



## Daily News 21 / 06 / 2021

Brussels, 21 June 2021

### European Innovation Scoreboard: Innovation performance keeps improving in EU Member States and regions

The Commission has today released the [European Innovation Scoreboard 2021](#), which shows that Europe's innovation performance continues to improve across the EU. On average, innovation performance has increased by 12.5% since 2014. There is continued convergence within the EU, with lower performing countries growing faster than higher performing ones, therefore closing the innovation gap among them. According to the [2021 Regional Innovation Scoreboard](#) also published today, this trend applies to innovation across EU regions. In the global landscape, the EU is performing better than its competitors like China, Brazil, South Africa, Russia, and India, while South Korea, Canada, Australia, the United States, and Japan have a performance lead over the EU. This year's European Innovation Scoreboard is based on a revised framework, which includes new indicators on digitalisation and environmental sustainability, bringing the scoreboard more in line with the EU political priorities. The European innovation scoreboard provides a comparative analysis of innovation performance in EU countries, other European countries, and regional neighbours. It assesses relative strengths and weaknesses of national innovation systems and helps countries identify areas they need to address. The first European innovation scoreboard was released in 2014. To know more on the European Innovation Scoreboard and the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2021, please consult our [press release](#) and [Q&A](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tel.: +32 229 58300)

### NextGenerationEU: European Commission endorses Austria's recovery and resilience plan

The European Commission has adopted a positive assessment of the recovery and resilience plans of [Austria](#). This is an important step towards disbursing €3.5 billion in grants under the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF). This financing will support the implementation of the crucial investment and reform measures outlined in each Member State's recovery and resilience plan. The RRF will play an important role in enabling them to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 pandemic. The Commission assessed the plan based on the criteria set out in the RRF Regulation. The Council will now have, as a rule, four weeks to adopt the Commission's proposals. The RRF – at the heart of NextGenerationEU – will provide up to €672.5 billion (in current prices) to support investments and reforms across the EU. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Enda McNamara – Tel.: +32 229 64976)

### Feux de forêt : La Commission européenne intensifie ses préparatifs pour la saison des feux de forêt 2021

Pour être prête à faire face aux incendies de forêt de grande ampleur cette saison, la Commission européenne a mis en place une flotte européenne renforcée de 11 avions et 6 hélicoptères de lutte contre les incendies dans le cadre du système rescEU. La Commission a également publié des lignes directrices à l'intention des États membres pour renforcer leurs mesures de prévention des incendies. Le commissaire à la gestion des crises, Janez **Lenarčič**, a déclaré: « *Chaque année, les incendies de forêts représentent un risque de catastrophe important pour toute l'Europe. En prévision de la saison des incendies de forêts de cette année, nous devons faire tout ce qui est nécessaire pour réduire l'incidence des incendies. La flotte de lutte contre les incendies de rescEU que nous proposons sera composée de 11 avions et de 6 hélicoptères, et pourra être déployée rapidement et à tout moment au cours de cette saison des incendies de forêts. La flotte est positionnée de manière stratégique en Croatie, en France, en Grèce, en Italie, en Espagne et en Suède, et je tiens à remercier ces pays pour leur grande coopération. En travaillant en étroite collaboration à tous les niveaux, notamment via le centre de coordination de la réaction d'urgence de l'UE et du mécanisme rescUE, l'UE sera en mesure de prévenir les incendies de forêts, de s'y préparer et d'y réagir, aussi bien cette année qu'à l'avenir.* » Le commissaire chargé de l'environnement, des océans et de la pêche, Virginijus

