



## Daily News 22 / 07 / 2021

Brussels, 22 July 2021

### **Coronavirus: Commission steps up research funding with €120 million for 11 new projects to tackle the virus and its variants**

The Commission has short-listed 11 new projects worth €120 million from Horizon Europe, the biggest European research and innovation programme (2021-2027), for supporting and enabling urgent research into the coronavirus and its variants. This funding is part of a wide range of [research and innovation actions](#) taken to fight the coronavirus and contributes to the Commission's overall action to prevent, mitigate and respond to the impact of the virus and its variants, in line with the new European bio-defence preparedness plan [HERA Incubator](#). The 11 short-listed projects involve 312 research teams from 40 countries, including 38 participants from 23 countries outside of the EU. Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"The European Union has been taking strong action to fight the coronavirus crisis. Today we are stepping up our research efforts to meet the challenges and threats that coronavirus variants present. By supporting these new research projects and reinforcing and opening relevant research infrastructures, we continue to fight this pandemic as well as prepare for future threats."* Most of the projects will support clinical trials for new treatments and vaccines, as well as the development of large scale, coronavirus cohorts and networks beyond Europe's borders, forging links with [European initiatives](#). The Commission has been at the forefront of supporting research and innovation and coordinating European and global research efforts, including preparedness for pandemics. It pledged €1.4 billion to the [Coronavirus Global Response](#), of which [€1 billion](#) comes from [Horizon 2020](#), the previous EU research and innovation programme (2014-2020). The new projects will complement those previously funded under Horizon 2020 to fight the pandemic. More information are available in a [press release](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391)

### **REACT-EU: Plus de 336 millions d'euros pour la Croatie, la France, l'Allemagne et la Grèce pour une relance juste, verte et numérique**

La Commission a accordé un financement supplémentaire de plus de 336 millions d'euros à la Croatie, la France, l'Allemagne et la Grèce pour les aider à faire face à l'impact économique et social de la pandémie de coronavirus et à stimuler une relance verte et numérique équitable. L'argent supplémentaire est accordé dans le cadre de [REACT-EU](#) pour compléter six programmes opérationnels (PO) du [Fonds social européen](#) (FSE), du [Fonds européen de développement régional](#) et du [Fonds européen d'aide aux plus démunis](#) (FEAD). En Croatie, le PO FEAD sera renforcé de 10 millions d'euros supplémentaires pour continuer à aider les plus démunis, y compris ceux touchés par la pandémie de coronavirus et les deux tremblements de terre dévastateurs de 2020. Ces personnes vulnérables recevront une aide alimentaire sous forme de repas chauds et de biens matériels de base tels que produits d'hygiène et fournitures scolaires. En France, le PO interrégional FEDER dans la région de la Loire bénéficiera d'un montant additionnel de 6 millions d'euros. L'intégralité de ces allocations soutiendra le processus d'écologisation et la numérisation de l'économie. Par ailleurs, dans les territoires français d'outre-mer de la Guadeloupe et de Saint-Martin, le PO conjoint FSE et FEDER bénéficiera de 50,3 millions d'euros supplémentaires. Les nouveaux fonds soutiendront l'éducation et la formation des enfants et des étudiants, et contribueront à renforcer les compétences et à soutenir l'emploi des jeunes et des personnes occupant des emplois particulièrement touchés par la pandémie. À Saint-Martin, les financements supplémentaires permettront aussi des investissements dans la transition verte, le soutien au tourisme, la numérisation des services, dont l'éducation, et le renforcement du secteur de la santé. En Allemagne, le PO FEDER en Saxe recevra 115 millions d'euros qui seront alloués aux centres de vaccination, au soutien aux tests ainsi qu'aux investissements dans les infrastructures informatiques, la numérisation et les équipements médicaux des hôpitaux universitaires. De plus, un nouveau PO multifonds pour la région de Mecklembourg-Poméranie fournira un financement supplémentaire de 56,5 millions d'euros pour des investissements dans deux hôpitaux universitaires, dans le secteur du

