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Plan d'action SAMIRA: La technologie radiologique et nucléaire à l'appui du plan européen pour vaincre le cancer

La Commission a présenté aujourd'hui son [plan d'action SAMIRA — programme stratégique pour les applications utilisant des rayonnements ionisants à des fins médicales](#). Ce plan améliorera la coordination au niveau de l'UE, veillera à ce que les technologies radiologiques et nucléaires continuent d'avoir des effets positifs pour la santé des citoyens de l'UE et contribuera à la lutte contre le cancer et contre d'autres maladies. Ainsi, ce plan garantit aux citoyens de l'UE l'accès à des technologies radiologiques et nucléaires de haute qualité à des fins thérapeutiques, les normes de sûreté les plus strictes étant appliquées. SAMIRA constitue la première initiative de suivi du [plan européen pour vaincre le cancer](#), adoptée par la Commission le 3 février. Un [communiqué de presse](#), un document [questions-réponses](#), et une [fiche d'information](#) sont disponibles en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations: Tim McPhie - Tél.: +32 229 58602; Ana Crespo Parrondo - Tél.: +32 229 81325)

President von der Leyen at the 'Masters of Digital 2021' event: 'The 2020s can be Europe's Digital Decade'

The President of the Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, delivered a speech yesterday at the 'Masters of Digital 2021' event, where she said: *"I believe the 2020s can be Europe's Digital Decade. A decade when Europe becomes a global leader in the digital world. New ideas are coming from the old continent. European industry as a whole is entering a new era. One fourth of industrial robots in the world are produced in Europe."* But investments – both public and private – and a clear set of rules are needed for Europe to take the lead in this digital world. On investment: *"NextGenerationEU is the largest digital investment plan Europe has ever seen. At least 20% of NextGenerationEU will fund digital investment. It can be a game changer."* On clear, coherent rules for digital businesses: *"For years, our digital businesses have dealt with way more obstacles than their competitors abroad. So we are creating a single set of rules for all digital businesses operating in Europe. This is why we have just presented two new pieces of legislation. The Digital Services Act and the Digital Markets Act. The Digital Services Act defines the responsibilities of all digital actors operating in Europe. And the Digital Markets Act will ensure that the online world remains a space of innovation and accessible to all players, big and small. These are just the first steps, and more are following."* Europe's digital lies in data and artificial intelligence, President **von der Leyen** said, two areas in which the Commission will introduce this year, to create more certainty for businesses and customers alike. *"Last November, we introduced a regulation on European data governance. And later this year, we will present a Data Act and proposals on health data spaces. What we want to do is to put those who generate data in the driving seat."* On artificial intelligence: *"This spring we will present a legal framework for artificial intelligence in Europe. We will set some requirements for high-risk applications of AI – from making sure that they use high-quality data, to ensuring human oversight. And in parallel, we will present a new plan to push European excellence on AI."* The speech is available [online](#), and you can watch it [here](#). (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150)

EU invests almost €7 million in European world-class supercomputing in Portugal

Today the [European High-Performance Computing Joint Undertaking](#), which pools European resources to buy and deploy world-class supercomputers and technologies, announced the signature for a contract worth €20 million for a new supercomputing system: [Deucalion](#) in Portugal. The EU will contribute nearly €7 million to the cost of the supercomputer, which will be capable of up to 10 petaflops or 10 million billion calculations per second, and will be hosted by the [Minho Advanced Computing Centre \(MACC\)](#). It will be used to further advance research and development in resource and energy efficient technologies, drug discovery, and weather prediction. It will also help develop industrial applications in many domains: drug and material design, bio-engineering, and climate-

friendly energy systems. The EU is at the forefront of investment in next-generation supercomputing infrastructure. In addition to the Deucalion in Portugal, 6 EuroHPC supercomputers have been acquired in the following centres: [Sofiatech](#) in Bulgaria, [IT4Innovations National Supercomputing Center](#) in Czechia, [CINECA](#) in Italy, [LuxProvide](#) in Luxembourg, [IZUM](#) in Slovenia, and [CSC](#) – IT Center for Science in Finland. The Joint Undertaking plans to acquire another pre-exascale supercomputer in Spain, later this year. Moreover, a [Commission proposal](#), presented in September 2020, aims to enable a further investment of €8 billion in the next generation of supercomputers and quantum technologies. More information is available [here](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)

