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Commissioner for Crisis Management in Kabul: EU steps up humanitarian assistance with €32 million

Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, has concluded an official visit to Kabul, Afghanistan, as the country tries to move beyond one of the deadliest conflicts worldwide, lasting decades. The visit was the first of an EU humanitarian affairs Commissioner in several years and aimed to maintain EU support following [2020 Afghanistan Conference](#) towards bringing peace to the country. During the visit, the Commissioner announced €32 million in humanitarian support to assist the civilians affected by the conflict for 2021. Janez **Lenarčič**, Commissioner for Crisis Management, said: *"Whilst peace negotiations are ongoing, humanitarian aid can be the central way to reach more than half of the population in the country, some 19 million people. It is paramount that all parties to the conflict facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance and expand safe and unhindered access to the most vulnerable. Moreover the protection of civilians, of education facilities, of hospitals and humanitarian missions cannot wait till the end of the peace negotiations. For them to conclude successfully, respect of International Humanitarian Law to safeguard lives is an essential prerequisite for a lasting peace and sustainable future of the country."* In Kabul, the Commissioner met H.E. President Ashraf Ghani as well as Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation. Additionally, a meeting with Ramiz Alakbarov, Deputy SRSG/Humanitarian Coordinator took place, along with key UN partners such as WHO, WFP, UNICEF and international NGOs. The full press release is available [here](#). (For information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi- Tel.: +32 229 69140)

La Commission engage des procédures d'infraction contre 24 États membres pour défaut de transposition des nouvelles règles de l'UE dans le domaine des télécommunications

La Commission a engagé aujourd'hui des procédures d'infraction contre 24 États membres pour non-transposition des nouvelles règles de l'UE dans le domaine des télécommunications. Le [code des communications électroniques européen](#) modernise le cadre réglementaire européen afin de diversifier les choix des consommateurs et de renforcer leurs droits, par exemple en garantissant des contrats plus clairs, la qualité des services et des marchés concurrentiels. Le code garantit également des normes plus élevées en matière de services de communication, notamment des communications d'urgence plus efficaces et plus accessibles. En outre, il permet aux opérateurs de bénéficier de règles encourageant les investissements dans les réseaux à très haute capacité, ainsi que d'une prévisibilité réglementaire accrue, favorisant l'innovation dans les services et infrastructures numériques. Le délai de transposition du code dans la législation nationale était fixé au 21 décembre 2020. À ce jour, seules la Grèce, la Hongrie et la Finlande ont déclaré à la Commission avoir adopté toutes les mesures nécessaires pour transposer la directive, et avoir donc terminé cette transposition. En conséquence, la Commission a adressé des lettres de mise en demeure à la Belgique, à la Bulgarie, à la Tchéquie, au Danemark, à l'Allemagne, à l'Estonie, à l'Irlande, à l'Espagne, à la France, à la Croatie, à l'Italie, à Chypre, à la Lettonie, à la Lituanie, au Luxembourg, à Malte, aux Pays-Bas, à l'Autriche, à la Pologne, au Portugal, à la Roumanie, à la Slovénie, à la Slovaquie et à la Suède, les invitant à adopter et à notifier les mesures ad hoc. Les États membres disposent d'un délai de deux mois pour répondre. De plus amples informations sont disponibles dans ce [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke — Tél.: + 32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou — Tél.: + 32 229 83583)

Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions programme: €100 million to support around 1,200 researchers in Europe

The Commission announced today that the [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions \(MSCA\)](#) will support - with up to €100 million over five years - 19 doctoral and 24 post-doctoral researcher training programmes of outstanding quality from 11 EU Member States and 3 associated countries. The

countries with the most projects selected are Spain, France and Ireland. These programmes will foster the high-quality training, supervision and career development of almost 1,200 excellent scientists carrying out their research in a wide range of disciplines, from health to computer science, advanced manufacturing, energy, rural development or prehistory. They will be supported by the [MSCA-COFUND action](#), which provides co-funding for regional, national and international programmes. Vice-President Margaritas **Schinas**, responsible for Promoting our European Way of Life, commented: *"Researchers take excellence, academic freedom and ethics to the next level in Europe and around the world. With a targeted €100 million additional support, we offer them today new opportunities to tackle some of the pressing issues in promoting our European Way of Life. Europe needs the best talents in research to fight pandemics, enhance its security, promote sustainable living, a fair and safe digital space, and democratic, inclusive, cohesive societies."* Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"I congratulate the beneficiaries who have been awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie COFUND grant after intense competition. Several of their programmes will focus on solutions to global challenges such as immunology, health crises or sustainability. Other programmes will cover areas relevant to future priorities such as food, oceans or smart cities. I am glad to see more European Universities supported by Erasmus+ applying for and succeeding in these calls. I am also delighted to see an increasing number of European regions leading or supporting projects that aim to boost their competitiveness by attracting talented researchers."* This was the last MSCA-COFUND call under the [Horizon 2020](#) programme for research and innovation, with the highest budget ever. Under [Horizon Europe](#), the MSCA will continue supporting regional, national and international programmes through MSCA-COFUND. More details on the [co-funding of regional, national and international programme](#) are available online. (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Sinéad Meehan - van Druten - Tel.: +32 229 84094)