**Sinkevičius**, a ajouté à cet égard: « *Les incendies de forêts constituent une menace croissante pour les forêts, qui abritent 80 % des plantes et des animaux vivant sur terre. Les nouvelles lignes directrices de la Commission présentent des mesures de prévention fondées sur une bonne gouvernance, une planification appropriée, une gestion forestière efficace et les sources de financement de l'UE. Investir dans la prévention est essentiel. Dans le même temps, nous devons être sûrs d'avoir la capacité de réagir lorsque des incendies de forêt se déclarent, et c'est là que le centre de réaction et de coordination d'urgence de l'UE joue un rôle essentiel.* » Selon les prévisions, le risque d'incendie de forêt pour la saison devrait être supérieur à la moyenne, les températures devant être plus élevées que la moyenne de juin à septembre dans la région méditerranéenne. La saison pourrait également connaître une baisse des précipitations, notamment en Europe centrale et dans de nombreuses régions de la Méditerranée. Cela peut accroître le risque d'incendies de forêt, tant dans les zones sujettes aux incendies que dans les nouvelles régions d'Europe. Plus de détails figurent dans le [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari - Tél.: + 32 229 54578; Gesine Knolle - Tel.: +32 295 4323)

### **Ensuring that crime does not pay: Commission launches public consultation to review EU rules on seizing criminals' profits**

Organised crime generates large profits, and with only about 1% of criminal proceeds confiscated in the EU today, criminals use illicit earnings to increase their reach and infiltrate the legal economy and public institutions, posing a threat to the rule of law. The Commission is launching today a [public consultation](#) on recovering and confiscating criminal assets, with the objective of reinforcing the tools that enable national authorities to trace, freeze and confiscate those assets. National, regional and local authorities, civil society organisations, businesses and private individuals are invited to contribute until 27 September 2021. The results of the consultation will feed into the upcoming evaluation and revision of EU rules on the freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of crime and on asset recovery offices. These initiatives form part of the [EU Strategy to tackle Organised Crime](#) and aim at depriving criminals of their illicit earnings, reducing the incentives that feed serious and organised crime and limiting the ability of criminals to reinvest such profits towards further crime. Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, has also published a [blog article](#) today encouraging all interested parties to contribute the consultation. (For more information: Adalbert Jahnz - Tel.: + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley - Tel.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tel.: +32 229 55721)

### **EU and Canada set up a strategic partnership on raw materials**

Today, the [framework](#) setting the ground for the EU-Canada strategic partnership on raw materials was formally adopted, following political endorsement at the EU-Canada Summit on 15 June. The partnership will allow both sides to advance trade and investments into a secure, sustainable and resilient raw materials value chain, which is key to achieving the transition to climate-neutral and digitalised economies. The strategic partnership will focus on the integration of EU-Canada raw material value chains while specifically enhancing collaboration on science, technology and innovation collaboration; as well as environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria and standards. Commissioner **Breton**, responsible for the Internal Market said: "*This partnership with Canada complements our efforts towards EU's security of supply and diversification of sourcing the raw materials we need for the climate-neutral economy and the twin transition. Canada was a natural choice to setup the first partnership on raw materials. Canada is a like-minded resource-rich country, shares important environmental, social and governance values with the EU and we have CETA, which offered the framework to advance.*" The EU-Canada strategic partnership on raw materials follows the [Commission's Critical Raw Materials Action Plan](#) published in September 2020, which announced that the EU should engage in strategic partnerships with resource-rich third countries, making use of all external policy instruments and respecting its international obligations. The EU is pursuing strategic international partnerships with third countries to diversify and strengthen the resilience of supply chains, in line with the [Updated Industrial Strategy](#) adopted in May 2021 and with the objectives of the [Commission's Trade Policy Review](#) issued in February. The EU is working on further strategic partnerships on raw materials, such as one with Ukraine which is currently being finalised ahead of an EU-Ukraine High level conference on 13 July. (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tel.: +32 229 58300)

### **Consumer protection: Credit card companies should clearly inform consumers when they risk being tricked into costly monthly subscriptions**

The European Commission and the [network of national consumer authorities](#) (CPC), led by the