La Commission européenne et de grands chefs cuisiniers encouragent la consommation durable de poissons et de fruits de mer

La Commission européenne a lancé « [Taste the Ocean](#) », une toute nouvelle campagne sur les réseaux sociaux dans laquelle de grands chefs cuisiniers encouragent la consommation de poissons et de fruits de mer pêchés ou produits de manière durable. Cette campagne intervient à un moment où les pêcheurs et les aquaculteurs sont confrontés aux répercussions économiques des mesures sanitaires liées à la lutte contre la pandémie de COVID-19, telles que les différents confinements ou la fermeture des restaurants et des services de restauration – qui représentent les principaux débouchés pour leurs produits. Avec cette campagne, la Commission vise également à sensibiliser les consommateurs à l'importance d'une consommation locale, saisonnière et durable. Lorsqu'ils sont produits ou récoltés correctement, les poissons et fruits de mer peuvent avoir une place importante dans un régime alimentaire durable, avec une empreinte environnementale et un bilan carbone bien plus faible que la plupart des protéines animales d'origine terrestre. Le commissaire européen à l'environnement, aux océans et à la pêche, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, a déclaré à ce propos : « *La responsabilisation des consommateurs est essentielle pour parvenir à des habitudes plus durables. En travaillant main dans la main avec certains des chefs cuisiniers les plus célèbres d'Europe, nous voulons sensibiliser les consommateurs à l'importance des choix individuels en matière de produits de la mer pour la santé des mers, tout en soutenant la reconstitution durable de nos zones côtières et des producteurs aquacoles de l'UE.* » Au cours des trois prochains mois, des chefs cuisiniers de haut niveau de neuf pays de l'UE (Belgique, Danemark, Espagne, France, Grèce, Italie, Pays-Bas, Portugal et Roumanie) partageront leurs recettes à base de différentes sortes de poissons ou de crustacés. D'autres pays suivront en fin d'année. Au cours de la campagne, la Commission présentera également les défis et les complexités du secteur. Depuis le début de la pandémie de COVID-19, la Commission a adopté une [série de mesures temporaires et ciblées](#) pour répondre aux défis auxquels est confrontée la communauté des produits de la mer, telles que des modifications exceptionnelles et des mesures de flexibilité dans le Fonds européen pour la pêche et la mer pour une réaffectation simplifiée des ressources financières. (Pour plus d'information: Vivian Loonela - Tél.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tél.: +32 229 53664)

Competition: Conference on 4 February 2021 on competition policy contributing to the European Green Deal*

Capping a period of wide-ranging public consultation and debate, Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, brought together a broad range of politicians, CEOs, NGOs, academics, competition experts and enforcers to discuss how competition policy can further support the objectives of the European Green Deal. The conference was followed by 3,000 participants. The role of competition policy is to protect effective competition in markets and cannot replace the vital role of regulation in fighting climate change and protecting the environment. At the same time, it contributes to helping Europe achieve its green goals. The panellists reflected on how competition rules and sustainability policies work together and on whether they could work together even better in the future. There was broad consensus that competitive markets will drive the innovation Europe needs to adopt more energy-efficient technologies and to build back stronger following the coronavirus crisis. Executive Vice-President **Vestager** stressed that “*We have what it takes to make a difference – to leave our children a world where they breathe clean air, and drink unpolluted water; where the oceans and forests are still full of life; and where human activity is not accelerating climate change. But to do that, we all need to work together. And that includes competition enforcers. Since the start of this mandate, we launched a review of our competition rules to make sure they are fit for purpose, in a changing world – a world of twin, green and digital, transitions, and of growing challenges to fair and open global trade.*” The views and contributions collected during the consultation and yesterday's conference will feed into the Commission's work, including the ongoing review of its guidelines in the field of antitrust and State aid. You can watch the recording of the conference [here](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024;

