides pour la poursuite de la coopération entre l'UE et le Royaume-Uni dans le domaine de la pêche. L'accord de principe établit le total autorisé de captures (TAC) pour 75 espèces de poissons partagées pour 2021, ainsi que pour certaines espèces d'eau profonde pour 2021 et 2022. Il clarifie également les limites d'accès pour les espèces hors quotas. La signature de l'accord, attendue dans les prochains jours, permettra également aux deux parties de s'engager dans des échanges de quotas. Une [déclaration de presse](#) est disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Vivian Loonela - Tél.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tél.: +32 229 53664)

### **RÉUNION DU COLLÈGE: Paquet de printemps du Semestre européen: ouvrir la voie à une reprise forte et durable**

La Commission européenne a présenté hier le paquet de printemps du Semestre européen. Le paquet de printemps donne des orientations budgétaires aux États membres, engagés dans un processus de réouverture progressive de leurs économies. Ces orientations visent à aider les États membres à consolider la reprise économique en utilisant au mieux la facilité pour la reprise et la résilience (FRR), instrument clé au cœur de NextGenerationEU. Sur la base des [prévisions économiques du printemps 2021](#) de la Commission, la clause dérogatoire générale continuera à s'appliquer en 2022 et devrait être désactivée à partir de 2023. Les orientations de la Commission prévoient que la politique budgétaire doit rester favorable en 2021 et 2022. Dans le cadre de ce paquet, la Commission a adopté un [rapport](#) sur le respect des critères relatifs au déficit et à la dette prévus au titre de l'article 126, paragraphe 3, du traité sur le fonctionnement de l'Union européenne (TFUE) pour tous les États membres de l'Union, à l'exception de la Roumanie, qui relève déjà du volet correctif du pacte de stabilité et de croissance. La Commission a également adopté une proposition pour les [lignes directrices pour l'emploi](#) pour 2021, le dixième rapport au titre de la surveillance renforcée concernant la [Grèce](#), les rapports de surveillance post-programme pour l'[Irlande](#), l'[Espagne](#), [Chypre](#) et le [Portugal](#). Un [communiqué de presse](#) et un [document questions-réponses](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Marta Wiecezorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Enda McNamara – Tél.:

## **European Commission welcomes political agreement on new €14.2 billion Pre-Accession Assistance Instrument (IPA III)**

The European Commission welcomes the political agreement reached yesterday between the European Parliament and the Council on the new Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III). This instrument supports candidate countries and potential candidates on their path towards fulfilling the EU accession criteria through deep and comprehensive reforms. The new instrument will provide support to Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey with an overall budget of €14.162 billion in current prices for 2021-2027, starting retroactively from 1 January 2021. Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, **Olivér Várhelyi**, commented: *"This long-awaited agreement on our ambitious financing assistance is a positive, welcome and strong signal for the Western Balkans and Turkey. The agreed package is a solid investment in the future of the enlargement region and the EU, supporting the implementation of key political, institutional, social and economic reforms to comply with EU standards and progressively align with its rules and policies. It will provide funding for the Economic and Investment Plan for the Western Balkans, a key tool to underpin the economic recovery of this priority region. Through investments in key sectors including connectivity, infrastructure, environment and climate, as well as energy and digital, it will boost the convergence with the EU and bring tangible benefits for citizens."* IPA III presents a solid policy-driven approach, with strategic and dynamic deployment of assistance, putting the "fundamentals" at its core: focusing on rule of law and respect of fundamental values; strengthening democratic institutions and public administration reform; promoting economic governance and reforms towards competitiveness. For more details see the [press release](#) and a [factsheet](#). (For more information: Ana Pisonero – Tel.: +32 229 54320; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)

## **LIFE programme: EU honours inspirational projects supporting nature, environment and climate action**

Yesterday at the [EU Green Week](#), Europe's biggest environmental event, the winners of the 2021 LIFE Awards were announced by the EU's [LIFE programme](#) - the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action. The LIFE Awards recognise the most innovative, inspirational and effective LIFE projects in three categories: nature protection, environment and climate action. This year's Awards honoured winners in three different categories from the Slovakia (Nature), Spain (Environment), and France (Climate Action). The public also voted for their favourite project in the Citizens' Award going to an Italian project, and the work and dedication of young volunteers were recognised in the LIFE4Youth Award with a selected project also from Italy. **Frans Timmermans**, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal said: *"The climate and biodiversity crises are more present than ever, but this year's LIFE project finalists provide hope and inspiration for future solutions. Conserving natural habitats and protecting wildlife are essential to our green recovery and our journey to climate neutrality."* Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries said: *"I would like to congratulate all the LIFE Awards 2021 finalists and winners. LIFE projects are a stellar example of people working together each and every day to address the most pressing global challenges like climate change and biodiversity loss. LIFE projects combine technology, innovation, expertise, cooperation, but above all lots of dedication to deliver smart solutions. I wish you all continued success."* An expert jury looked at the 15 finalists and chose the three winners, who all demonstrated an outstanding contribution to environmental, economic and social developments. They also showed excellence in impact, replicability, policy relevance, cross-border cooperation and cost-effectiveness. More information about the winners and other finalists can be found [here](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Tim McPhie - Tel.: +32 229 58602; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel.: +32 229 53664; Lynn Rietdorf - Tel.: +32 229 74959)

