



## Daily News 01 / 02 / 2021

Brussels, 1 February 2021

### **EU Cohesion policy: €61 million to support research and innovation for innovative applications in economy and society in Croatia**

Today, the European Commission has approved an investment of more than €61 million from the [European Regional Development Fund](#) to modernise and expand the Ruđer Bošković Institute (RBI) in Zagreb, Croatia, to increase its scientific research capacity with the project 'Open Scientific Infrastructural Platforms for Innovative Applications in Economy and Society' (O-ZIP). Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira**, said: *"Thanks to this EU project, the institute will become more competitive and will increase its collaboration with local and international research partners and business stakeholders. Given the global challenges we face, it is essential to invest in European research institutes and projects to solve societal problems in sectors like health, food and the environment."* The institute's improved capacity and working environment will help train a new generation of students in multidisciplinary scientific fields with the additional aim to motivate the current generation of scientists to stay in Croatia, contributing to the country's economic development and innovation. Better links with business and industry will ensure that the institute's research meets real societal problems in areas such as the environment, climate change, energy, health and ageing. The O-ZIP project will help the country implement its [Smart Specialisation Strategy \(S3\)](#) and projects under the [EU Research and Innovation programme \(Horizon 2020\)](#) priorities. More on EU funded investments in Croatia is available on the [Open Data Platform](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712, Veronica Favalli - Tel.: +32 229 87269)

### **The EU and Japan trade deal celebrates second anniversary by further strengthening ties**

The 1st of February marks the second anniversary of the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA). The Joint Committee established under the Agreement, co-chaired by Executive Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** and Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs Toshimitsu Motegi, celebrates this anniversary by agreeing important improvements to the Agreement. Each side will see 28 [additional Geographical Indications](#) (GIs) protected and wine and vehicle trade between the two sides will become even easier than before. Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, said: *"The EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is one of our most important deals. Together, the EU and Japan make up for a quarter of the world's GDP and our bilateral trade reaches some €170 billion a year. This deal has made trading easier and cheaper for both EU and Japanese producers; it has helped farmers and manufacturers alike. Our strong cooperation is now bearing even more fruit, with 28 more traditional quality agri-food products now protected from imitation. We are also facilitating trade for wine and cars, two key sectors. This is very welcome as we work to rebuild economic growth following the COVID-19 pandemic. But the EU-Japan relationship goes beyond bilateral trade. We both stand for rules based, open global trade and a strong World Trade Organization."* Commissioner for Agriculture, Janusz **Wojciechowski**, said: *"This agreement is a great example of trade benefitting both sides as a result of mutual trust and close cooperation, in particular for the agri-food sector. I thank Japan for a continuously constructive and fruitful dialogue. This deal is very positive for Japanese and European farmers and will continue to be. After only two years since the entry into force of the agreement, an extra 28 geographical indications on both sides are now protected in our respective markets. These products have real added value, reflecting authenticity and quality, while further rewarding our farmers. In addition, thanks to the recent Japanese authorisation for wine practices, our European wine producers will now be able to benefit from increased export opportunities. Remember – good food is good business!"* A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tel.: +32 229 63303; Sophie Dirven – Tel.: +32 229 67228)

### **Security Union: Stricter rules on explosive precursors will make it harder for terrorists to build homemade explosives**

Today, new [EU rules](#) restricting access to explosive precursors start applying throughout the EU. The rules contain stronger safeguards and controls on the sale and marketing of dangerous chemicals, which have been misused to produce homemade explosives in a number of terrorist attacks in Europe. Under the new rules, suspicious transactions - whether online or offline - should be reported, including by online marketplaces. Sellers have to verify their customers' identity and their need for buying a restricted substance. Before issuing a licence for buying restricted substances, Member States need to carry out security screening, including a criminal background check. The new rules also restrict two additional chemicals: sulphuric acid and ammonium nitrate. To assist Member States and sellers implement the rules, the Commission presented [Guidelines](#) in June last year together with a [monitoring programme](#) intended to track the outputs, results and impact of the new Regulation. The Regulation strengthens and updates the [existing rules](#) on explosive precursors, and contributes to denying terrorists the means to act and protecting the security of Europeans, in line with the priorities set out in the [Counter-Terrorism Agenda](#) presented in December 2020. (For more information: Adalbert Jahnz - Tel.: + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley - Tel.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tel.: +32 229 55721)