L'UE et l'OIT signent un nouvel échange de lettres, renforçant leur coopération pour une reprise équitable et la promotion du travail décent

L'Organisation internationale du travail (OIT) et l'Union européenne ont renforcé leur coopération pour façonner l'avenir du travail et promouvoir un travail décent, y compris dans le cadre de la reprise après la pandémie du coronavirus. Hier, la Commission européenne et l'OIT ont signé un [nouvel échange de lettres](#), actualisant le cadre de leur coopération de longue date qui a débuté en 1958. Il s'agit du troisième accord formel, après les échanges de lettres précédents, en 1989 et 2001. Nicolas **Schmit**, commissaire européen à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, a déclaré : « *Le monde du travail est en train de changer profondément. La pandémie a un impact immense sur l'emploi et les affaires sociales. La numérisation et le changement climatique transforment le quoi, le où et le comment de notre travail. Nous devons agir maintenant et saisir l'occasion de relever ces défis importants, tout en veillant à intégrer la dimension sociale dans la transition. Je me réjouis de poursuivre notre bonne coopération avec l'OIT pour construire un meilleur avenir du travail dans l'UE et dans le monde entier.* » L'UE et l'OIT coopèrent sur un large éventail de sujets, notamment la promotion du travail décent dans les chaînes d'approvisionnement mondiales, les principes et droits fondamentaux au travail, le dialogue social, la protection sociale, la sécurité et la santé au travail, l'égalité des sexes, les compétences et l'emploi des jeunes. L'OIT a également soutenu l'UE dans la mise en œuvre de sa [Garantie pour la jeunesse](#), qui aide les jeunes de toute l'UE à améliorer leurs chances de trouver un emploi. Vous trouverez de plus amples informations sur le nouvel échange de lettres dans [cette rubrique](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Marta Wieczorek - Tél.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes - Tél.: +32 229 83951)

State aid: Commission opens in-depth investigation into Romanian support measures in favour of CE Oltenia

The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether Romanian support measures in favour of Complexul Energetic Oltenia SA ('CE Oltenia') would be in line with EU rules on State aid to companies in difficulty. CE Oltenia, a Romanian majority state-owned lignite-based electricity producer, has been experiencing financial difficulties. Following a temporary rescue aid granted by Romania to the company after being [approved by the Commission](#) under EU State aid rules in February 2020, on 4 December 2020, Romania notified to the Commission a plan for the restructuring of CE Oltenia. At this stage, the Commission has doubts that the restructuring plan and the aid to support it satisfy the conditions of the [Commission's Guidelines on rescue and restructuring aid](#). The Commission's in-depth investigation will in particular examine: (i) whether the proposed restructuring plan can restore the long-term viability of CE Oltenia in a reasonable time frame without continued State aid; (ii) whether CE Oltenia or investors would sufficiently contribute to the restructuring costs, thus ensuring that the restructuring plan does not rely mainly on public funding and that the aid is proportionate; and (iii) whether appropriate measures to limit the distortions of competition created by the aid would accompany the restructuring plan. The Commission will now investigate further to find out whether its initial concerns are confirmed. The opening of an investigation gives Romania and interested third parties the opportunity to submit comments. It does not prejudge the outcome of the investigation. The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves €300 million Austrian scheme for package travel organisers and facilitators of linked travel services in the context of the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a €300 million Austrian scheme for package travel organisers and facilitators of linked travel services in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. Under the scheme notified by Austria, the aid will take form of State guarantees, which will cover 100% of the beneficiaries' liability for travel services which could not be provided in full or in part due to the coronavirus outbreak, in the specific instance in which the beneficiaries become insolvent. The Commission assessed the measure under EU State aid rules, and in particular Article [107\(3\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures implemented by Member States to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State. It concluded that the measure is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the Austrian economy, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the general principles set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis,

