



Daily News 01 / 07 / 2021

Brussels, 1 July 2021

EU offers €30 million financing to the company Univercells for a new COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing facility and pipeline

The European Investment Bank (EIB) signed today a €30 million loan agreement with the innovative Belgian biotechnology company, Univercells, to enable the production of large volumes of prophylactic COVID-19 vaccines in a new manufacturing facility and to co-develop a pipeline of vaccines. This venture loan is backed by the [InnovFin Infectious Diseases Finance Facility](#) (IDFF) under [Horizon 2020](#), the EU's research and innovation programme for 2014-2020. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *"Since the beginning of the pandemic we have made tremendous efforts to support Europe's innovators, prioritising the research on and the development of safe and effective solutions to tackle the crisis and its aftermath. Our financial instruments and cooperation with the EIB have also helped develop and deploy many cutting-edge technologies addressing COVID-19. I am very pleased that today we are extending this support to the innovative Belgian biotech for their new COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing facility and development of a pipeline of vaccines. This is one step closer to restoring normal life and to ensuring we are better prepared for future pandemics."* The partnership announced today will contribute to the fight against the coronavirus pandemic, while at the same time creating significant long-term value and impact and supporting future pandemic preparedness. The new venture debt to Univercells backed by IDFF adds to a previous €20 million IDFF operation signed in October 2019. This investment will support not only European pandemic readiness, but due to Univercells' innovative business model of hub-and-spoke, it will also support vaccine availability and production autonomy in low and middle-income countries. More information is available in this [EIB press release](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

EU Digital COVID Certificate enters into application in the EU

As of today, the EU Digital COVID Certificate Regulation enters into application. This means that EU citizens and residents will now be able to have their Digital COVID Certificates issued and verified across the EU. 21 EU countries as well as Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein had [already started to issue certificates](#) ahead of today's deadline, and five more EU countries are starting today. Welcoming the entry into application of the EU Digital COVID Certificate, President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: *"The European Union is delivering for its citizens. The European Digital COVID Certificate is a symbol of an open and safe Europe that is opening cautiously putting the protection of the health of our citizens first. In March, we promised to have an EU-wide system to facilitate free and safe travel within the EU by the summer holidays. Now we can confirm that the EU Digital COVID Certificate system is up and running. A vast majority of EU Member States are already connected to the system and ready to issue and verify the Certificates. More than 200 million certificates have already been generated. We are helping Europeans get back the freedom they value and cherish so much."* The full [press release](#) is available online as well as [Q&As](#) and [factsheet](#). More information is available on the [EU Digital COVID Certificate website](#). (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)

Defence Industry: the Commission kick-starts the European Defence Fund with €1.2 billion and awards 26 new industrial cooperation projects for more than €158 million

The Commission adopted yesterday a package of decisions supporting the competitiveness and innovation capacity of the EU defence industry. The adoption of the first European Defence Fund (EDF) annual work programme paves the way to the immediate launch of 23 calls for proposals for a total of €1.2 billion of EU funding in support of collaborative defence research and development projects. Furthermore, under the EDF's precursor programme, the European Defence Industry

Development Programme (EDIDP), 26 new projects with a budget of more than €158 million were selected for funding. In addition, two major capability development projects received a directly awarded grant of €137 million under the EDIDP, ESSOR, the European Secure Software-defined Radio, and MALE RPAS, also known as Eurodrone. Margrethe **Vestager**, Executive Vice-President for a Europe Fit for the Digital Age, said: *"The European Defence Fund now plays a key role in making defence industrial cooperation in Europe a permanent reality. This will foster the EU's competitiveness and contribute to achieving our technological ambitions. With significant participation of companies of all sizes and from across the EU, the Fund provides great opportunities to foster innovation and cutting edge capabilities. 30% of funding going to small and medium sized enterprises is a very promising start."* Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, said: *"In 2021, the European Defence Fund is coming to life. With the EU's first-ever dedicated defence programme, European cooperation in defence will become the norm. Public authorities will spend better together, and companies - big or small - from all Member States will benefit, resulting in more integrated European defence industrial value chains. In 2021 alone, the EDF will finance up to €1.2bn in high-end defence capability projects such as the next generation of aircraft fighters, tanks or ships, as well as critical defence technologies such as military cloud, AI, semiconductors, space, cyber or medical counter measures."* During the first year, the EDF will co-finance large-scale and complex projects for a total amount of €1.2 billion. To finance this ambitious roll-out, the 2021 EDF budget of €930 million has been complemented with a 'top-up' of €290 million from the 2022 EDF budget. This will allow to kick-start large-scale and ambitious capability development projects while ensuring broad thematic coverage of other promising topics. For more information on these decisions, please find more information in our [press release](#), in the [speech](#) of Commissioner **Breton**, and in the factsheets on [EDF](#), on the [EDF work programme](#), on [EDIDP](#) and on the [EDIDP specific projects](#). You can also watch the replay of the launch event [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tel.: +32 229 88199)