Danish Consumer Ombudsman, have written to three major credit card companies - Visa, Mastercard and American Express – to request changes to the way information is presented to consumers when they make a payment involving recurring subscription fees. [Recent research](#) shows that as many as 1 in 12 EU consumers has ordered a cheap product or service online only to find out later they had been lured into a costly monthly subscription. Common cases involve mobile phones and beauty products sold by online sellers, who are concealing the actual costs in hidden or small print about recurring payments. While credit card companies are not the ones running these schemes, they have a duty to properly inform their customers. In the payment window where consumers enter their credit card information when shopping online, there is often only information about a one-off payment amount, not the recurring subscription. Under EU rules, namely the [Payment Services Directive](#) and the [Unfair Commercial Practices Directive](#), consumers must be made aware of the specific amount for payment transactions and they should not be misled. Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders**, said: *"The truth is that sometimes consumers are being tricked and we are calling on credit card companies to ensure that their own customers don't fall for it. Credit card companies have a duty to uphold EU law and ensure consumers know about the actual costs when buying."* The three credit card companies now have two months to inform the Commission and CPC authorities about the positive changes they intend to make to their current payment processes. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jödis Ferrol — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

### **Investment Plan for Europe in Germany: support for small and medium-sized companies during the COVID-19 crisis**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) Group has provided a guarantee of €95 million to Landesbank Baden Württemberg (LBBW). The guarantee will enable Germany's biggest Landesbank to provide new lending of up to €570 million to small and medium-sized companies (SMEs). The EIB Group guarantee is backed by the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#), the central pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe. The transaction is expected to support smaller businesses in their recovery from liquidity shortages caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The EIB expects the overall lending to expand to €800 million via the engagement of additional lenders, and the transaction is expected to support 28,000 jobs. Commissioner for the Economy, Paolo **Gentiloni**, said: *"I welcome this support for small and medium-sized German businesses through the Landesbank Baden Württemberg, which is backed by a guarantee from the EIB Group and the Investment Plan for Europe. Thanks to this agreement, companies will have additional access to finance to maintain their operations and safeguard jobs. We will continue to show strong support for businesses in these difficult times."* The [Investment Plan for Europe](#) has so far mobilised €546.5 billion of investment across the EU, benefitting over 1.4 million SMEs in total. The press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

### **Irish translation on track to reach full status by 1 January 2022**

Today, the European Commission adopted a report to the Council on the available language capacity in the EU institutions for the Irish language. It finds that the EU institutions will be able to meet all demand for translation into Irish of legislation and the increased demand for translation of other types of documents, by continuing ongoing measures until the end of the year. Irish has been a treaty language since 1973, when Ireland became a Member State, meaning that only the EU treaties would be translated into Irish. In 2007, at the request of Ireland, Irish became an official and working EU language, with a derogation, meaning that not all documents were translated into Irish at that point. Today's report follows a 2015 request from Ireland to phase out this derogation, and give Irish full status, as the other official EU languages. The Council will now consider the Commission's findings in this report. In the absence of a Council regulation stating otherwise, the derogation will end on 1 January 2022. The EU and the Irish government have achieved this by working closely together and taking innovative measures to make progress in translation into Irish, recruitment, external contractors and Irish language resources. This cooperation will continue in the future. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Claire Joawn - Tel.: +32 229 56859)

### **State aid: Commission approves €8.6 million Belgian scheme to support operators in the tourist accommodation sector in the context of the coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €8.6 million Belgian scheme to support operators in the tourist accommodation sector in the Brussels-Capital region affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The public support will take