## **Agriculture : la Commission approuve une nouvelle indication géographique de Hongrie**

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription du « [Hegykői petrezselyemgyökér](#) » de Hongrie dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). Le « Hegykői petrezselyemgyökér » est un persil tubéreux cultivé le long du lac Fertő, dans la région de Transdanubie occidentale. Il ne présente aucune ramification et possède une saveur et un arôme fortement épicés. Le « Hegykői petrezselyemgyökér » diffère du persil tubéreux produit dans d'autres régions de Hongrie en ce qu'il est d'une couleur blanc pur, sa forme est plus lisse, il ne présente aucune ramification et il possède une saveur et un arôme fortement épicés. Cela s'explique par l'effet



des sols et par le climat du lac Fertő et du contrefort des Alpes. Le « Hegykői petrezselyemgyökér » doit sa saveur et son arôme fortement épicés au climat spécifique du lac Fertő. Les conditions climatiques locales — et en particulier la période de croissance prolongée en raison du temps froid et pluvieux — favorisent le développement des arômes. Cette nouvelle appellation va rejoindre 1 759 produits alimentaires déjà protégés. La liste est disponible dans la base de données [eAmbrosia](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

### **State aid: Commission approves €82 million Hungarian scheme to promote single wagon transport in Hungary**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, an HUF 29 billion (approximately €82 million) Hungarian aid scheme to support single wagon transport in Hungary. Single wagon transport is a form of freight transport, which is smaller and has less capacity of a full train. It requires the switching or shunting of wagons at departure or destination stations and at any intermediate station. In Hungary, 10 to 12 million tons of goods per year are transported with single wagon transport (i.e. around one-fifth of all goods transported by railway). Under the scheme, which will run until 31 December 2025 and will be open to railway companies active in the single wagon transport sector, the support will take the form of direct grants. The aid aims at partially covering the costs related to rail infrastructure as well as other external costs incurred by the beneficiaries, such as accidents, pollution, congestion and climate change. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules, in particular [Article 93](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the [2008 Commission Guidelines on State aid for railway undertakings](#). The Commission found that the scheme is necessary and proportionate to promote the use of rail transport, which is less polluting than road transport and reduces road congestion. The measure will therefore be beneficial both for the environment and for mobility. Furthermore, the Commission found that the aid will have an “incentive effect”, as the beneficiaries would not engage in single wagon transport related activities in the absence of the public support. The Commission concluded that the measure will contribute to transport coordination and facilitate the shift of freight transport from road to rail in line with the EU policy objectives, including those set out in the Green Deal, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. On this basis, the Commission approved the scheme under EU State aid rules. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under case number SA.59448 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

### **State aid: Commission approves €95 million Austrian wage subsidy scheme to support companies in the context of the coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €95 million Austrian wage subsidy scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the [Temporary Framework](#). The public support will take the form of a one-time bonus to help employers cover part of the costs related to holiday entitlements that their employees acquired during short-time work programs (so called “Kurzarbeit”). The measure will be open to companies active in certain sectors that were particularly affected by the restrictive measures that the Austrian government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus, such as the hospitality sector. The aim of the measure is to preserve the jobs of employees, who, due to the coronavirus outbreak, would have otherwise been laid off, and to allow companies to resume their activities immediately after the lockdown period. The Commission found that the scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the measure will finance part of the wage costs for employees who would otherwise have been laid off; (ii) the aid will not exceed 80% of the monthly gross salary of the benefitting personnel; and (iii) the aid 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 has 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.62569 in the State Aid public [case 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 creation of joint venture by Prosegur and Euronet**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created company constituting a joint venture based in Spain, by Prosegur Compañía de Seguridad, S.A ('Prosegur') of Spain and EFT Services Holding B.V. ('Euronet') of the Netherlands. The joint venture will own, develop and operate independent ATM networks and will provide outsourced ATM services to financial institutions in certain Central and Latin America countries. Prosegur provides security services to companies, homes and businesses. Euronet is an electronic payments provider. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that the joint venture has no, or negligible, current or planned activities within the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10226](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Vice-President Jourová at the national launch of the Conference on the Future of Europe in Prague**

Today, Vice-President Věra **Jourová** is inaugurating the Conference on the Future of Europe in Czechia, at the Hrzánský Palace in Prague. Both political personalities and representatives of civil society will be replying to questions by 100 citizens about the future of Europe and the role of Czechia in the European Union. Vice-President **Jourová** said: *"I am happy that the Conference on the Future of Europe enables each and every European to be heard; it empowers us to shape our common future. We should participate in it and take it seriously, because we are building Europe not only for us, but above all for our children."* The event is co-organised by the European Parliament, the Czech government and the European Commission. Other participants will include Dita Charanzová and Marcel Kolaja, Vice-Presidents of the European Parliament, Mikuláš Bek, Chairman of the EU Affairs Committee of the Senate, and Milena Hrdinková, State Secretary for European Affairs, and others. The Conference on the Future of Europe is a pan-European project, in which all Europeans can actively contribute through a [multilingual digital platform](#) and play a key role in shaping the European Union's future. The whole event can be watched [online](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500)

[Eurostat](#) press releases

MEX/21/2843