Agriculture : la Commission approuve deux nouvelles indications géographiques de France et de Croatie

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription de l'« [Huile de noix du Périgord](#) » de France dans le registre des appellations d'origine protégées (AOP) et de la « [Rudarska greblica](#) » de Croatie dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). L'« Huile de noix du Périgord » est une huile vierge, de première pression, obtenue uniquement par procédé mécanique. La caractéristique principale de l'« Huile de noix du Périgord » réside dans l'utilisation de noix de qualité issus de variétés locales traditionnelles: la Marbot, la Corne, la Grandjean et la Franquette. Elle réside également dans l'obtention d'une huile présentant un bon équilibre aromatique et des arômes délicats et fruités bien présents. La « Rudarska greblica » est un produit élaboré à partir d'une pâte fine étalée à la main puis cuite, et elle est garnie de fromage frais de vache. Des noix moulues, des épinards, des blettes, des orties, des poireaux, de la menthe et des carottes jaunes râpées peuvent être aussi ajoutés au fromage. La « Rudarska greblica » doit son nom à un outil traditionnel nommé « greblica », qui était utilisé pour raviver les braises du four à pain dans les demeures des mineurs, car la forme de ce gâteau était semblable à la forme de cet outil. La « Rudarska greblica », qui est devenue la « marque de fabrique » de la localité de Rude, au nord de la Croatie, a contribué au développement du tourisme dans cette localité. Ces nouvelles appellations vont rejoindre 1507 produits alimentaires déjà protégés dont la liste est disponible dans la base de données [eAmbrosia](#). Pour plus d'informations, voir aussi les pages sur la [politique de qualité](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tél.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours – Tél.: +32 229 63303)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Dorel by the Cerberus Group

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Dorel Industries Inc. ('Dorel') of Canada by Cerberus Capital Management, L.P. ('Cerberus Group') of the US Cerberus Group is a private investment firm with holdings in real and personal property of various kinds worldwide. Dorel is active in juvenile products, bicycles and home products worldwide, and its brands include Dorel Juvenile, Dorel Sports, and Dorel Home. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that the companies are not active in the same product and geographic markets. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.10086](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Russia: High Representative/Vice-President Borrell travels to Moscow

The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy/Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep **Borrell**, will travel to Russia from today, 4 February, evening until Saturday, 6 February. It will be the first visit to Russia by an EU High Representative/Vice-President since 2017. The visit will provide an opportunity to have wide-ranging discussions with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and other Russian interlocutors ahead of the European Council's strategic discussion on EU-Russia relations scheduled for March. High Representative **Borrell** will address Russia's actions in Ukraine and in the neighbourhood, the importance of continued implementation of the Iran nuclear deal, the global response to the coronavirus pandemic, climate change, among others. The recent poisoning, detention and sentencing of opposition politician Alexei Navalny, which was condemned as politically motivated and counter to Russia's human rights obligations by the European Union in a [Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU](#), as well as the concerns over fundamental freedoms and human rights in Russia more broadly, will also be on his agenda. During his visit, Josep **Borrell** will have meetings with representatives of Russian civil society organisations and members of the academic community in Moscow. Ahead of the visit, Josep **Borrell** said: *"The relationship with Russia is one of the EU's most complex. Recent developments only serve to further underline the need for me to visit Moscow. But beyond the issues of contention there are also areas in which the EU and Russia do cooperate, or need to cooperate more, that require our urgent attention."* Following their meeting on Friday 5 February, High Representative/Vice-President **Borrell** and Minister Lavrov will hold a joint press conference at 10:15 CET, which will be [streamed live on Europe by Satellite](#) (EbS). Audiovisual coverage of the visit will be provided by [EbS](#). For more information on EU-Russia relations, consult the [website of the EU Delegation in Moscow](#). (For more information: Peter Stano – Tel.: +32 229 54553; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)

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