the form of direct grants and will consist of a fixed amount of minimum €12,500 and maximum €312,500 per beneficiary, depending on certain criteria, including the number of accommodations held by the beneficiary in the Brussels-Capital Region. The aim of the scheme is to mitigate the sudden liquidity shortages that the beneficiaries are facing due to the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictive measures that the Belgian government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus. The Commission found that the Belgian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed the limits per beneficiary set in the Temporary Framework, and (ii) will be granted no later than 30 September 2021 (i.e. before 31 December 2021, as provided by the Temporary Framework). The Commission concluded that the measure is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the conditions of the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. More information on the Temporary Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.63215 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition website](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Giulia Astuti - Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves €3.2 million Latvian scheme to support media companies in context of coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €3.2 million Latvian scheme to support media companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak and by the restrictive measures that the Latvian government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The scheme will be open to 74 media companies registered in Latvia, including national, regional or local mass media outlets producing editorially independent journalistic content. Under the scheme, the support will take the form of direct grants. The measure aims to mitigate the sudden liquidity shortages that the beneficiaries are facing due to the significant decrease in demand for advertising in media outlets, and will compensate them for part of the decrease in revenues that they suffered between November 2020 and March 2021. The Commission found that the scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €1.8 million per beneficiary; 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 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.63031 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Giulia Astuti - Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves €610,000 Romanian scheme to support companies active in independent cultural sector in Bucharest affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €610,000 (approximately RON 3 million) Romanian scheme to support companies active in the independent cultural sector in Bucharest, in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State Aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the measure, the aid will take the form of direct grants. The aim of the scheme is to mitigate the liquidity shortages that the beneficiaries are facing due to the restrictive measures that the Romanian government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus. The public support will cover certain costs incurred by the beneficiaries during the period from August until December 2020: (i) rent expenses for headquarter/operational office, up to a maximum amount of €4,020 (RON 20 000) per month; (ii) public utilities expenses (i.e. heat, electricity, water, sewage, waste, natural gas); (iii) salaries and contributions for maximum 3 employees, capped at the national minimum monthly wage. The Commission found that the Romanian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €1.8 million per beneficiary, 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.62608 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of sole control over Eurolife by Fairfax**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Eurolife FFH Insurance Group Holdings S.A. ('Eurolife') of Greece by Fairfax Financial Holdings Limited ('Fairfax') of Canada. Eurolife, currently jointly controlled by Fairfax and OPG Commercial Holdings S.A. of Luxembourg, is active in life and non-life insurance and reinsurance, and insurance distribution in Greece and Romania. Fairfax is a holding company active in property and casualty insurance and reinsurance, and investment management. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given the minor horizontal and vertical overlaps between the companies' activities and because Fairfax already jointly controls Eurolife. 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.10329](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of MAF Colombia by TFS and Mitsui**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of MAF Colombia SAS of Colombia by Toyota Financial Services Corporation ('TFS') and Mitsui & Co., Ltd. ('Mitsui'), both of Japan. MAF Colombia provides auto loan services to consumers in Colombia. TFS offers financial services, including auto sales financing, credit cards and insurance services as well as vehicle sales financing and leasing services for individuals and businesses globally. TFS is a wholly owned subsidiary of Toyota Motor Corporation ('TMC') of Japan, which is engaged in the manufacture, sale, leasing and repair of motor vehicles, ships, aircraft and other transportation equipment, as well as the sale of material-handling equipment worldwide. Mitsui offers general trading activities, conducting its business activities globally in areas ranging from product sales, worldwide logistics and financing. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that MAF Colombia does not carry out any activities, nor does it have any assets in the European Economic Area ('EEA'). Therefore, the proposed acquisition does not give rise to any horizontal overlaps or vertical relations between the companies in the EEA. 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.10279](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control of a newly created joint venture between MUFG, SMFG, MHFG and Resona HD**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by Mitsubishi UFJ Financial Group, Inc. ('MUFG'), Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group, Inc. ('SMFG'), Mizuho Financial Group, Inc. ('MHFG') and Resona Holdings, Inc. ('Resona HD'), all of Japan. The joint venture will be active exclusively in Japan, where it will develop and set-up a new alternative electronic payments infrastructure aimed mainly at small money transactions among and between individuals. MUFG, SMFG, MHFG and Resona HD are banking groups based in Japan. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that the joint venture will have no activities in 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.10294](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Ohio by CDPQ and OTPP**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Ohio National Mutual Holdings, Inc. ('Ohio') of the US by Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec ('CDPQ') and Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan Board ('OTPP'), both of Canada. Ohio provides individual life insurance, disability income insurance and annuities, as well as broker-dealer

