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State aid: Commission simplifies rules for aid combined with EU support and introduces new possibilities to implement aid measures supporting the twin transition and the recovery from coronavirus pandemic

The European Commission adopted today an extension of the scope of the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER), which will allow Member States to implement certain aid measures without prior Commission scrutiny. The revised rules concern: (i) aid granted by national authorities for projects funded via certain EU centrally managed programmes under the new Multiannual Financial Framework; and (ii) certain State aid measures that to support the green and digital transition and are, at the same time, relevant for the recovery from the economic effects of the Coronavirus pandemic. Exempting such aid from prior notification is a major simplification, which facilitates a quick implementation of such measures by Member States, where conditions limiting the distortion of competition in the Single Market are met. With the aim of improving the interplay between EU funding rules and EU State aid rules under the new Multiannual Financial Framework, the Commission streamlines the State aid rules applicable to national funding of projects or financial products, which fall under the scope of certain recently adopted EU programmes. In addition, with the amendment of the GBER, the Commission creates even further possibilities for Member States to provide aid needed for the twin transition in a way that will also allow them to rapidly support companies in need for funding to combat the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic. The relevant aid to achieve these goals that is now exempted from prior notification to the Commission will also play a role in continuing to prepare for the post-crisis period. The new aid categories that will be exempted from the notification obligation fall under policy areas that are top priorities for the twin transition. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Today, the Commission is streamlining the State aid rules applicable to national funding that fall under the scope of certain EU programmes. This will improve further the interplay between EU funding rules and EU State aid rules under the new Multiannual Financial Framework. We are also introducing more possibilities for Member States to provide State aid to support the twin transition to a green and digital economy without the need of a prior notification procedure, while at the same time not causing undue distortions of competition in the Single Market. The new rules will also make it easier for Member States to quickly provide much needed funding in support of a sustainable and resilient recovery from the economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic."* A full [press release](#) and [Q&A](#) are available online. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Coronavirus : le groupe d'experts sur les variants et les traitements contre la COVID-19 tient sa première discussion

Aujourd'hui, dans le cadre de l'incubateur HERA, le nouveau groupe d'experts de la Commission sur les variants de la COVID-19 tiendra sa première réunion pour discuter de la circulation et de la catégorisation des variants et de la nécessité d'adapter les vaccins à ces derniers. Stella **Kyriakides**, Commissaire à la santé et à la sécurité alimentaire, a déclaré : *« Les infections par le variant Delta sont en augmentation dans toute l'Europe. La pandémie de COVID-19 se poursuit, tout comme nos efforts pour la contenir. Ce n'est pas le moment de baisser la garde. Avec notre nouveau groupe d'experts sur les variants, nous améliorons notre écran radar et notre système d'alerte grâce à l'incubateur HERA. Les contributions du groupe nous aideront à mieux identifier, comprendre et anticiper les variants et nous guideront dans notre travail de développement de contre-mesures. J'attends avec impatience leurs recommandations. Nous devons avoir une longueur d'avance. »* Le groupe d'experts soutiendra [l'incubateur HERA](#) en anticipant la menace des variants du COVID-19, notamment en les catégorisant et en évaluant la nécessité d'adapter les vaccins existants. Il proposera également des critères de sélection pour une liste de 10 traitements prometteurs contre la COVID-19, comme [annoncé](#) dans le cadre de la [stratégie thérapeutique](#). Les seize membres du groupe sont des experts dans leur domaine et sont nommés à titre indépendant. Ils comprennent

deux représentants de l'Agence européenne des médicaments (EMA) et du Centre européen de prévention et de contrôle des maladies (ECDC). Les travaux du groupe d'experts seront disponibles sur le [registre des groupes d'experts](#) de la Commission. (Pour plus d'informations : Stefan de Keersmaecker – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Anna Wartberger – Tél.: +32 229 82054)

Despite the challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Commission continued to strive in 2020 to enforce EU law