Plan européen de lutte contre le cancer: la Commission lance un centre de connaissances pour lutter contre le cancer

La Commission a lancé hier le [centre de connaissances sur le cancer](#), la première action phare menée dans le cadre du [plan européen de lutte contre le cancer](#). Ce centre de connaissances est une nouvelle plateforme en ligne destinée à réunir des données et à coordonner les actions contre la première cause de décès chez les moins de 65 ans en Europe. Il recueillera les données les plus récentes sur le cancer, fournira des orientations en matière de soins de santé et de systèmes d'assurance de la qualité, tout en assurant un suivi et en établissant des projections de l'évolution de l'incidence et de la mortalité du cancer dans l'ensemble de l'UE. Ce centre de connaissance offre également un espace dans lequel toutes les personnes engagées dans la lutte contre le cancer peuvent partager leurs bonnes pratiques, collaborer et se coordonner, afin que nous exploitions au mieux nos connaissances collectives et les données scientifiquement prouvées. Le centre de connaissances est une initiative phare du [plan européen de lutte contre le cancer](#), priorité majeure dans le domaine de la santé de la Commission **von der Leyen** et pilier essentiel d'une union européenne de la santé forte. Pour plus d'informations sur ce sujet, veuillez consulter notre [communiqué de presse](#), ainsi que l'[enregistrement de l'événement de lancement](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tél.: +32 229 58615; Célia Dejond – Tél.: +32 229 88199)

Politique de cohésion de l'UE: 118 millions d'euros pour la Guyane française et la Pologne

La Commission a approuvé un investissement de 118 millions d'euros provenant des fonds structurels pour deux grands projets concernant le département français d'outre-mer de Guyane et la Pologne. 26 millions d'euros du [Fonds européen de développement régional](#) (FEDER) seront notamment investis dans le développement d'un réseau de bus rapide à Cayenne, en Guyane française, tandis que 92 millions d'euros seront utilisés pour la modernisation du matériel roulant de la compagnie ferroviaire polonaise PKP Intercity SA. La commissaire à la cohésion et aux réformes, Elisa **Ferreira**, a déclaré: *« Ces projets offriront des avantages tangibles aux habitants et aux touristes. Un système de transport public efficace réduira les temps de trajet, incitera les habitants à ne pas utiliser la voiture, améliorera la sécurité des déplacements et permettra une réduction des émissions de CO². Il s'agit d'un exemple significatif de l'UE soutenant les citoyens à l'aide d'infrastructures qui répondent aux objectifs du Pacte vert »*. Le grand projet guyanais optimisera l'efficacité du système de transports en commun en dédiant une voie distincte aux bus sur les principaux axes de transport entre Cayenne, Matoury et Rémire-Montjoly. De plus, 5,6 km d'infrastructures routières seront construits, à destination des quais, de l'espace public, des gares, des terminaux de transfert de passagers, des parcs, de la signalisation et d'un système de gestion du trafic, ainsi que deux terminaux de gare et un dépôt de bus. En Pologne, le grand projet se

traduira par la rénovation de 183 wagons, 20 locomotives électriques et l'achat de six engins ferroviaires. Actuellement, l'âge moyen du matériel roulant de PKP Intercity SA est de 29 ans pour les wagons et de 33 ans pour les locomotives. Le projet modernisera le système ferroviaire de treize régions polonaises et augmentera globalement son attractivité et sa compétitivité. (Pour plus d'informations : Stefan de Keersmaecker - Tél.: +32 229 84680;; Veronica Favalli - Tél.: +32 229 87269)

European Citizens' Initiative: Commission to propose phasing out of cages for farm animals