## **Aviation : une nouvelle étape vers la modernisation et la décarbonation du ciel européen**

Aujourd'hui, la Commission européenne a adopté un règlement qui établit le Projet commun 1 (CP1), un nouveau cadre qui contribue à rendre les vols dans le ciel européen plus durables, en assurant une gestion plus efficace des voies aériennes. Après une phase pilote intense, le CP1 va maintenant se concentrer sur les innovations technologiques et pratiques les plus prometteuses en matière de gestion du trafic aérien (ATM), et fixer des délais de mise en œuvre réalistes à respecter par les parties concernées - les compagnies aériennes, aéroports et prestataires de services de navigation aérienne. La commissaire européenne aux transports, Adina **Vălean**, a déclaré à ce propos: « *La modernisation de la gestion du trafic aérien en Europe est essentielle pour atteindre les objectifs de notre Pacte vert pour l'Europe et assurer l'endurance à long terme du secteur de l'aviation. En accélérant la mise en œuvre des solutions technologiques innovantes, le projet commun 1 (CP1) assurera des trajectoires de vol plus directes, et donc plus économes en carburant, et permettra aux avions modernes d'exploiter pleinement les avantages de technologies plus écologiques et plus silencieuses.* » Le nouveau projet - ainsi que la meilleure mise en place du nouveau Ciel unique européen, [comme récemment proposé par la Commission](#) - contribuera aux objectifs du [Pacte vert pour l'Europe](#) et à la mise en œuvre de notre [stratégie de mobilité durable et intelligente](#) adoptée récemment. L'Union européenne fournira des fonds pour soutenir la mise en œuvre du CP1 par le biais du programme « [Connected Europe Facility](#) ». Les modalités détaillées de la mise en œuvre du PC1 seront adoptées au cours du second semestre 2021. Vous trouverez plus de détails sur le projet et les prochaines étapes [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Stefan De Keersmaecker - Tél.: +32 229 84680; Stephan Meder - Tél.: +32 229 13917)

## **Commission publishes public consultation on the taxation of cross-border alcohol and tobacco purchases in the EU**

The Commission has launched a public consultation on the taxation of cross-border alcohol and tobacco purchases in the EU. Under current rules, excise duty on alcohol and tobacco bought by a private individual for their own use and transported to another EU country is only paid in the country where the goods were bought. This is the case even if they bring these goods into another Member State. For both alcohol and tobacco products, the misuse of cross-border shopping rules for private individuals is a source of concern for several EU countries due to lost revenues and the negative impact on the effectiveness of national public health policies. The current EU rules of cross-border shopping of alcohol beverages and tobacco products by private individuals are being reviewed to ensure that they remain fit for purpose to balance the objectives of public revenues and health protection. This is particularly important in the context of the European Action Plan against Cancer since taxation plays a pivotal role in reducing alcohol and tobacco consumption, in particular when it comes to acting as a deterrent to stop young people from smoking and abusing alcohol. The public consultation aims to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have an opportunity to express their views on the current rules and how they might work in the future. It includes questions on the effects of the current system, along with possible changes. The public consultation is available [here](#) and remains open until 23 April 2021. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek - Tel.: +32 229 58197; Nerea Artamendi Erro - Tel.: +32 229 90964)

## **Investment Plan for Europe supports new financing for the cultural and creative sectors in the Nordic countries**

The European Investment Fund (EIF) has signed a guarantee agreement with Danish finance provider REinvent Finance. As part of creative hub REinvent Group, it will provide new financing to operators in the Nordic film and TV series industry to improve access to finance for a sector which has come under pressure due to COVID-19. This agreement is backed by the European Commission under the [Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility \(CCS GF\)](#) and the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#), a part of the Investment Plan for Europe. Thanks to this agreement, a total guarantee amount of up to €26 million is expected to support 60 transactions in the film and TV series industry of the Nordic countries, including Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Iceland. This is an important sign of support in these difficult times to help Nordic creative audiovisual content go worldwide. Thierry **Breton**, Commissioner for Internal Market, said: *"I welcome this new agreement under the Cultural and Creative Sectors Guarantee Facility, which will enable easier access to financing for Nordic film and TV production companies. The culture and creative sectors are facing unprecedented difficulties as a result of the economic shock brought by the coronavirus pandemic. As such, this support will ensure continuation of their vibrant and unique contribution to Europe's audiovisual landscape."* The [Investment Plan for Europe](#) has so far mobilised €546.5 billion of investment across the EU. The press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

### **Investment Plan for Europe supports businesses in Romania affected by the COVID-19 pandemic**

The new cooperation between the European Investment Bank (EIB), European Investment Fund (EIF) and Deutsche Leasing Romania will enable local companies across Romania to benefit from €370 million of additional leasing finance. The EIB Group support is backed by a guarantee from the [European Fund for Strategic Investment \(EFSI\)](#), as part of the Investment Plan for Europe. The new initiative aims to enhance the resilience of Romanian businesses faced with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. It also aims to increase financing for agriculture and equipment investment, with the majority of borrowers situated in rural areas. The new agreement furthermore includes €25 million of targeted support for climate action investment. Commissioner for the Economy, Paolo **Gentiloni**, said: *"Supported by the Investment Plan for Europe, this agreement between the EIB Group and Deutsche Leasing will make additional leasing financing available to local businesses in Romania. This will particularly help SMEs situated in rural areas to finance specialised equipment they need for their operations, and thus help sustain economic development and jobs in this difficult period."* The [Investment Plan for Europe](#) has so far mobilised €546 billion of investment across the EU, benefitting over 1.4 million SMEs. The press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tel.: +32 229 83951)