The European Commission adopted today its 2020 [Annual Report on Monitoring the Application of EU Law](#), which shows that the COVID-19 pandemic clearly affected Member States' capacity to implement EU law in full and on time. Nonetheless, the Commission continued enforcing EU rules across all policy fields while prioritising the areas that have the highest impact on the everyday lives of citizens and businesses, such as the environment, mobility and transport, and energy. Together, these represented half of all new cases. Overall, in 2020, the Commission opened 903 new infringement cases. This is a 13% increase compared to 2019, when the number of new cases stood at 797. Denmark, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands had the fewest number of new cases opened for incorrect transposition or wrong application of EU law in 2020, whereas Bulgaria, Italy, Malta and Greece faced the highest number. For more information, read the [press release](#). (For more information: Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150)

Commission takes stock of relations with national Parliaments

Today, the Commission adopted its comprehensive [annual report](#) on relations with national Parliaments and on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Despite disruptions due to the pandemic, there was closer cooperation with national Parliaments in 2020 than during the institutional transition year of 2019. The Commission received 255 opinions from national Parliaments, 9 were reasoned opinions expressing subsidiarity concerns (compared to none in 2019). The majority of the opinions concerned non-legislative Commission initiatives or were own-initiative opinions, which shows the willingness of some national Parliaments to provide forward-looking political input. Members of the Commission had more meetings with national Parliaments in 2020 than in 2019, and participated in inter-parliamentary meetings to an even greater extent than before, thanks to the possibilities offered by videoconferencing. In 2020, the Commission helped national Parliaments to exercise subsidiarity control by excluding the Christmas/New Year period when calculating the eight-week period for submitting reasoned opinions, and by showing flexibility when reasoned opinions were received after the expiration of this scrutiny period, to cater for the possible practical difficulties national Parliaments might have encountered due to the pandemic. Every year, the Commission submits a report on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality in line with the Treaties. Since 2005, the Commission also publishes an annual report on its relations with national Parliaments. These reports can be accessed [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Sinéad Meehan-van Druten – Tel.: +32 229 84094)

Migration: EU helps channel humanitarian support to migrants in Lithuania

Following a request for assistance from Lithuania, the European Commission is helping European countries send support through the [European Civil Protection Mechanism](#). Lithuania asked for help following increased arrivals of migrants and asylum seekers coming from the Middle East and Africa and entering Lithuania via the border with Belarus. Already twelve countries have offered support such as tents, beds and generators. The Commission coordinates the delivery and finances up to 75% of the costs for transporting the assistance. Janez **Lenarčič**, Commissioner for Crisis Management, said: "*Lithuania's border is an external EU border, which is currently experiencing an unprecedented influx of migrants and asylum seekers. These people, many of the vulnerable, need urgent support such as food and shelter. The European Union and other Member States will not leave Lithuania in this difficult situation alone. Already many EU countries have offered support and we are ready to send more help as needed.*" Commissioner for Home Affairs, Ylva **Johansson**, said: "*The authoritarian regime in Belarus is exploiting human beings for political reasons: this is completely unacceptable. The European Union and the Member States are showing strong solidarity with Lithuania, and together we fully support civil society in Belarus. Humanitarian support will make sure basic needs such as food and shelter are met. The Commission is ready to provide further emergency funding to Lithuania as needed. Also Union agencies are quickly providing support: the European Asylum Support Office is helping protect people, manage reception and process asylum applications; Frontex is deploying personnel and equipment to protect the European external border; and Europol is deploying staff to help safeguard European internal security.*" The European Commission's

[Emergency Response Coordination Centre](#) is coordinating the assistance and will support the transportation costs. A [press release](#) is available online. (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Daniel Puglisi – Tel.: +32 229 69140)

Media and Audiovisual Action Plan: Commission launches interactive tool on EU support