tourisme, en soutien aux petites et moyennes entreprises (PME) et dans l'intégration des chômeurs de longue durée et les jeunes sur le marché du travail. En Grèce, 100 millions d'euros supplémentaires pour le PO 'Réforme du secteur public' contribueront à renforcer le système de santé publique du pays et à en améliorer l'accès aux citoyens. Ces fonds soutiendront un réseau mobile d'infirmières pour soulager les hôpitaux pendant la crise sanitaire, améliorer les services de soins à domicile à distance pour les malades chroniques et soutenir les services de santé mentale et physique pour les travailleurs de la santé. REACT-EU fait partie de [NextGenerationEU](#) et fournit 50,6 milliards d'euros de financement supplémentaire (en prix courants) au cours de 2021 et 2022 aux programmes de la politique de cohésion. Les mesures visent à soutenir la résilience du marché du travail, l'emploi, les PME et les familles à faible revenu, ainsi qu'à jeter les bases d'une transition verte et numérique et d'une reprise socio-économique durable. (Pour plus d'informations: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tél.: +32 229 84680; Veerle Nuyts – Tél.: +32 229 96302; Veronica Favalli – Tél.: +32 229 87269; Enda McNamara – Tél.: +32 229 64976)

## **Ensuring smooth air travel while checking EU Digital COVID Certificates: new guidelines for Member States**

Following the launch of the EU Digital COVID Certificate on 1 July, the European Commission has issued [guidelines](#) for EU Member States on the best ways to check them before travel, ensuring the smoothest possible experience for air passengers and staff alike. The non-mandatory EU Digital COVID Certificate provides either proof of vaccination, shows if a person holds a negative SARS-COV-2 test result, or has recovered from COVID-19. Therefore, the EU Digital COVID Certificate is essential to support the re-opening of safe travel. As passenger numbers will rise over the summer, an increased number of Certificates will need to be checked. The airline sector is particularly concerned by this since, in July for example, air traffic is expected to reach more than 60% of 2019 levels, and will rise thereafter. Currently, how and how often passenger's Certificates are checked, depends on the holder's departure, transit and arrival points. A better-coordinated approach would help avoid congestion at airports and unnecessary stress for passengers and staff. Commissioner for Transport, Adina **Vălean** said: *"Reaping the full benefits of the EU Digital COVID Certificate requires the harmonization of the verification protocol. Cooperating for a 'one-stop' system to check the certificates makes for a seamless travel experience for the passengers across the Union."* To avoid duplication, i.e. checks by more than one actor (airline operators, public authorities etc.), the Commission recommends a 'one-stop' verification process prior to departure, involving coordination between authorities, airports and airlines. Moreover, EU Member States should ensure that the verification is carried out as early as possible and preferably before the passenger arrives at the departure airport. This should ensure smoother travel and less burden for all involved. (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Anna Wartberger – Tel.: +32 229 82054)

## **REUNION DU COLLEGE : Vaincre la criminalité financière: la Commission réforme les règles en matière de lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux et le financement du terrorisme**

La Commission européenne a présenté un ensemble ambitieux de propositions législatives visant à renforcer les règles de l'UE en matière de lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux et le financement du terrorisme (LBC/FT). Ce paquet législatif contient également une proposition de création d'une nouvelle autorité de l'UE dans le domaine de la lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux. Il s'inscrit dans le cadre de l'engagement pris par la Commission de protéger les citoyens de l'UE et le système financier de l'UE contre le blanchiment de capitaux et le financement du terrorisme. Son objectif est de permettre de mieux détecter les transactions et activités suspectes et de combler les failles dont profitent les criminels pour blanchir le produit d'activités illicites ou financer des activités terroristes par l'intermédiaire du système financier. Comme le rappelle la [stratégie de l'UE pour l'union de la sécurité](#) pour la période 2020-2025, le renforcement du cadre de l'UE en matière de lutte contre le blanchiment de capitaux et le financement du terrorisme contribuera également à protéger les Européens contre le terrorisme et la criminalité organisée. Les mesures proposées renforcent considérablement le [cadre existant de l'UE](#) en tenant compte de l'émergence de nouveaux défis liés à l'innovation technologique. Parmi ces défis figurent les monnaies virtuelles, la plus grande intégration des flux financiers dans le marché unique et le caractère international des organisations terroristes. Ces propositions permettront de créer un cadre beaucoup plus harmonisé afin que les opérateurs soumis aux règles en matière de LBC/FT puissent plus facilement s'y conformer, en particulier lorsqu'ils ont des activités transfrontières. Un [communiqué de presse](#), un [document questions-réponses](#) et une [fiche d'information](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podestà – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Nerea Artamendi Erro – Tél.: +32 229 90964)