and investment advisory services Brazil, Chile, Peru and the US CDPQ is a long-term institutional investor managing funds primarily for public and para-public pension and insurance plans globally. OTPP is active in the administration of pension benefits and the investment of pension plan assets on behalf of active and retired teachers in the Canadian province of Ontario. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because Ohio will have no actual or foreseen activities in 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.10297](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of a newly created joint venture by Colony Capital and Liberty Global**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture of Luxembourg, by Colony Capital, Inc. of the US and Liberty Global plc of the UK. The joint venture is active in the acquisition, development and commercialisation of technical real estate and data centres for the provision of colocation services in the UK and the European Economic Area. Colony Capital manages a global portfolio composed of, amongst other, investments in digital infrastructure, including macro cell towers, data centres, small cell networks and fibre networks. Liberty Global is active in the operation of cable networks offering television, broadband internet, fixed-line voice telephony and mobile telecommunications services in several EU Member States. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the very 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.10241](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Whirlpool Beyaz by Arçelik**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Whirlpool Beyaz Eşya San. ve Tic. A.Ş ('Whirlpool Beyaz') by Arçelik A.Ş. ('Arçelik'), both of Turkey. Whirlpool Beyaz owns a plant in Turkey that manufactures refrigerators, freezers and washing machines sold under various brands, including Whirlpool, Bauknecht, Ignis, and Indesit. Arçelik manufactures and supplies a broad range of household appliances, consumer electronics and components under various brands, including Altus, Beko, and Grundig. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the companies' moderate combined market position resulting from the proposed transaction and the presence of a number of other competitors 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.10291](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni - Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of Lonza Specialty Ingredients by Bain Capital and Cinven**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of Lonza Specialty Ingredients of Switzerland by Bain Capital Investors L.L.C. ('Bain Capital') of the US and Cinven Capital Management (VII) General Partner Limited ('Cinven') of the UK. Lonza Specialty Ingredients provides microbial control solutions and chemical technologies, as well as composite materials, performance intermediates and chemicals. Bain Capital and Cinven are active in private equity investment. Some of Bain Capital's portfolio companies are also active in the same or related markets as Lonza Specialty Ingredients, namely Italmatch Chemicals S.p.A of Italy in specialty chemicals, and Diversey, Inc. of the US in cleaning and hygiene products and systems. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns given that it would result in a few insignificant horizontal overlaps in specialty chemicals, as well as a number of unproblematic vertical overlaps between the manufacture of cleaning and hygiene products and systems worldwide and in the European Economic Area ('EEA') and the production of biocidal products for hygiene end-uses in the EEA and its Member States. In addition, in all of the markets under consideration, the combined market shares of the parties are limited to moderate, while several other well-established players are present and would be in a position to constrain any post-merger attempt of price increases or foreclosure strategies. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#)

website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10234](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Infra Group by ICG**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Infra International NV ('Infra Group') of Belgium by Intermediate Capital Group plc ('ICG') of the UK. Infra Group is an infrastructure works provider that offers a full range of services from design, engineering and installation to the maintenance of infrastructure networks. Infra Group is active in Belgium, France, Germany and the Netherlands. ICG is an investment firm, with investments in various companies across Europe, Asia Pacific and the US. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies' limited combined market shares in markets where their activities overlap, and the fact that their combined or individual market shares in markets where their activities are vertically linked also remain limited. 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.10282](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie - Tel: +32 229 86500; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **NextGenerationEU: President von der Leyen in Latvia, Germany and Italy to present Commission assessment of national recovery plans**

Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** will travel to Latvia, Germany and Italy tomorrow, Tuesday 22 June, as she continues her NextGenerationEU tour of capitals. She is visiting these countries to personally hand over the result of the Commission's assessment and Recommendation to the Council on the approval of the national recovery and resilience plans in the context of [NextGenerationEU](#). On Tuesday morning, the President will start her day in Riga with a bilateral meeting with Krišjānis Kariņš, Prime Minister of Latvia. She will then travel to Berlin, where she will be received by Angela Merkel, Chancellor of Germany. On Tuesday afternoon, the President will be in Rome where she will meet Mario Draghi, Prime Minister of Italy. President **von der Leyen** will also visit several projects that are or will be funded under the Recovery and Resilience Facility. These projects are active in the fields of material science, water management, sustainable architecture and design in Latvia, the film industry in Italy, and smart solutions in healthcare in Germany. (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150; Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197)

### **Vice-President Schinas, Commissioners Reynders and Johansson to take part in EU-US Justice and Home Affairs Ministerial meeting**