Today the Commission has launched an [interactive mapping tool](#) to connect the media and audiovisual sectors with EU funding. It will facilitate access to information about EU funding opportunities for both the audiovisual and the news media sectors. In just a few clicks, any European media and audiovisual company – regardless of the size and the focus – will be directed to the most appropriate source of EU support suited to their needs. Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: *"In December, we presented our Action Plan for the media, our roadmap for the recovery and strengthening of the industry. Our objective is to ensure audiovisual and media professionals can seize all new EU funding opportunities we mobilised. As of today, a dedicated interactive tool will guide them to find appropriate EU support."* The tool includes information on the upcoming calls for funding available under the [2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework](#). This initiative is part of a broader set of actions aimed at supporting the recovery and transformation of the audiovisual and media sectors, as announced in the [Media and Audiovisual Action Plan](#). Audiovisual and news media professionals can also find assistance at the national level via the [Creative Europe desks](#). You will find the mapping tool and more information on media sector related calls [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Charles Manoury – Tel.: +32 229 13391)

Commission launched a new interactive webpage on the €392 billion budget allocation for Cohesion policy 2021-2027

Following the entry into force of the Cohesion policy legislative package on 1 July, the Commission has now launched a new webpage with the detailed breakdown of the €392 billion Cohesion policy funding for the 2021-2027 programming period. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira** said: *"Cohesion policy continues to be a driving force for growth and fair sustainable development for all European Member States and regions. More than ever now, it will help us overcome the coronavirus crisis by also encouraging investments for a digital and fair transition to a green Europe. We developed this new webpage to bring Cohesion policy closer to all citizens. It is user friendly and it shows data in a transparent and easy way"*. The initial allocations (in current prices) by country, category of region and by fund are found in this [interactive data story](#). Member States are currently preparing their national Partnership Agreements (PA) and detailed spending programmes. The EU funds covered are the [European Regional Development Fund](#) (including [Interreg](#)), the [European Social Fund Plus](#), the [Cohesion Fund](#) and the [Just Transition Fund](#). The initial national amounts by fund can change as a result of the significant flexibility that Member States have to transfer between funds and other budgetary instruments. It is estimated that the total investment triggered, including national co-financing, will amount to around €500 billion. The final amounts decided will be released as open data on the [Cohesion Open Data Platform](#) as PA and programmes will be progressively adopted. (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Veronica Favalli – Tel.: +32 229 87269)

L'Équipe Europe partagera plus de 200 million de doses de vaccin contre le COVID-19 d'ici fin 2021

Pour l'Union européenne, il est prioritaire de garantir l'accès à des vaccins contre le COVID-19 sûrs et abordables dans le monde entier, et notamment dans les pays à revenu faible ou intermédiaire. L'Équipe Europe (l'Union européenne, ses institutions et ses 27 États membres) est en passe de dépasser l'objectif initial annoncé lors du sommet mondial sur la santé qui s'est tenu à Rome en mai de cette année, quand la présidente Ursula **von der Leyen** s'est engagée sur un partage d'au moins 100 millions de doses. En effet, d'ici fin 2021, 200 millions de doses de vaccins contre le COVID-19 devraient avoir été envoyées aux pays qui en ont le plus besoin. La présidente **von der Leyen** a déclaré : *« L'Équipe Europe assume sa responsabilité et aide le reste du monde à lutter contre le virus. La vaccination est essentielle. C'est pourquoi il est capital de garantir l'accès des pays du monde entier aux vaccins contre le COVID-19. Nous aurons fourni plus de 200 millions de doses de vaccins contre le COVID-19 aux pays à revenu faible ou intermédiaire d'ici la fin de l'année. »* En parallèle, l'Équipe Europe a lancé une initiative concernant la fabrication de vaccins, de médicaments et de technologies de la santé ainsi que l'accès à ceux-ci en Afrique. Cette initiative contribuera à créer les conditions propices à la fabrication locale, sur le continent africain de vaccins, moyennant un financement d'un milliard d'euros par le budget de l'Union et des institutions européennes de

financement du développement, telles que la Banque européenne d'investissement. Un communiqué de presse avec plus d'informations est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Dana Spinant – Tél.: +32 229 90150 ; Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tél.: +32 229 84680; Anna Wartberger – Tél.: +32 229 82054)