### **State aid: Commission approves €586 million Hungarian scheme to support small and medium-sized enterprises affected by coronavirus outbreak\***

The European Commission has approved an approximately €586 million (HUF 214 billion) Hungarian scheme to support small and medium-sized enterprises ('SMEs') affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of a reduction of the local business tax rate to 1% and a 50% reduction in the advance payments of the local business tax. The scheme aims to provide relief and liquidity to SMEs in order to mitigate the effects of the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the Hungarian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the aid will not exceed €200,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products, €240,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and €1,600,000 per company active in all other sectors; and (ii) the scheme will run until 31 December 2021. The Commission concluded that the measure is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the 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.60910 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves €200 million Belgian scheme to support companies in Flanders affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €200 million Belgian scheme to support companies active in the Flemish Region affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The support will take the form of direct grants. The scheme will be open to companies active in all sectors. To be eligible companies must either (i) have suffered a turnover decline, excluding VAT, of at least 60% in the months of January and/or February 2021, compared to the same reference period in 2020; or (ii) be active in the food and drink sectors that were not allowed to operate in January and/or February 2021 as a result of the restrictive measures put in place to limit the spread of the virus, unless their activity was already mainly devoted to take-away; or (iii) be active in eligible sectors listed, e.g. cinemas, fitness centres, wellness centres, indoor playgrounds, in the measure that they were not allowed to operate in January and/or February 2021 as a result of the restrictive measures. The Commission found that the Belgian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €225 000 per company active in the primary production of agriculture products, €270 000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and €1 800 000 per company active in other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted before 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, 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.60524 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **State aid: Commission approves €10.2 million Cypriot scheme to support self-employed and enterprises affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €10.2 million Cypriot scheme to support self-employed and enterprises affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants intended to cover part of the beneficiaries operating costs. The scheme consists of two measures. The first measure applies to self-employed and enterprises whose operations have been fully suspended since 16 March 2020 because of the restrictive measures imposed by the Cypriot government to limit the spread of the virus. The amount of the grants will be calculated based on staff headcount, up to a maximum of €15,000. The second measure applies to self-employed and enterprises either whose operations have been suspended since November 2020 because of the restrictive measures, or whose monthly turnover decreased by 80% or more in one given month in 2020, compared to the same month in 2019. The amount of this one-off grant is based on staff headcount, with aid ranging from €500 for beneficiaries with one staff member to €3,000 for beneficiaries with 50 employees or more. The aim of the scheme is to address the liquidity needs of the beneficiaries and to help them continue their activity during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the Cypriot scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €225 000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products, €270 000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and €1 800 000 per company active in all other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted before 30 June 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.60274 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Web.com and Endurance by Clearlake and Siris**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of Web.com Group Inc. ('Web.com') and Endurance International Group Holdings, Inc. ('Endurance') by Clearlake Capital Group, L.P. ('Clearlake') and Siris Capital Group, LLC ('Siris'), all of the U.S. Web.com is a portfolio company of Siris and provides domain name registration and web

development services. Endurance is a portfolio company of Clearlake which assists small and medium-sized businesses with their online web presence, email marketing, and other online business solutions. Clearlake is a private investment firm, with a portfolio of companies active in software and technology-enabled services, energy and industrials, as well as food and consumer products. Siris is a private investment firm focusing its investments in companies in data, technology, and technology-enabled business services and telecommunication sectors. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the companies' moderate combined market positions resulting from the proposed transaction. 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.10085](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Industrie de l'UE: la Commission accueille la première réunion du nouveau forum industriel pour soutenir le verdissement, la numérisation et la résilience de l'industrie de l'UE**