Tomorrow morning, Margaritis **Schinas**, Vice-President for Promoting our European Way of Life, Didier **Reynders**, Commissioner for Justice, and Ylva **Johansson**, Commissioner for Home Affairs, will take part in a ministerial meeting dedicated to justice and home affairs issues with the US in Lisbon. It will be the first such meeting to be held in person with the new US administration since the easing of coronavirus-related restrictions. Secretary for Homeland Security Alejandro Mayorkas and Deputy Assistant Attorney General Bruce Swartz will represent the US. The meeting is held twice a year to advance transatlantic cooperation in the area of justice and home affairs and address common challenges. Tomorrow's discussions will focus on cooperation and information exchange in the fight against terrorism, including the EU-US Passenger Name Record agreement. Participants will also discuss the fight against violent extremism, hate speech, racism and xenophobia. Turning to the challenges and opportunities of the digital age, participants will focus on the responsibility of online platforms, with an update on addressing terrorist content and child sexual abuse online, an update on ePrivacy and the proposed Digital Services Act and a discussion on cyber security and artificial intelligence. In a last session dedicated to migration and mobility, participants will notably discuss visa reciprocity before turning to the resumption of international travel. The meeting will build on the outcome of the EU-US summit of 15 June. A press conference with Vice-President **Schinas**,

Commissioners **Reynders** and **Johansson** will take place tomorrow at 14.00 CET which you can follow live on [EbS](#). A statement will be published [here](#) tomorrow after the meeting. (For more information: Adalbert Jahnz - Tel.: + 32 229 53156; Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253)

## **Les commissaires Gabriel et Schmit participent aux réunions ministérielles du G20 sur l'éducation et l'emploi**

Demain matin, mardi 22 juin, les ministres de l'éducation des pays du G20 se réuniront à Catane, en Italie, afin de partager leurs approches en matière d'éducation mixte et la manière dont ils tentent d'aider les enfants issus de milieux défavorisés de profiter des opportunités d'éducation. Ces deux sujets seront abordés dans le contexte de la pandémie et des plans de relance. Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire à l'innovation, la recherche, la culture, l'éducation et la jeunesse, représentera la Commission et participera à la réunion hybride par vidéoconférence. Lors de la réunion, les ministres adopteront une déclaration commune reconnaissant le travail effectué par le G20 sur l'agenda de l'éducation et s'engageant à poursuivre la coopération. La commissaire **Gabriel** expliquera comment [l'espace européen de l'éducation](#) et le plan d'action pour l'éducation numérique contribuent à la fourniture d'une éducation de qualité et aux transitions verte et numérique dans toute l'Europe. Les ministres de l'éducation et de l'emploi tiendront ensuite une réunion conjointe, avec la participation du commissaire à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, Nicolas **Schmit**. Les ministres adopteront à cette occasion une déclaration commune sur le passage de l'école au travail et la nécessité de fournir aux jeunes les compétences et le soutien adéquats à ce moment clé de la vie. Le mercredi 23 juin, le commissaire **Schmit** participera à la [réunion des ministres du travail et de l'emploi des pays du G20](#). Les ministres se réuniront pour discuter de l'emploi, de l'amélioration des conditions de travail et de l'égalité de rémunération pour les femmes, de la protection sociale dans un marché du travail en constante évolution, notamment à la lumière des transitions verte et numérique, ainsi que des modèles de travail, de l'organisation des entreprises et du processus de production à l'ère de la numérisation. Ce dernier point inclut la situation des personnes travaillant par le biais de plateformes numériques de travail et l'impact de l'utilisation d'algorithmes sur le marché du travail. Les ministres devraient adopter une déclaration ministérielle sur les sujets abordés. (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Marta Wieczorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Célia Dejond – Tél.: +32 229 88199; Flora Matthaes – Tél.: +32 229 83951)

## **Agriculture : le commissaire Wojciechowski participe à la quatrième conférence ministérielle sur l'agriculture de l'Union africaine et de l'Union européenne**

