



Daily News 28 / 07 / 2021

Brussels, 28 July 2021

Coronavirus: Commission signs contract to procure monoclonal anti-body treatment

Yesterday, the Commission signed a joint procurement framework contract with the pharmaceutical company Glaxo Smith Kline for the supply of sotrovimab (VIR-7831), an investigational monoclonal antibody therapy, developed in collaboration with VIR biotechnology. It is part of the [first portfolio of five promising therapeutics announced by the Commission in June 2021](#), and is currently under rolling review by the European Medicines Agency. 16 EU Member States are participating in the procurement for the purchase of up to 220,000 treatments. Sotrovimab can be used for the treatment of coronavirus patients with mild symptoms who do not require supplemental oxygen, but who are at high risk for severe COVID-19. Ongoing studies suggest that early treatment can reduce the number of patients that progress to more severe forms and require hospitalisation or admission to the intensive care units. Stella Kyriakides, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, said: "We committed in our [COVID-19 Therapeutics Strategy](#) to have at least three new therapeutics authorised by October. We are now delivering a second framework contract that brings monoclonal antibodies treatments to patients. Alongside vaccines, safe and effective therapeutics will play a pivotal role in Europe's return to a new normal." Monoclonal antibodies are proteins conceived in the laboratory that mimic the immune system's ability to fight the coronavirus. They attach to the spike protein and thus block the virus' attachment to the human cells. The European Commission concluded nearly 200 contracts for different medical countermeasures worth over €12 billion. Under the current framework contract with Glaxo Smith Kline, Member States can purchase sotrovimab (VIR-7831) if and when needed, once it has received either emergency use authorisation in the Member State concerned or a (conditional) marketing authorisation at EU level from the European Medicines Agency. Further information can be found [here](#). (For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Anna Wartberger – Tel.: +32 229 82054)

Cybersecurity: All EU Member States commit to build a quantum communication infrastructure

With the latest signature by Ireland of the [political declaration](#) to boost European capabilities in quantum technologies, cybersecurity and industrial competitiveness, all Member States have now committed to work together, along with the European Commission and the European Space Agency, to build the [EuroQCI](#), a secure quantum communication infrastructure that will span the whole EU. Such high-performing, secure communications networks will be essential to meeting Europe's cybersecurity needs in the years to come. Margrethe Vestager, Executive Vice-President for a Europe fit for the Digital Age, said: "I am very happy to see all EU Member States come together to sign the EuroQCI declaration – European Quantum Communication infrastructure initiative - a very solid basis for Europe's plans to become a major player in quantum communications. As such, I encourage them all to be ambitious in their activities, as strong national networks will be the foundation of the EuroQCI." Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry Breton, added: "As we have recently seen, cybersecurity is more than ever a crucial component of our digital sovereignty. I am very pleased to see that all Member States are now part of the EuroQCI initiative, a key component of our forthcoming secure connectivity initiative, which will allow all Europeans to have access to protected, reliable communication services." The EuroQCI will be part of a wider Commission action to launch a satellite-based secure connectivity system that will make high-speed broadband available everywhere in Europe. This plan will provide reliable, cost-effective connectivity services with enhanced digital security. As such, the EuroQCI will complement existing communication infrastructures with an additional layer of security based on the principles of quantum mechanics – for example, by providing services based on quantum key distribution, a highly secure form of encryption. You can find more information [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Nerea Artamendi Erro – Tel: +32 229 90964)

Fisheries: The EU and Cook Islands agree to continue their sustainable fisheries partnership

Today, the European Union and the Cook Islands agreed to continue their successful fisheries partnership as part of the [Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement](#), for a duration of three years. The agreement allows EU fishing vessels operating in the Western and Central Pacific Ocean to continue fishing in the Cook Islands fishing grounds. Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, said: "*With the renewal of this Fisheries Protocol, European Union vessels will be able to continue fishing one of the healthiest tropical tuna stocks. We are particularly proud to contribute, through our sectoral support, to the development of the Cook Islands' fisheries sector - a Small Island Developing State that has been often praised for its effective and responsible fisheries management policies. This is how the EU's Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreements work in practice.*" In the framework of the new Protocol, the EU and ship owners will contribute with a total up to approximately €4 million (NZD 6.8 million) for the next three years, of which €1 million (NZD 1.7 million) to support the Cook Islands' initiatives within the sectoral fisheries and maritime policy. Overall, next to improvements in the fishing sector, the revenue obtained from this Agreement has previously allowed the Cook Islands' government to improve its social welfare system. More information is in the [news item](#). (For more information: Tim McPhie – Tel.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli – Tel.: +32 229 87269)

Le Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe soutient un fonds qui investit dans les petites et moyennes entreprises françaises

Avec le soutien du Fonds européen d'investissement (FEI) et du [Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe](#), Delta AM a réalisé la première clôture de son fonds senior garanti, « France Économie Réelle », recueillant environ 75 millions d'euros. Le soutien de l'UE a été possible grâce au [programme de crédit privé sur mesure pour les PME](#) du [Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques](#) (FEIS), qui vise à encourager l'investissement institutionnel privé afin de soutenir davantage de solutions de financement sur mesure et fondées sur le marché pour les PME et les entreprises de taille intermédiaire européennes. La taille cible du fonds sera de 300 millions d'euros, avec pour objectif d'investir dans plus de 60 nouveaux prêts pour les entreprises européennes. Le fonds « France Économie Réelle » vise spécifiquement à soutenir les PME françaises dans leur stratégie de croissance, tenant compte des critères environnementaux, sociaux et de gouvernance (ESG) basés sur la philosophie des entreprises en matière de climat, de création d'emplois et d'inclusion sociale. Le vice-président exécutif pour une économie au service des personnes, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, a déclaré : « *Je suis heureux que le FEI investisse dans le fonds 'France Economie Réelle' de Delta AM grâce au soutien du Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe. Ce fonds offre exactement ce dont nous avons besoin pour une reprise solide : des solutions de financement sur mesure pour les petites et moyennes entreprises afin de protéger les emplois et de favoriser une croissance durable.* » Le [Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques \(EFSI\)](#) est le principal pilier du [Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe](#), qui a jusqu'à présent mobilisé 546,5 milliards d'euros d'investissements, soutenant plus de 1,4 million de PME et de start-ups dans toute l'UE. Le communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Veerle Nuyts - Tél : +32 229 96302 ; Flora Matthaes - Tél : +32 229 83951)