## **State aid: Commission invites interested parties to provide comments on proposed revision of Short-term export credit insurance Communication**

The European Commission has launched today a targeted public consultation inviting all interested parties to comment on a proposed revision of the Short-term export credit insurance Communication (STEC). Interested parties can respond to the consultation over a period of nine weeks, until 23 September 2021. Export credits enable foreign buyers of goods and services to defer payment. The payment deferral implies credit risk for the sellers, against which they insure themselves (export credit insurance). STEC lays down rules to ensure that State support to export credits does not distort competition among private and public or publicly supported export credit insurers, and to create a level-playing field among exporters in different Member States. It provides that trade within 27 EU Member States and nine OECD countries listed in its Annex, with a maximum risk period of up to two years, entails marketable risks, meaning that there should be sufficient capacity provided by private insurers and such risks should, in principle, not be insured by the State or State supported insurers. As a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, the Commission found in March 2020 that there is a lack of sufficient private insurance capacity for short-term export credits in general and considered all commercial and political risks associated with exports to the countries listed in the Annex as temporarily non-marketable. This temporary derogation applies until 31 December 2021. Separately, the STEC is also set to expire on 31 December 2021, and has been evaluated as part of [State aid Fitness Check](#). The evaluation showed that the objectives of STEC are in principle achieved and that its rules are overall fit for purpose. The proposed revision therefore envisages only a small number of mainly technical amendments, in particular: (i) STEC would continue to apply beyond 2021; (ii) the new total annual export turnover threshold would increase from €2 million to €2.5 million; (iii) Member States would be required to publish the annual reports on risks that are considered non-marketable and covered by State insurers; (iv) the Commission would continue to publish decisions about the list of marketable risk countries on its website and in the Official Journal. The draft STEC and the details about the targeted public consultation and the proposed changes, are available [online](#). In addition to the targeted consultation launched today, the draft STEC will also be discussed in a meeting between the Commission and Member States that will take place in September. This process will ensure that both Member States and other interested parties will have sufficient opportunities to comment on the draft Commission proposal. The adoption of the new STEC is foreseen for the last quarter of 2021. *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

## **State aid: Commission approves €507.5 million German Federal scheme for the acquisition of climate-friendly commercial vehicles**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €507.5 million German Federal scheme for the acquisition of climate-friendly commercial vehicles that will apply until the end of 2024. The scheme is open to undertakings from all sectors and offers direct grants for three sub-measures: (i) a premium of maximum 80% of the price difference between a carbon friendly (pure electrical, plug-in hybrid, or hydrogen/cell-fuelled) commercial vehicle and that of a comparable conventional diesel model meeting the highest applicable emission EU vehicle class (currently EURO 6/VI standards) (ii) maximum of 80% of the investment costs for charging facilities for electric vehicles for use by the acquiring undertaking, which may be made available for public use; and (iii) maximum of 50% of the costs of environmental studies. Aid will be based on a competitive bidding process. The notified measure aims at facilitating the development of certain environmentally friendly economic activities, hence the Commission assessed the measure and in particular the first and third sub-measures, under the 2014 Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy ('EEAG'). The second sub-measure was assessed in direct application of Article 107(3)(c) TFEU. The Commission concluded that the scheme (i) facilitates the development of certain economic activities and (ii) it creates incentives for emission reductions in line with the relevant EU objectives, such as clean transport as well as net-zero GHG emissions by 2050. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.59352 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 €650,000 Latvian scheme to support companies active in microgreen production, fishery and aquaculture sectors affected by the coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €650,000 Latvian scheme to support companies active in primary microgreen production, fishery and aquaculture sectors affected by the coronavirus outbreak