Yesterday, the Commission decided to positively respond to the European Citizens' Initiative (ECI) "End the Cage Age", the sixth successful initiative supported by over 1 million citizens across the EU. In its reply, the Commission set out plans for a legislative proposal by 2023 to prohibit cages for a number of farm animals. The proposal will come as part of the ongoing revision of the animal welfare legislation under the Farm to Fork Strategy. Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová, said: "As the successful outcome of this Initiative shows, citizens' input can make a real difference, leading to concrete legislative proposals from the Commission. We have heard the concerns of millions of people over the living conditions of farm animals and we will respond to it. My message to EU citizens is simple: the ECI is there for you, don't hesitate to use it!" Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "Animals are sentient beings and we have a moral, societal responsibility to ensure that on-farm conditions for animals reflect this. Today's response is a key step towards an ambitious revision of the animal welfare legislation in 2023, a priority since the beginning of my mandate. I am determined to ensure that the EU remains at the forefront of animal welfare on the global stage and that we deliver on societal expectations." Janusz Wojciechowski, Commissioner for Agriculture, said: "A sustainable food system cannot exist without high animal welfare standards...The Green Deal and its Farm to Fork Strategy, supported by the new Common Agricultural Policy, will be crucial in the transition to sustainable food systems. This citizens' initiative only confirms that this transition also responds to a societal demand for more ethical and sustainable farming." Since an end of the use of cages will require changes to current farming systems, the Commission will consider the socio-economic and environmental implications of the measures to be taken and the benefits to animal welfare in an impact assessment to be completed before the end of 2022. In this context, a public consultation will be carried out at the latest by early 2022. The Commission will assess the feasibility of working towards the proposed legislation entering into force from 2027. A full [press release](#) and a [questions and answers](#) are available online. (For more information: Stefan de Keersmaecker — Tel. + 32 229 84680; Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Darragh Cassidy— Tel.: + 32 229 83978 Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444)

Vision à long terme pour les zones rurales: vers des zones rurales de l'UE plus fortes, connectées, résilientes et prospères

La Commission européenne a présenté hier une [vision à long terme pour les zones rurales de l'UE](#), qui recense les défis et les problèmes auxquels elles sont confrontées, tout en mettant en avant certaines des possibilités les plus prometteuses qui s'offrent à elles. S'appuyant sur de vastes consultations des citoyens et d'autres acteurs des zones rurales, la vision présentée hier propose un pacte rural et un plan d'action rural, dont l'objectif est de faire de nos zones rurales des régions plus fortes, connectées, résilientes et prospères. Pour réagir efficacement face aux grandes évolutions et aux défis posés par la mondialisation, l'urbanisation et le vieillissement, et recueillir les fruits des transitions verte et numérique, il est nécessaire de mettre en place des politiques et des mesures qui tiennent compte de la diversité des territoires de l'UE, de leurs besoins spécifiques et de leurs forces relatives. Cette vision à long terme pour les zones rurales de l'UE vise à répondre à ces défis, en s'appuyant sur les nouvelles possibilités offertes par les transitions verte et numérique de l'UE et sur les enseignements tirés de la pandémie de COVID-19, et en définissant les moyens d'améliorer la qualité de vie en milieu rural, de parvenir à un développement territorial équilibré et de stimuler la croissance économique. Un [communiqué de presse](#), un [Q&A](#), et une [fiche d'information](#) sont disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

The EU welcomes the start of trading under the EU-Ghana interim Economic Partnership Agreement

Today, Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, and Hon. Alan Kyerematen, Minister of Trade and Industry of Ghana, announced the start of the effective implementation by Ghana of the EU-Ghana interim Economic Partnership Agreement (iEPA). As of today, Ghana will start liberalising access to its market for 80% of the total volume of EU exports.

Since December 2016, the iEPA guarantees duty free-quota free access to the EU market for products made in Ghana. The effective implementation of the iEPA is crucial for developing and diversifying EU-Ghana bilateral trade. It creates better opportunities for EU companies to trade and invest in Ghana, and produce goods for export to the wider African market under the preferences available under the African Continental Free Trade Area. Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: *"The opening of Ghana's market to EU exports marks a milestone in our longstanding trade and economic relationship. Products made in Ghana already enjoy duty free-quota free access to the EU market. Increased trade volumes under the framework of the iEPA will increase two-way trade, creating jobs and growth in both the EU and Ghana. A well-functioning iEPA also reaffirms our shared commitment to rules-based trade, and will therefore enhance relations between the EU and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), as well as African States more broadly."* The EU-Ghana Joint Statement is available [here](#). (For more information: Miriam García Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Álvaro Rangel Hernández – Tel.: +32 2 291 36 65)

The EU-Republic of Korea trade agreement marks ten years with trade growing twice as fast