Publication of the latest agri-food trade figures: EU agri-food trade increased in January - April 2021, compared to last year

During the period [from January to April 2021](#), EU agri-food trade (exports plus imports) reached a value of €103.4 billion; i.e. 1.1% less than in January-April 2020. While EU exports increased by 1.7% compared to the same period in 2020, reaching €63 billion, EU imports attained €40.3 billion, still 5.1% less than in the first four months of 2020. The monthly value for EU exports in April 2021 were 7.7% lower than March 2021, but also 9.8% higher than April 2020. EU imports in value also were 2.5% lower in April 2021 compared to March 2021, but 3.7% higher than the value observed in April 2020. On a year over year basis, for the period January-April 2021, EU agri-food export values fell most with respect to those towards the United Kingdom (minus €806 million, -6%), when compared with the same period in 2020. The highest increases in the EU export values were recorded with respect to China (plus €912 million, +16%). This continued to be primarily driven by an increase in the EU exports value of pork meat. EU export values to the United States have also increased by 7.1% (plus €488 million) compared to the same period in 2020, mainly driven by wine and spirits. Looking at agri-food imports over January-April 2021 compared to the same period in 2020, a significant fall in the value of EU imports from the United Kingdom continues to be observed (minus €1.844 million, -37%). A further decrease was also observed in the EU imports from the United States (minus €387 million, -10%). On the other hand, countries for which the EU import values increased the most over the first four months of 2021 include India, Brazil, Serbia, Australia and Argentina. The resulting agri-food trade surplus' value stood at €22.7 billion, an increase of 17% compared to the period January-April 2020. This net trade balance continued to be driven by high exports of wine, spirits and liqueurs, pork meat, chocolate and confectionary, bulbs, roots and live plants. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Álvaro Rangel Hernández – Tél.: +32 229 13665)

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into financing of Post Danmark's universal service obligation

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether the compensation granted by Denmark to Post Danmark to fulfil its public service mission for the year 2020 is in line with EU State aid rules. In March 2021, Denmark notified the Commission of its plan to compensate Post Danmark for a maximum amount of approximately €30 million (DKK 225 million) for carrying out its universal postal service obligation during 2020. This includes the provision of basic postal services throughout the country at affordable prices and at certain minimum quality requirements. Under EU state aid rules on [public service compensation](#), adopted in 2011, companies can be compensated for the extra cost of providing a public service subject to certain criteria. In December 2019, the Commission received a complaint from a Danish association with members active in the road transport and logistics sector alleging that the compensation to be granted to Post Danmark for its universal service obligation for 2020 constitutes incompatible State aid. At this stage, following a report from the Danish national auditor ('Rigsrevisionen'), the Commission has doubts on Post Danmark's allocation of costs between the universal postal services and non-universal postal services it carries out, and consequently on the calculation of the net cost of the universal service obligation by Denmark based on this cost allocation. Following a preliminary assessment, the Commission has therefore decided to open an in-depth investigation, in particular as it has concerns regarding the verification of the absence of overcompensation. The Commission will now investigate further to determine whether its initial concerns are confirmed. The opening of an in-depth investigation gives Denmark, the complainant and other interested third parties an opportunity to submit comments. It does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. A full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission adopts new Notice on the enforcement of State aid rules by national courts