and 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](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The measure aims at mitigating the liquidity shortages that the beneficiaries are facing and at addressing the losses that they incurred during the period from 1 October 2020 to 31 May 2021 for companies active in the microgreen production sector and from 1 January 2021 to 31 May 2021 for companies active in fishery and aquaculture sector. The Commission found that the Latvian scheme is in line with the conditions of the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €225,000 per beneficiary active in the primary agricultural sector and €270,000 per beneficiary active in the fishery and aquaculture sector; 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 scheme 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.64033 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 acquisition of joint control over the Austrian merchant acquiring and point-of-sale terminal business of Ingenico by Global Payments and Erste Group**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over the Austrian merchant acquiring and point-of-sale ('POS') terminal provision and management business (the 'PAYONE Austrian Divestment Business') of Ingenico Group S.A. ('Ingenico') of France by Global Payments Inc. of the US. and Erste Group Bank AG ('Erste Group') of Austria. Ingenico is ultimately controlled by Worldline S.A. The PAYONE Austrian Divestment Business relates to the provision of POS merchant acquiring services as well as to the provision and management of POS terminals in Austria. Global Payments Inc. is a financial services company that provides various payments solutions to merchants, issuers, businesses and consumers globally. Erste Group is a financial services group that offers banking and financial services in Central and Eastern Europe. The proposed acquisition stems from the [Commission's conditional approval of the acquisition by Worldline of Ingenico](#) for which Worldline committed to divest, among other things, Ingenico's Austrian POS merchant acquiring and POS terminal provision and management business. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the very limited horizontal overlaps and vertical relationships between the companies' activities. 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.10348](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Valeo by Bain Capital**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Valeo Foods Group Limited ('Valeo') of Ireland by Bain Capital Investors, LLC ('Bain Capital') of the US. Valeo is an international manufacturer of ambient food products including confectionery, sweet snacks, savoury snacks and a variety of other ambient grocery products. Bain Capital is a private equity investment firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the companies' activities do not overlap and the transaction has limited impact 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.10324](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

### **Concentrations: La Commission autorise l'acquisition de CVG par Equistone Partners Europe**

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de CVG SAS et l'ensemble de ses filiales (« CVG ») par Equistone Partners Europe SAS, tous deux basés en France. CVG vend des produits dédiés à l'enfance sous la marque « Vertbaudet », y compris prêt-à-porter, chaussures, maison, puériculture et jouets. Equistone Partners Europe est active dans le secteur de gestion de fonds professionnels de capital investissement et, par l'intermédiaire de sa filiale Courir SAS France, aussi dans la vente au détail de chaussures et de



vêtements pour enfants. La Commission a conclu que la concentration envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, compte tenu de son impact limité sur la structure du marché. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le [site internet concurrence](#) de la Commission, dans le [registre public](#) des affaires sous le numéro d'affaire [M.10345](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

## **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by IHS Markit and CME**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over a newly created joint venture by IHS Markit Ltd. ('IHSM') of the UK and CME Group Inc. ('CME') of the US. The joint venture will consist of IHSM's over-the-counter ('OTC') derivatives and foreign currency trade processing business (MarkitSERV) and of CME Group's OTC derivatives optimisation businesses (Traiana, TriOptima and Reset). Through these businesses, the joint venture will provide trade processing and trade/portfolio optimisation services in a number of asset classes. IHSM is a global provider of information, analytics, expertise, and solutions to major industries, financial markets, and governments. CME is a global risk management firm that owns and operates several exchanges and provides other trading and clearing services across a range of asset classes, including commodities, equity indices, FX, IRDs and cryptocurrencies. The proposed transaction is largely complementary, and results in a few technically overlapping areas between the companies' activities relating to trade processing products. The Commission's investigation also showed that any strategy to foreclose competitors following the transaction would be unlikely. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns. 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.10158](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **STATEMENTS**

### **Statement following the announcement by the UK government regarding the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland**

On 21 July, Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič**, the EU's co-chair of the Joint Committee and Partnership Council, issued a statement following today's announcement by the UK government regarding the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland. The statement reaffirmed the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland as the joint solution that the EU found with Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Lord David Frost, ratified by the UK Parliament, to address the unique challenges that Brexit, and the type of Brexit chosen by the British government, poses for the island of Ireland. It outlined EU efforts to find flexible, practical solutions to overcome the difficulties citizens in Northern Ireland are experiencing regarding the implementation of the Protocol. Vice-President **Šefčovič** made clear that the EU will continue to engage with the UK, also on the suggestions made by the UK, saying: "We are ready to continue to seek creative solutions, within the framework of the Protocol, in the interest of all communities in Northern Ireland. However, we will not agree to a renegotiation of the Protocol." Read the full statement [here](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten – Tel.: +32 229 84094)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Executive Vice-President Timmermans and Commissioners Sinkevičius and Simson in Naples to attend G20 Ministerials on environment, climate and energy**