Demain, 22 juin, le commissaire Janusz **Wojciechowski** participera virtuellement à la [quatrième conférence ministérielle sur l'agriculture de l'Union africaine et de l'Union européenne](#), co-organisée par la Commission de l'Union africaine et la Commission européenne. La conférence permettra aux ministres de l'agriculture de l'UA et de l'UE d'échanger des points de vue et de partager les meilleures pratiques sur le développement de systèmes alimentaires plus durables, également dans le contexte de la réponse à la pandémie du COVID-19. L'événement comprendra quatre sessions thématiques de haut niveau, qui se tiendront en parallèle. Les sessions permettront une discussion approfondie sur des questions à fort potentiel pour une coopération renforcée entre l'UE et l'UA. Une session plénière clôturera la conférence, avec la participation du commissaire **Wojciechowski**. Plus d'informations sur la coopération entre l'Union africaine et l'Union européenne [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

## **Espace : le commissaire Breton lance officiellement le programme spatial de l'Union européenne**

Demain, le commissaire Thierry **Breton**, en charge du marché intérieur, participera à un événement célébrant le lancement officiel du programme spatial de l'Union européenne, donnant un nouveau départ à un ambitieux programme spatial européen, et soulignant la contribution du programme spatial aux transitions numérique et verte, ainsi qu'aux principales priorités de l'Europe. Le commissaire sera rejoint par d'autres participants tels que le président de la commission ITRE du Parlement européen, Cristian Bușoi, le ministre de la Science, de la Technologie et de l'Enseignement supérieur, Manuel Heitor, et le directeur-général de l'ESA, Josef Aschbacher. Le [règlement du programme spatial](#) de l'UE adopté en avril 2021 avec le plus grand budget jamais alloué à l'espace, 14,88 milliards d'euros (en prix courant), englobe toutes les activités spatiales de l'UE dans un seul règlement du programme spatial. Le nouveau règlement permet la modernisation des programmes phares de l'UE, Galileo, EGNOS et Copernicus, et apporte [deux nouvelles initiatives spatiales](#), la communication par satellites gouvernementaux et la surveillance de l'espace. Le programme spatial



favorisera le leadership technologique et la résilience de l'Europe dans le domaine de l'espace, afin de lui permettre d'être compétitive dans la course mondiale, et le fonds d'investissement spatial [CASSINI](#), doté d'un milliard d'euros, stimulera les start-ups et l'innovation de rupture dans l'écosystème aérospatial. L'événement comprendra également la signature officielle de l'accord-cadre de partenariat financier, de l'accord de contribution avec l'Agence européenne pour les programmes spatiaux (EUSPA) et avec l'Agence spatiale européenne (ESA), ainsi que trois tables rondes consacrées à des questions urgentes pour l'écosystème. Parmi les sujets abordés figurent la coopération entre les acteurs de l'espace, les possibilités d'entrepreneuriat ou la contribution du programme spatial de l'UE aux priorités de l'UE en matière de transformation verte et numérique, ainsi que la résilience de l'économie européenne. Pour plus d'informations, veuillez consulter notre [fiche d'informations](#). Afin de suivre l'événement ainsi que le point presse avec le commissaire **Breton**, veuillez-vous inscrire via [ce lien](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodnova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tél.: +32 229 88199)

## **EU Vaccines Strategy : Commissioner Kyriakides visits Greece and meets with Prime Minister Mitsotakis**

Tomorrow, 22 June, Commissioner **Kyriakides** will be in Athens, Greece, where she will meet with Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. The Commissioner will also meet with Minister of Health Vassilis Kikilias. Discussions will focus on the EU Vaccines Strategy and the roll-out of the national vaccination campaign in Greece, as well as the way forward on the proposals under the European Health Union. The meeting with the Minister of Health will be followed by a joint visit to the Mega Vaccination Center 'Prometheus'. Ahead of the visit to Greece, Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: *"Vaccination remains our strongest response against COVID-19 and its new variants and we need to ensure that as many citizens as possible are fully vaccinated and protected across the EU. Our joint EU Vaccines Strategy is an example of the power of European collaboration and of European solidarity in action, and I am looking forward to discussing how the EU can further support the roll-out of the successful Greek national vaccination campaign, including for hard-to reach populations."* This visit is part of the Commission's on-going efforts and Commissioner **Kyriakides**' commitment to support the roll-out of Member States national COVID-19 vaccination campaigns. (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Darragh Cassidy – Tel.: +32 229 83978)

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