Aujourd'hui, la Commission accueille la première réunion du Forum Industriel, qui lui fournira des avis d'experts sur la mise en œuvre de la [nouvelle stratégie industrielle de l'UE](#) publiée en mars 2020 et l'aidera à analyser systématiquement les différents écosystèmes industriels. La manifestation virtuelle comprendra la participation du vice-président exécutif Valdis **Dombrovskis**, de la vice-présidente exécutive Margrethe **Vestager** et du commissaire Thierry **Breton**. Parmi les membres du Forum figurent des représentants des États membres et des parties prenantes de l'industrie, du monde universitaire, de la société civile, des syndicats et d'autres organisations. Le commissaire **Breton**, chargé du marché intérieur, a déclaré à ce propos: « *L'Europe a tout ce qu'elle a besoin pour sortir plus forte de la crise. En travaillant ensemble, nous pouvons nous adapter et nous appuyer sur notre main-d'œuvre qualifiée, une recherche de qualité, des écosystèmes industriels dynamiques et d'excellentes infrastructures. Le Forum industriel soutiendra le passage de notre transformation industrielle à plus grande vitesse et garantira les bons investissements dans notre avenir. Ensemble, nous nous pencherons sur les différents risques et besoins de nos écosystèmes industriels lorsqu'ils s'engagent dans la double transition numérique et verte et deviennent plus résilients.* » La réunion d'aujourd'hui aidera la Commission à analyser les différents écosystèmes industriels. Les participants apporteront également leur contribution à la mise à jour de la stratégie industrielle et discuteront des aspects opérationnels du Forum. De plus amples informations sur le Forum industriel sont disponibles [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tél.: +32 229 58300)

### **Vice-President Jourová on a virtual visit to Slovakia to discuss the rule of law and disinformation**

Today and tomorrow, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra **Jourová**, will participate in a virtual visit to Slovakia to discuss, among others, the Rule of Law Report and disinformation. Today, the Vice-President will have a video meeting with the Slovak Minister of Justice Mária Kolíková, with whom she will discuss the justice reform and safety of journalists in Slovakia. Tomorrow, she will meet the Národná Rada, the Slovak Parliament, to discuss the annual Rule of Law Report, anti-corruption and democracy. Later, the Vice-President will discuss issues around disinformation with the Slovak Network of Experts against Hybrid Attacks ('SOPHIA'). Later in the week, she will continue the virtual meeting with Branislav Gröhling, Minister of Education, Science, Research and Sport to discuss education of Roma children. (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferrolí — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

### **Coronavirus: Commissioners Kyriakides and Breton participate in COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination meeting**

Today, Commissioner Stella **Kyriakides**, responsible for Health and Food Safety and Commissioner Thierry **Breton**, responsible for the Internal Market are participating via video link in a meeting on COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination organized by Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel. They will

discuss fair and equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines around the world, the EU's support to vaccine manufacturers, and the importance of delivering on the advance purchase agreements. Chancellor Merkel will lead a press conference with regional authorities after the event. Commissioner **Kyriakides** said: *"We have invested in research, in bold decisions by a few brave pharmaceutical companies and speedy work by regulators. The Commission, together with our Member States, are ready to support vaccine manufacturers to quickly step-up production and deliver vaccines. We now call on all companies to ensure predictability and transparency. This is essential to carry out vaccination across the EU and the world."* Commissioner **Breton** said: *"Current challenges in the vaccine production industrial chain call for both immediate and longer term solutions. We will work with industry and Member States to design a European vaccine production scale-up programme. We need a strong joint public/private partnership to repurpose, very fast, the European vaccine industrial base, and give Europe the means to become more resilient."* (For more information: Stefan de Keersmaecker - Tel.: +32 229 84680; Sonya Gospodinova - Tel.: +32 229 66953; Darragh Cassidy - Tel.: +32 229 83978; Federica Miccoli - Tel.: +32 229 58300)

## **La commissaire Johansson rencontre l'intergroupe du Parlement européen sur la lutte contre la corruption**

Aujourd'hui, la commissaire chargée des affaires intérieures, Ylva **Johansson**, rencontrera l'intergroupe du Parlement européen sur la lutte contre la corruption, une initiative multipartite de 129 membres du Parlement européen. La réunion abordera l'examen de la mise en œuvre par l'UE de la [Convention des Nations Unies contre la corruption](#) (CNUCC) ainsi que les mesures prises par les gouvernements pour réduire le risque de corruption pendant la pandémie de COVID-19. Ces dernières années, l'UE a réalisé des progrès importants en matière de la lutte contre la corruption. La législation a notablement progressé en ce qui concerne la lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux, les marchés publics, la protection des lanceurs d'alerte et le recouvrement des avoirs. L'année dernière, la Commission a publié le premier [rapport](#) européen sur l'état de droit et a récemment réitéré son engagement à entreprendre un [examen](#) de l'application par l'UE de la CNUCC. Cette année, la Commission présentera également un programme de l'UE destiné à lutter contre la criminalité organisée, qui traitera de la corruption en tant que précurseur du crime organisé. (Pour plus d'informations: Adalbert Jahnz - Tél.: + 32 229 53156; Ciara Bottomley - Tél.: +32 229 69971; Laura Bérard - Tél.: +32 229 55721)

[Eurostat](#) press releases

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