The European Commission has adopted a new Notice on the enforcement of State aid rules by national courts (the 'Enforcement Notice'). The new Enforcement Notice replaces the [2009 Enforcement Notice](#), providing updated practical information on the enforcement of State aid rules at

national level. Since the 2009 Enforcement Notice, the case law of the Union Courts and the regulatory framework for State aid have evolved. The Commission therefore decided that it was necessary to adopt a new Notice whose main purpose is to offer updated guidance to national courts when they apply these rules and to encourage knowledge sharing and closer cooperation with the Commission through dedicated tools, namely requests for information, opinions and amicus curiae observations. Enforcement is a central element of State aid control. Both the Commission and national courts have competences in enforcing State aid rules and good cooperation between them is essential. In particular, national courts must take all appropriate actions, in accordance with their national law, to address the consequences of an infringement of Member States' obligation not to implement any new planned State aid unless it has been approved by the Commission or exempted from notification (so-called 'stand-still obligation'). Since the 2009 Enforcement Notice, under the Commission's [State aid modernisation agenda](#), more possibilities have been introduced for the Member States to grant aid without prior Commission scrutiny, including due to the extension of the scope of exemptions from the obligation to notify planned State aid to the Commission. As a result, the amount of aid granted on the basis of block exemptions has increased, while the role of national courts in ensuring compliance with State aid rules has become even more prominent. The New Enforcement Notice takes stock of the results of the 2019 [Study on the enforcement of State aid rules and decisions by national courts](#), which offered a comprehensive overview of the enforcement of State aid rules by national courts in the EU and highlighted the need to improve cooperation with the Commission. The New Enforcement Notice takes into account comments received in a [public consultation](#) that ended in April 2021. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves a Swedish amendment with a total budget of €271 million to promote rail transport in Sweden

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, an amendment with a new total budget of SEK 2.75 billion (approximately €271 million) of a Swedish aid scheme, originally approved by the Commission on 12 May 2020 ([SA.57886](#)), to increase the support for rail freight transport in Sweden. This scheme will run until 31 December 2025 and will be open to railway companies active in the rail freight transport sector. The support will take the form of direct grants. Due to the budget increase, individual grants of aid will also increase. The aid aims at partially covering costs related to external costs incurred by the beneficiaries, such as accidents, pollution, congestion and climate change. The Commission assessed the amendment under EU State aid rules, in particular [Article 93](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and the [2008 Commission Guidelines on State aid for railway undertakings](#). The Commission found that the budget amendment (i) is necessary and proportionate to promote the use of rail transport, which is less polluting than road transport and reduces road congestion (ii) will be beneficial both for the environment and for mobility, as it will increase Sweden's available funds to support the rail freight sector, and (iii) it will facilitate the modal shift from road to rail, whilst not leading to undue competition distortions. More information will be available on the Commission's [Competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under case number SA.62800 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Aides d'État: la Commission autorise un régime belge d'un montant de 200 millions d'euros visant à soutenir les micro, petites et moyennes entreprises dans le contexte de la pandémie de coronavirus

La Commission européenne a autorisé un régime belge d'un montant de 200 millions d'euros visant à soutenir les micro, petites et moyennes entreprises (PME), y compris les travailleurs indépendants, touchées par la pandémie de coronavirus et les mesures restrictives que les autorités belges ont dû mettre en œuvre pour limiter la propagation du virus. Le régime a été autorisé en vertu de l'[encadrement temporaire](#) des aides d'État. Les PME des secteurs les plus durement touchés par les perturbations des activités liées à la pandémie de coronavirus et aux mesures restrictives en vigueur pourront bénéficier de cette mesure. Les secteurs financier, agricole, de la pêche et de l'aquaculture sont exclus du champ d'application du régime. Dans le cadre de ce régime, l'aide prendra la forme de subventions directes jusqu'à concurrence de 15 % du chiffre d'affaires de l'entreprise en 2019. Le montant de l'aide par bénéficiaire sera calculé sur la base du nombre de salariés et de l'ampleur de la baisse du chiffre d'affaires; il pourra atteindre 300 000 euros au maximum pour les entreprises de plus de 50 salariés ayant subi une baisse de leur chiffre d'affaires de plus de 75 % par rapport à 2019. La Commission a estimé que la mesure belge était conforme aux conditions énoncées dans l'encadrement temporaire. En particulier, l'aide i) ne dépassera pas 1,8 million d'euros par bénéficiaire; et ii) sera accordée au plus tard le 31 décembre 2021. La Commission a conclu que la