The ten-year anniversary of the EU-Republic of Korea Trade Agreement comes with an impressive growth in bilateral trade of more than 50%, reaching over €110 billion. Trade in goods grew by 46% from 2010 to 2020, almost twice as fast as EU trade with countries that do not have a trade agreement with the EU. While the most benefited sectors have been machinery, transport equipment and chemicals, the agreement also contributed to significant export growth in other smaller sectors, like footwear and hats, textiles exports and wood. It has also helped EU agri-food producers increase their exports significantly and created new opportunities thanks to an extended list of geographical indications (GIs), updated last April. The agreement also played an important role in improving workers' rights, as the first EU trade deal with a sustainability chapter. Executive Vice-President and Trade Commissioner, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: *"We have a lot to celebrate on the 10th anniversary of the EU-Republic of Korea trade deal, which has led a big boost in our bilateral trade - in fact, trade has doubled. This shows that trade deals are very much worth negotiating and implementing and they are vital to our recovery: every €1 billion of exports supports 13,000 jobs in the EU. The deal also shows that the EU is walking the talk on workers' rights, as the agreement has successfully contributed to the Republic of Korea's ratification of key international labour conventions."* The EU remains the biggest source of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Republic of Korea, representing 37% of the country's total FDI stock. The EU's investment in the Republic of Korea grew by 39% since 2010, reaching €44 billion in 2019. More information is available in our [press release](#). (For more information: Miriam García Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Álvaro Rangel Hernández – Tel.: +32 2 291 36 65)

State aid: Commission approves €131 million German scheme to support modernisation of inland waterway fleets

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €131 million German scheme to support the modernisation of inland waterway fleets in Germany. The scheme consists of two measures. The first measure aims at increasing the competitiveness, efficiency and safety of inland waterway vessels in Germany, by supporting the upgrading of inland waterway vessels. This is expected to contribute to a modal shift towards inland waterway vessels for freight transport. The second measure aims at reducing the negative environmental impact of inland waterway vessels, by lowering emissions through the retrofitting of inland waterway vessels with new, environmentally friendly engines and lower-emission technologies. Under both measures, the support will take the form of direct grants. The Commission assessed the first measure under [Article 93](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) regarding transport coordination. It found that the measure (i) is beneficial for the environment and for mobility, as it supports waterway transport, which is less polluting than road transport, while also decreasing road congestion and (ii) is proportionate and necessary to achieve the objective pursued, namely to support the modal shift from road to waterways. The Commission assessed the second measure under the 2014 [Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy](#) ('EEAG'). The Commission found that the measure (i) is proportionate and limited to the minimum necessary, in particular because the level of the aid will be set in principle through a competitive bidding process and (ii) the measure will contribute to the reduction of CO₂ and air pollutant emissions, in line with the EU's climate and environmental objectives set out in the [European Green Deal](#). The Commission therefore concluded that the positive effects of the scheme outweigh any potential distortion of competition and trade brought about by the aid. On this basis, the Commission approved the scheme under EU State aid

rules. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.57137 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; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €200 million Danish scheme to compensate companies for the damages suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved €200 million Danish scheme to support companies in various sectors in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The aim of the scheme is to compensate companies with mixed activities (i.e. companies for which part of their activities is allowed, while another part is prohibited) for the damages suffered because of business disruption due to the coronavirus outbreak and to the restrictive measures implemented by the Danish government to limit the spread of the virus. Under the scheme, the aid will take the form of direct grants, with a maximum amount per beneficiary of approximately €4 million (DKK 30 million) per month. The public support will cover part of the fixed costs incurred by companies suffering a decline in turnover resulting from prohibited activities of at least 35% during the period from 9 July 2020 until 30 September 2021 (subject to relevant restrictions being in place), compared to the corresponding period in 2019. The Commission assessed the measure under [Article 107\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors for the damages directly caused by exceptional occurrences, such as the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the scheme will compensate damages that are directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak. It also found that the measure is proportionate, as the envisaged compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the scheme is in line with 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.62538 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; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €1.53 million Flemish scheme to support the protection of teleworkers' health in the context of the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €1.53 million Flemish scheme to incentivize companies, in the context of liquidity shortages due to the coronavirus outbreak, to enhance the protection of workers' health, negatively affected by an increased use of teleworking. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, which goes under the name of 'Working from home in a healthy and vital way: call for projects', the aid will take the form of direct grants. The scheme is open to companies of all sizes active in all sectors, except the financial sector, the primary agricultural production, fisheries and aquaculture sectors. The € 1.53 million budget will be allocated to a minimum of 10 and up to a maximum of 20 companies proposing innovative projects that will contribute to the mental and physical health of teleworkers. 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 company and (ii) will be granted no later than 30 November 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.63252 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; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves amendment to Greek repayable advances scheme, including budget increase, to support companies in the context of the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found the modification of an existing Greek repayable advances scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with the [Temporary Framework](#). The Commission approved the [original scheme](#) in April 2020 ([SA.56815](#)) and its subsequent amendments in [July 2020](#) ([SA.58047](#)), in [November 2020](#) ([SA.59069](#)), and in [December](#)