the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The package travel industry has been hit hard by the coronavirus outbreak, due to restrictions on international travel that Austria and other countries had to impose to limit the spread of the virus. This €300 million aid scheme will enable Austria to ensure that, should package travel organisers become insolvent, sufficient resources are available to refund consumers for travel services cancelled due to the coronavirus. We continue working closely with Member States to ensure that national support measures can be put in place in a coordinated and effective manner, in line with EU rules."* The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves second €4.9 billion Swedish guarantee scheme to support economy in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found a Swedish aid scheme to support the economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with the [State aid Temporary Framework](#). The previous scheme, approved in [April 2020 \(SA.56860\)](#) and prolonged a first time until 31 December 2020 ([SA.58659](#)), consists of guarantees on new loans granted by commercial banks to support companies, mainly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), affected by the coronavirus outbreak. Sweden notified on 2 February 2021 the re-introduction of the scheme until 31 December 2021, with a budget of approximately €4.9 billion (SEK 50 billion). The objective of the scheme is to limit the risk associated with issuing loans to those companies that are most severely affected by the economic impact of the current crisis, thus facilitating their access to liquidity and ensuring the continuation of their activity. The Commission found that the Swedish scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular (i) the measure concerns a guarantee scheme for new investment and working capital loans with a maturity of up to three years implemented through credit institutions; (ii) the guarantee may be granted until 31 December 2021; (iii) a maximum of 70% of the loan amount will be guaranteed; and (iv) the guarantee premium is set at a minimum of 50 basis points ("bps") per annum for SMEs and at a minimum of 100 bps per annum for large enterprises. 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 measures 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.61486 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears the acquisition of joint control over Molslinjen by EFMS

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control over Molslinjen A/S of Denmark by EQT Fund Management S.à r.l. ('EFMS') of Luxembourg, ultimately controlled by EQT AB of Sweden. Molslinjen is operating ferry routes within Denmark. It also operates ferry routes between Denmark and Germany and between Denmark and Sweden. EFMS is managing EQT Infrastructure V, an investment fund in infrastructure and infrastructure related assets and businesses primarily in Europe and North America. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of the limited impact it would have on the market. 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.10120](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: La Commission autorise l'acquisition du contrôle de Banca Piccolo Credito Valtellinese S.p.A. par Crédit Agricole Italia S.p.A.

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle de Banca Piccolo Credito Valtellinese S.p.A. (« CreVal »), basée en Italie, par Crédit Agricole Italia S.p.A. (« CAI »), contrôlé par le groupe Crédit Agricole basé en France. CreVal est une société anonyme de droit italien et est la société mère de Credito Valtellinese Banking Group, actif dans le secteur de la banque de détail en Italie. CAI est une filiale du groupe Crédit Agricole, qui assiste ses clients par l'intermédiaire de son large éventail de services bancaires et financiers offerts dans tous les secteurs de la banque de détail, ainsi que des activités financières connexes

telles que l'assurance, la gestion d'actifs, le crédit-bail, la banque d'investissement et le crédit à la consommation. La Commission a conclu que la concentration 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](#) de la concurrence de la Commission, dans le [registre public des affaires](#) sous le numéro [M.10095](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of the personal care business of Domtar by American Industrial Partners

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of the personal care business of Domtar Corporation ('Domtar') by American Industrial Partners ('AIP'), both of the U.S. The personal care business of Domtar manufactures absorbent hygiene products, including adult incontinence products and hygiene products for infants. AIP is a private equity firm. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because the activities of the companies do not overlap. 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.10145](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control over Ecom Express Private by Partners Group and Warburg Pincus