mesure était nécessaire, appropriée et proportionnée pour remédier à une perturbation grave de l'économie d'un État membre, conformément à l'article 107, paragraphe 3, point b), du TFUE et aux conditions énoncées dans l'encadrement temporaire. Sur cette base, la Commission a autorisé la mesure en vertu des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État. De plus amples informations sur l'encadrement temporaire et les autres mesures prises par la Commission pour faire face à l'incidence économique de la pandémie de coronavirus sont disponibles [ici](#). La version non confidentielle de la décision sera publiée sous le numéro SA.64030 dans le [registre des aides d'État](#) figurant sur le site web de la Commission consacré à la [concurrence](#), dès que les éventuels problèmes de confidentialité auront été résolus. *(Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)*

State aid: Commission approves €9 million Spanish support to compensate Air Nostrum for damage suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €9 million Spanish measure to compensate Air Nostrum for damage it suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak. The amount represents part of Air Nostrum's overall net losses during the period between 29 March and 23 May 2020, when its fleet was grounded as a result of the travel restrictions introduced by Spain and other destination countries to limit the spread of the coronavirus. Air Nostrum plays an important role in Spain's international connectivity and is the carrier for domestic remote destinations under public service obligations agreements. The airline is also crucial for regional connectivity, in particular in the Autonomous Community of Valencia. Businesses in manufacturing, commerce and tourism are heavily relying on this connectivity, especially for the economic recovery and viability of this region. The support will take the form of a direct grant. The scheme was approved 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 in particular that the Spanish measure will compensate damage that is directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak. The aid will be granted before 31 December 2021, with a payment schedule to be established in the future. The Commission also found that the measure is proportionate as the compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the Spanish measure is in line with EU State aid rules. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case number SA.58343 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 €9.5 million Irish scheme to support not-for-profit entities in the context of the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €9.5 million Irish scheme to support not-for-profit regional, county and local entities affected by the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictive measures that the Irish government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, which goes under the name 'Regional Enterprise Transition Scheme', the aid will take the form of direct grants of minimum €50,000 and up to maximum €1.8 million per beneficiary. The aid will be granted to not-for-profit regional, county and local entities for projects, to be selected through a competitive procedure, which will contribute to the viability and competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises. The Commission found that the Irish 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 by the Temporary Framework; 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.63264 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 opens in-depth investigation into proposed acquisition of GRAIL by

Illumina

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess the proposed acquisition of GRAIL by Illumina, under the EU Merger Regulation. The Commission's preliminary investigation suggests that Illumina could have the ability to engage in foreclosure strategies given its leading position in NGS systems and that Illumina could have an economic incentive to foreclose GRAIL's rivals. Such foreclosure strategies could have an adverse impact on GRAIL's rivals and European patients, in particular by hampering innovation, reducing the choice, innovative features and performance of products available to patients, doctors and health systems, and increasing barriers to enter the NGS-based cancer detection tests space. The Commission will now carry out an in-depth investigation into the effects of the transaction to determine whether its initial competition concerns are confirmed. The proposed transaction was notified to the Commission on 16 June 2021. The Commission now has 90 working days, until 29 November 2021, to take a decision. The opening of an in-depth inquiry does not prejudice the outcome of the investigation. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, responsible for competition policy, said: *"Cancer detection tests based on next generation sequencing technologies could revolutionise how cancer is detected and thus emerge as a game changer in the fight against the disease. It is very important to preserve market conditions allowing the best solutions to emerge for the tests to ultimately reach the market at affordable prices, for the benefit of patients. We have today opened an in-depth investigation precisely to assess whether the proposed transaction, which will combine the activities of Illumina and GRAIL, would threaten the ability of developers of cancer detection tests to effectively compete in this area and bring innovative products to the market."* A full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Le haut représentant/vice-président Josep Borrell et le Commissaire Thierry Breton participent au cours Quo Vadis Europa