InvestEU: Commission appoints Investment Committee

The European Commission on Tuesday, 27 July, appointed 12 external experts as members of the [Investment Committee of the InvestEU Fund](#) for a term of four years. The 12 members of the Investment Committee – four permanent and eight non-permanent members – were selected and appointed by the Commission at the recommendation of the InvestEU Steering Board. They represent a broad knowledge and expertise in the relevant fields and sectors covered by the InvestEU programme. The Investment Committee will be gender-balanced and include members from across the EU to ensure deep insights in geographic markets in the EU. The appointment of the independent Investment Committee is another milestone for the implementation of the InvestEU programme, which will provide the EU with crucial long-term funding, crowding in the necessary important private investments in support of a sustainable recovery and helping build a greener, more digital and more resilient European economy. The Investment Committee decides on the granting of the EU guarantee to investment and financing operations proposed by the implementing partners under the InvestEU programme. The fully independent Committee is taking its decisions based on the guarantee request form and scoreboard provided by the implementing partners to ensure compliance with the [InvestEU Regulation](#) and the [Investment Guidelines](#). The Investment Committee will operate in four compositions, corresponding to the four policy windows of the InvestEU programme: sustainable infrastructure; research, innovation and digitalisation; small and medium-sized companies; and social investment and skills. (For more information: Veerle Nuyts – Tel.: +32

Aides d'État: la Commission autorise un régime français de subventions salariales de 8,4 milliards d'euros pour soutenir les PME particulièrement touchées par la pandémie

La Commission européenne a autorisé un régime français de subventions salariales d'un montant de 8,4 milliards d'euros visant à soutenir les petites et moyennes entreprises (« PME ») opérant dans des secteurs particulièrement touchés par la pandémie du coronavirus et par les mesures restrictives que le gouvernement français a 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. Dans le cadre de ce régime, les aides prendront la forme d'exonérations du paiement des cotisations sociales. Le soutien public aidera les PME à reprendre leurs activités et à éviter les licenciements. La Commission a estimé que le régime français était conforme aux conditions énoncées dans l'encadrement temporaire. Plus précisément, (i) la mesure aidera des entreprises qui sont particulièrement touchées par la pandémie et vise à éviter les licenciements; (ii) les subventions salariales mensuelles ne dépasseront pas 80 % du salaire brut mensuel du personnel bénéficiaire; et (iii) l'aide sera accordée au plus tard le 31 décembre 2021. La Commission a conclu que la mesure est 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 TFEU et aux conditions énoncées dans l'encadrement temporaire. Sur cette base, la Commission a autorisé les mesures 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 disponibles [ici](#). La version non confidentielle de la décision sera publiée sous le numéro SA.62999 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 €130 million Greek scheme to support micro and small enterprises in the context of the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €130 million Greek scheme to support micro and small enterprises affected by the coronavirus outbreak and the restrictive measures that the Greek government had to implement to limit the spread of the virus. The scheme was approved under the State Aid [Temporary Framework](#). The measure will be open to companies active in all sectors (except the financial and the primary agricultural production ones), which experienced business disruption in April 2021 due to the coronavirus outbreak. Under the scheme, the aid will take the form of direct grants and will consist of a fixed amount of minimum €500 and maximum € 4,000, depending on the number of employees and the region of location. The Commission found that the Greek measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed € 270,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector and €1.8 million per company active in all other sectors; 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.63212 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 €20 million Greek scheme to support newspapers, magazines, regional media service providers and radio stations in the context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €20 million Greek scheme to support newspapers, magazines, regional media service providers and radio stations affected by the coronavirus outbreak and by the restrictive measures that the Greek government had to implement to limit the spread of coronavirus. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The aid amount will be calculated on the basis of the beneficiaries' contribution to the Unified Journalists' Supplementary Security Fund. The Commission found that the Greek scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €1.8 million per company, and (ii) will be

granted no later than 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.63896 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)

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de Digital Aftermarket par la Caisse des dépôts et consignations et Bain Capital

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle en commun de la société Digital Aftermarket, basée en France, par la Caisse des dépôts et consignations, basée en France, et la société Bain Capital, basée aux États-Unis. Digital Aftermarket est active dans la fourniture de services d'intermédiation en ligne pour la recherche de services de réparation et d'entretien de véhicules automobiles, principalement en France et marginalement en Belgique. La Caisse des dépôts et consignations est un établissement public remplissant des missions d'intérêt général en appui des politiques publiques conduites par l'État et active dans la gestion de fonds privés notamment dans le domaine de l'énergie et de l'environnement, de l'immobilier, de l'investissement et des services. Bain Capital est une société de gestion d'actifs et de services financiers. La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence compte tenu de son impact très limité sur la structure du marché. L'opération a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du 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.10331](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of sole control of bpost bank by BNPPF

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control of bpost bank N.V. by BNP Paribas Fortis S.A./N.V. ('BNPPF'), both of Belgium. Both bpost and BNPPF provide banking services to individuals and corporate customers, and life insurance products. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that BNPPF already had control over bpost bank and that the transaction is a change from joint to sole control. 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.10286](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

[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](#).