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Ecom Express Private Limited of India by Partners Group AG of Switzerland and Warburg Pincus LLC of the U.S. Ecom Express Private provides third-party logistics services in India and is currently solely controlled by Warburg Pincus. Partners Group is a global private markets investment management company active in a range of industries. Warburg Pincus is a global private equity firm with portfolio companies active in various sectors including consumer, industrial and business services, energy, financial services, healthcare, real estate, and technology. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of the limited impact it would have on the market. 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.10131](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

STATEMENTS

Joint Statement ahead of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation

Ahead of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February 2021, High Representative/Vice-President **Borrell**, Vice-Presidents **Jourová** and **Šuica**, Commissioners **Dalli** and **Urpilainen**, joined together to reaffirm the EU's strong commitment to eradicate female genital mutilation worldwide and made the following statement: "No woman or girl should suffer from violence. Female genital mutilation (FGM) is a severe violation of human rights and an act of violence against women and girls. It is estimated that more than 200 million women and girls worldwide have suffered from FGM. In Europe, at least 600,000 women and girls are living with the consequences of FGM, often severely affecting their health and well-being, even endangering their lives. COVID-19 has disrupted prevention programmes, seriously undermining progress towards reducing this heinous practice. Any backward step puts thousands of women and girls at risk. In line with [the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024](#), [the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025](#) and [the Gender Action Plan III](#), we are committed to stepping up our actions to end FGM in Europe and globally. For this, we support and work together with survivors, affected families and communities, experts and policymakers to end FGM. This year, we will present a legal proposal to prevent and combat specific forms of gender-based violence and a specific Recommendation on the prevention of harmful practices. The upcoming EU Strategy on the Rights of

the Child will make further concrete recommendation to effectively prevent and put an end to FGM, both inside and outside the EU. Both women and men play a crucial role in abandoning FGM. Nothing can justify this violence against women and girls, and no one should stay silent." The [full statement](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#) are available online. (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: + 32 229 63444; Jördis Ferrolí — Tel.: + 32 229 92729)

Belarus: Joint Statement by High Representative/Vice-President Borrell and Commissioner Várhelyi on the 7 February Day of Solidarity with Belarus

Ahead of the 7 February Day of Solidarity with Belarus, the High Representative/Vice-President Josep **Borrell** and Neighbourhood and Enlargement Commissioner Olivér **Várhelyi** made the following Joint Statement: *"Six months after the fraudulent elections of 9 August 2020, the brave people of Belarus continue to demonstrate peacefully for their voices to be heard and their choice to be respected, despite the brutal repression of the Belarusian regime. Unjust persecutions, including hundreds of documented cases of torture, continue against opposition and civil society, media workers, employees and entrepreneurs, as well as many students who have been dismissed from universities and denied the right to education. Many thousands have been detained and several hundred prosecuted on fabricated charges and denied the right to a fair trial. The European Union continues to stand firmly with the people of Belarus. The authorities must heed their persistent calls for a democratic future and respect for fundamental freedoms and human rights. Violence against peaceful protesters must cease at once. All arbitrarily apprehended persons, including political prisoners and journalists, must be released immediately and unconditionally. All perpetrators of human rights violations must be held to account. The EU continues to call for the swift initiation of a genuine, inclusive national dialogue followed by new credible and transparent elections to end the political crisis, respecting the will of the Belarusian people. The EU has stepped up its support to the people of Belarus and stands ready to support a democratic Belarus with a variety of means, including a comprehensive plan of economic support."* The statement is available [online](#). (For more information: Peter Stano – Tel.: +32 229 54553; Ana Pisonero – Tel.: +32 229 54320; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359; Zoï Muletier – Tel.: +32 229 94306)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Executive Vice-President Dombrovskis takes part in High-Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment

The first meeting of the High-Level Dialogue on Trade and Investment hosted by India this year, is taking place virtually today, 5 February. Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, Valdis **Dombrovskis**, will co-chair it with Indian Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal. In line with the [Joint Statement of the 15th EU-India Summit of July 2020](#), the High-Level Dialogue will discuss a broad range of issues, including trade and investment relations, market access issues and cooperation on WTO reform. Executive Vice-President **Dombrovskis** said: *"This first High-Level Dialogue on EU-India trade and investment can be a cornerstone for expanding and enriching our bilateral relations. We are already mutually important economic partners, but it is clear that we can do much more. There is considerable untapped potential in our trade and investment relationship. In this respect, 2021 can be an important year. Portugal has assumed the rotating presidency of the Council of the EU, and they have made EU-India relations a top priority. I hope we can make progress on trade matters as an important stepping-stone towards the EU-India Summit"*. After today's High-Level Dialogue, a Joint Statement will be published [here](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Sophie Dirven – Tel.: +32 229 67228)

Ocean governance: EU joins the International Coral Reef Initiative to protect marine ecosystems

Today Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, is representing the EU in the General Assembly of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) which confirmed EU's membership in this global partnership for the conservation of the world's coral reefs. In the context of the EU's ambitious International Ocean Governance agenda, the ICRI membership is an opportunity to work together with the almost 90 organisations and countries – members of the ICRI

– which are acting to protect vulnerable marine ecosystems by sustainably managing coral reefs and associated ecosystems, building capacity and raising awareness. Commissioner **Sinkevičius** said: *"Coral reefs are emblematic of rich marine life. Yet, the rapid degradation of these underwater worlds is also a very stark reminder of the pressures that human activity put on our planet, not least our oceans. The protection of these vital marine ecosystems is of great importance to biodiversity, sustainable food supply and the global climate system."* Coral reefs and related ecosystems are facing serious degradation, primarily due to human-caused stresses such as pollution, habitat destruction and climate change. This work will feed into the preparations for the UN Biodiversity Conference in Kunming, China (COP 15) later this year that is expected to agree on an ambitious post-2020 global biodiversity framework. The Commission presented last year, as part of the [European Green Deal](#), its [Biodiversity Strategy](#) which aims, amongst others, to strengthen the protection of marine ecosystems and to restore them to a "good environmental status". (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel.: +32 229 66712; Daniela Stoycheva – Tel.: +32 229 53664)

Coronavirus Response: Commission takes stock of implementation of financial sector relief measures for consumers and businesses

Today, Commissioner **McGuinness** will chair a roundtable meeting with the European financial sector, including consumer and business association representatives, to evaluate [relief measures adopted](#) to mitigate the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis. The meeting comes as consumers and businesses continue to be impacted by the pandemic. Topics on the agenda include a discussion on measures aimed at supporting consumers in relation to over-indebtedness and measures to assist businesses impacted by the shutdown of significant parts of the economy. The objective is to have an open dialogue about relief measures in the financial sector and their application at national level. The discussion concerns initiatives such as payment moratoria, safer cashless payments while ensuring cash payments remain available for those who need them, and loans that aim to mitigate the impact of the coronavirus crisis. Commissioner **McGuinness** said: *"I appreciate the readiness of consumers, business organisations and financial sector participants to work together to try and find solutions to support those who need it most in these difficult times. Even when the intensity of the pandemic abates, we will need to be mindful of its long-term consequences for some time to come. I look forward to exploring what improvements to current relief measures could be useful for consumers and businesses, and also how fair and balanced solutions can be found to help citizens and viable firms when support measures are gradually phased out in the future."* As announced in the [Commission's Banking Package](#) on 28 April 2020, on [28 May 2020](#) there was already a first meeting of the roundtable to mark the beginning of a dialogue with the European financial sector to see what practical relief measures can be put in place to alleviate the impact of the coronavirus crisis. Today's roundtable follows the adoption of a list of "[best practices](#)" agreed by the financial sector and consumer and business organisations in July 2020. (For more information: Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)

[CALENDAR](#) – Commissioner's weekly activities

[Eurostat](#) press releases

*Updated on 05-02-2021, at 12h55

MEX/21/421