Executive Vice-President Frans **Timmermans**, Commissioner **Sinkevičius** and Commissioner Kadri

**Simson** will attend the G20 Environment, Climate and Energy Ministerial meeting today and tomorrow. The Environment, Climate, and Energy Ministerial will focus on climate action and cities, sustainable recovery, climate finance, circular economy, pollution, ocean and biodiversity protection, the clean energy transition, energy security and energy poverty. This ministerial is an important stepping-stone towards the COP26 in Glasgow later this year. It is the first occasion for the Commission to present its new proposals on implementing the European Green Deal in climate, energy, transport and fiscal policies adopted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July to its international partners, and encourage them not only to present ambitious new targets ahead of the COP26, but also to put in place robust domestic measures to implement climate action. In the margins of the Ministerial meetings, Executive Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** will meet with Mrs Patricia Espinosa, Executive Secretary of UNFCCC; Mr Francesco La Camera, Director General of the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA); Mr John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate from the United States; Mr Shinjiro Koizumi, Minister of Environment of Japan; Mr Maxim Reshetnikov, Minister for Economic Development of Russia; and Mr Murat Kurum, Minister of Environment of Turkey. Commissioner **Sinkevicius** will meet Mr Michael Regan, United States Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency; Ms Han Jeoung Ae, Minister for the Environment of South Korea; Mr Juan Cabandie, Minister for Environment of Argentina; Mr John Kerry, Special Presidential Envoy for Climate from the United States; and Mr Shinjiro Koizumi, Minister of Environment of Japan. Commissioner Kadri **Simson** will meet with Mr Roberto Cingolani, Minister for Ecological Transition of Italy; Mr Peter Altmaier, Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Energy of Germany; Mr David Turk, Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Energy; Mr Francesco La Camera, Director General of IRENA. (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 58602; Lynn Rietdorf – Tel.: +32 229 74959)

### **Protecting Europe's seas: Commission launches public consultation on the Marine Strategy Framework Directive\***

The European Commission has today launched a [public consultation](#) seeking the views of citizens, institutions and organisations from the public and private sectors on how to make the EU's [Marine Strategy Framework Directive](#) more efficient, effective and relevant to the ambitions set in the [European Green Deal](#). Building on the initiatives announced under the European Green Deal, most notably the [Zero Pollution Action Plan](#) and the [EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2030](#), this review seeks to ensure that Europe's marine environment is governed by a robust framework, that keeps it clean and healthy whilst ensuring its sustainable use. Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries Virginijus **Sinkevičius** said: *"Healthy seas and oceans are essential to our wellbeing and to achieve our climate and biodiversity goals. However, human activities are negatively affecting life in our seas. Biodiversity loss and pollution continue to threaten marine life and habitats, and climate change poses enormous threats to the oceans and to the whole planet. We need to step up protection and care of our seas and oceans. That is why we need to take a close look at our current rules and, if need be, change them before it is too late. Your views on the marine environment are crucial in this process."* The Marine Strategy Framework Directive is the EU's main tool to protect the marine environment and aims to maintain healthy, productive and resilient marine ecosystems, while securing a more sustainable use of marine resources for the benefit of current and future generations. The review of the Directive will look in more detail at how it has performed so far, take into account findings by the Commission's [Report](#) on the Marine Strategy published in June 2020 and assess its suitability to tackle the cumulative impacts of human activities on the marine environment. The [public consultation](#) is open until 21 October. More information is in the news release [here](#). (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

[Tentative agendas](#) for forthcoming Commission meetings

*Note that these items can be subject to changes.*

[Eurostat](#) press releases

**The Spokesperson's Service has re-opened the Berlaymont press room to a limited number of journalists. For more information, please see [here](#).**

UPDATED on 22-07-2021 at 15:55

MEX/21/3843