[2020 \(SA.59900\)](#). Greece notified further modifications to the scheme, including notably: (i) an overall estimated budget increase by €1.5 billion; (ii) an extension of the period in relation to which the aid may be granted, introducing a new round of aid that covers the period from September to December 2020; (iii) a change in the eligibility conditions of beneficiaries, i.e. newly created companies that were severely affected by the restrictive measures implemented by the Greek authorities do not need to prove a decline in turnover of at least 20% in those months, if certain conditions are met; (iv) modifications of the rules for the calculation of the aid amounts and of the conditions for partial repayment of the aid. The Commission found that the Greek scheme, as amended, continue to be in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will continue not to exceed €100,000 per company active in the primary agricultural production, €120,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector and €800,000 per company active in all other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted no later than 31 December 2021. The Commission concluded that the scheme, as modified, remains 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 numbers SA.62081 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; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears joint acquisition of certain timberland assets of Arauco by BCI, ABP and TIG

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of 80,000 hectares of timberlands that are currently part of Forestal Arauco S.A. of Chile by British Columbia Investment Management Corporation ('BCI') of Canada, Stichting Pensioenfonds ABP ('ABP') of the Netherlands and BTG Pactual Timberland Investment Group, LLC ('TIG') of the US. The acquisition will take place through the incorporation of a full function joint venture and its wholly owned subsidiary. The joint venture will harvest wood to be sold to customers in Chile. BCI is an investor active across a wide range of asset classes. ABP is a pension fund for government and education employees in the Netherlands. TIG, controlled by Banco BTG Pactual S.A. of Brazil, is a management organisation active in timberland investments. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited overlap between the companies' activities, and its limited impact in the European Economic Area. 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.10315](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Xilinx by AMD

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of Xilinx, Inc. by Advanced Micro Devices, Inc., both of the US. Xilinx is a global semiconductor company primarily active in the supply of field programmable gate arrays ('FPGAs'). AMD is a global semiconductor company that supplies central processing units ('CPUs') based on the x86 instruction set, graphics processing units ('GPUs'), and semi-custom processors for the gaming market. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns in the European Economic Area given the absence of horizontal overlaps and vertical relationships between the activities of the companies. The Commission assessed possible conglomerate effects and concluded that the transaction does not raise competition concerns in that regard, given the lack of ability and incentive to foreclose rival providers of CPUs and GPUs and the presence of alternative suppliers. 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.10097](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

NextGenerationEU: President von der Leyen travels to Vilnius to present the Commission's assessment of the Lithuanian national recovery plan

Tomorrow, President Ursula **von der Leyen** will be in Vilnius, to present the Commission's assessment and Recommendation to the Council on the Lithuanian national recovery and resilience plan in the context of NextGenerationEU. President **von der Leyen** will meet the President of Lithuania, Gitanas Nausėda, as well as the Prime Minister, Ingrida Šimonytė. The President will also visit a project related to solar batteries, which will be funded thanks to the Recovery and Resilience Facility. *(For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150; Marta Wieczorek - Tel.: +32 229 58197)*

The Western Balkans become a roaming free zone: the “Roam Like at Home” regime starts on 1 July with the support of the EU

Today, the “Roam Like at Home” regime in the Western Balkans enters into force. From 1 July, all roaming costs within the region will be eliminated. This is a historic achievement of cooperation amongst the telecom Ministries and Independent Regulators of the region, supported by the European Commission, and a stepping-stone in the digital transformation of the region. In 2019, the Western Balkan leaders signed the Regional Roaming Agreement in Belgrade and committed to eliminating roaming charges within the region, in a bid to improve connectivity and bring tangible benefits of the regional agenda to the citizens and businesses alike. The first phase of the implementation, introduced on 1 July 2019, gradually reduced the roaming charges by over 80%, and has led to a significant increase in data traffic in the entire Western Balkan region. The European Commission has fully supported this process, which was facilitated by the Regional Cooperation Council, with the assistance of the Body of European Regulators, BEREC. Setting up a roaming free zone is also a significant step of the Western Balkans in aligning with the EU Digital Single Market principles and practices, which the Common Regional Market agreed by the Western Balkan leaders in the Sofia Summit under the Berlin process, in November 2020 will further support. The next step will be the preparation of a roadmap for the reduction of roaming charges between the EU and the Western Balkans. *(For more information: Ana Pisonero – Tel.: +32 229 54320; Elisa Castillo Nieto — Tel.: +32 2 29 63803)*

[Eurostat](#) press releases

Today, on 1 July, the Spokesperson's Service re-opens the Berlaymont press room to a limited number of journalists. For more information, please see [here](#)

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