Le haut représentant/vice-président Josep **Borrell** et le Commissaire Thierry **Breton** participeront au cours [Quo Vadis Europa](#) qui aura lieu à Santander (Espagne) du 26 au 30 juillet. Organisé chaque année par le haut représentant/vice-président **Borrell** depuis l'an 2000, le cours *Quo Vadis Europa* a pour objectif d'offrir, à travers différentes sessions, des réflexions et des réponses aux questions les plus urgentes de la politique étrangère de l'UE, en collaboration avec des experts, des groupes de réflexion et des universitaires. Cette année, l'événement, organisé à l'Université internationale Menéndez Pelayo, comptera avec la participation de panélistes de haut niveau, dont la Haute Commissaire des Nations unies aux droits de l'homme, Michelle Bachelet, entre autres. Le lundi 26 juillet, le haut représentant **Borrell** prononcera un discours d'introduction lors de la session inaugurale du forum sur le leadership de l'UE dans le monde post-pandémique. Le 27 juillet, le commissaire chargé du marché intérieur, Thierry **Breton**, fera une intervention par vidéo sur 'La géopolitique de la technologie'. Le haut représentant **Borrell** participera également à la session de clôture du vendredi 30 juillet sur la politique étrangère à l'époque de la COVID-19 et au-delà. Une couverture audiovisuelle sera disponible sur [EBS](#). Le programme complet est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Nabila Massrali - Tél : +32 229 88093 ; Elisa Castillo Nieto - Tél : +32 229 63803 ; Xavier Cifre Quatresols - Tél : +32 229 73582)

Commissioner Wojciechowski represents the Commission at the 2021 UN Food Systems Pre-Summit

Commissioner for Agriculture Janusz **Wojciechowski** will represent the Commission at the 2021 [UN Food System Pre-Summit](#), a three-day event hosted by Italy on 26-28 July 2021 at the Rome headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). The Pre-Summit consolidates the preparatory work for the Summit, notably a series of online meetings, public forums, citizens' dialogues, and other discussions on 'solutions', organised around the Summit's [five action tracks](#). The aim is to provide people with the opportunity to actively engage with the Summit, in line with the principle that everyone will be required to take action to transform the world's food systems. By bringing together a wide range of actors from around the world, the Pre-Summit sets the stage for the Summit of September 2021, in the margins of the UN General Assembly, and leverages the power of the world's food systems to deliver progress towards the 17 [Sustainable](#)

[Development Goals](#), in line with the Commission's [Green Deal](#), [Farm to Fork](#), and [Common Agricultural Policy](#) objectives. The event will involve thousands of youth, food producers, indigenous peoples, civil society, researchers, private sector, policy leaders, the UN system, and Ministers of agriculture, environment, health, nutrition, and finance to collectively raise political ambition and work on transformative changes in our food systems in order to achieve the 2030 Agenda. More information about the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit can be found [here](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Álvaro Rangel Hernández – Tel.: +32 229 13665)*

Informal Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) meeting, 26 July 2021

Executive Vice-President **Dombrovskis**, Commissioner **Gentiloni** and Commissioner **McGuinness** will represent the European Commission at the informal Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) meeting taking place via videoconference on Monday, 26 July 2021. The participants will discuss the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility and exchange views on proposals for Council Implementing Decisions on the next round of national recovery and resilience plans. They will also take stock of the Commission's recently adopted [anti-money laundering package](#). The package aims to improve the detection of suspicious transactions and activities, and to close loopholes used by criminals to launder illicit proceeds or finance terrorist activities through the financial system. Executive Vice-President **Dombrovskis** will represent the Commission at the press conference following the meeting. *(For more information: Veerle Nuyts – Tel.: +32 229 96302; Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024)*

[CALENDRIER](#) – activités hebdomadaires des Commissaires

[Liste des points prévus](#) à l'ordre du jour des prochaines réunions de la Commission

Veuillez noter que ces informations sont données sous réserve de modifications.

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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

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