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EU at COP26: President von der Leyen attends World Leaders Summit

On 1-2 November, Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** represented the Commission at the World Leaders Summit which opened the COP26 UN Climate Conference. The President first spoke in the [opening plenary session](#) of COP26, evoking the need for leaders "to be on the right side of history" and "to do whatever it takes now to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius". The President participated in two forestry-related events, delivering a [statement](#) on the Great Green Wall Initiative on Monday and [pledging €1 billion in funding](#) for the Global Forests Finance Pledge yesterday. Also on 2 November, the President [co-hosted](#) an event on infrastructure investment with US President Joe Biden, where she announced a [Just Energy Transition Partnership](#) with South Africa. Next, she officially launched the [Global Methane Pledge](#), a joint EU-US initiative which has mobilised over 100 countries to cut their collective methane emissions by at least 30% by 2030, compared to 2020 levels. Finally, President **von der Leyen** kicked off the [EU-Catalyst partnership](#) with Bill Gates and EIB President Werner Hoyer. More information on the [Global Forests Finance Pledge](#), the [Global Methane Pledge](#) and the [EU-Catalyst partnership](#) is available online. (For more information: Eric Mamer - Tel.: +32 229 94073; Tim McPhie - Tel.: +32 229 58602; Ana Pisonero - Tel.: +32 229 54320; Sonya Gospodinova - Tel.: +32 229 66953)

La Commission propose des possibilités de pêche dans l'Atlantique, le Kattegat et le Skagerrak pour 2022

Aujourd'hui, la Commission a publié sa [proposition](#) concernant les captures de stocks de poissons dans l'océan Atlantique, le Kattegat et le Skagerrak. Sur la base de cette proposition, les ministres de la pêche de l'UE adopteront les possibilités de pêche définitives lors du Conseil du 13 et 14 décembre 2021, qui s'appliqueront à compter du 1er janvier 2022. La Commission présente une proposition de 23 totaux admissibles de captures (TAC) pour les stocks de poissons gérés uniquement par l'UE dans les eaux communautaires de l'océan Atlantique, du Kattegat et du Skagerrak. Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, commissaire à l'environnement, aux océans et à la pêche, a déclaré: « *La proposition d'aujourd'hui est une étape clé dans le maintien d'un écosystème sain et d'un secteur de la pêche rentable. La Commission s'engage à fixer des limites de capture responsables conformément aux avis scientifiques disponibles. Notre stratégie pour la biodiversité l'énonce clairement: nos vies dépendent de la vie des océans. La durabilité ne connaît pas de frontières. C'est notre principe directeur.* » Sur la base des avis scientifiques délivrés par le Conseil international pour l'exploration de la mer (CIEM), la Commission propose une diminution de plus de 20% pour quatre stocks: sole du golfe de Gascogne, sole à l'ouest de l'Irlande, langoustine dans le Skagerrak et le Kattegat; et la morue au Kattegat. La Commission propose des augmentations pour cinq stocks, dont la plie du Kattegat, la sole du Kattegat et du Skagerrak, les cardines des eaux ibériques, la baudroie de la mer Cantabrique et la langoustine dans certaines parties du sud du golfe de Gascogne. La proposition sera mise à jour après la conclusion des consultations avec le Royaume-Uni et la Norvège, et une fois que les organisations régionales de gestion des pêches auront pris leurs décisions. Plus d'informations dans le [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Tim McPhie – Tél.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli – Tél.: +32 229 87269)

South Sudan: EU provides €2 million in emergency humanitarian funding for victims of floods

The European Commission has allocated emergency humanitarian funding of €2 million for those affected by recent unprecedented floods in South Sudan. To date, an estimated 40 people have died and over 750,000 people are affected. Many people had to flee their homes due to the floods in 31 of the 78 counties of the country, including most famine-affected areas. Projections indicate that over a million people may be affected by those floods by the end of the year. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, said: "Severe flooding in several areas of South Sudan has

exacerbated an already fragile humanitarian situation. Prior to the flooding, around 70% of South Sudan's population was already in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. Thousands of people live in famine-like conditions, and undernutrition is at critical levels. The emergency funding will be used to respond to the immediate needs of those affected. The floods in South Sudan are a timely reminder for urgent action on climate change, in view also of the COP26 conference: The effects of climate change are real, and they are here – and vulnerable populations suffer the repercussions.” The emergency humanitarian funding will be channelled through the EU's humanitarian partner, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), and will be used to provide vulnerable populations with life-saving water and sanitation (WASH), shelter and other essential non-food items. You can access the press release [here](#). (For more information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: + 32 229 54578; Gesine Knolle - Tel.: +32 295 4323)

SMEs: national solvency measures in the wake of COVID-19 pandemic helped companies avoid bankruptcies

Today, the Commission published a report on national solvency measures for SMEs. According to this report, SMEs and other European businesses have been able to avoid bankruptcies also thanks to a wide range of national solvency measures implemented by Member States in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights how a broad variety of national measures, including debt moratoria, safeguards for employees or fiscal measures are helping to prevent a liquidity crisis from turning into broader solvency crisis for European businesses. The Report builds on experiences shared by national financial experts nominated by their national SME envoys at the workshop 'SME Envoys Finance - Exchange of good practices on national solvency measures for SMEs', which took place in September. During this event, Member States shared information about measures taken to address SMEs' issues with [access to finance](#) as a result of the pandemic. The event follows the EU's [Updated Industrial Strategy](#), which called for more sharing of good practices in this area to support national efforts to aid recapitalisation, debt conversion and SME balance sheet strengthening. The experience presented in the report shows that Member States have predominantly implemented well-established measures such as loans and equity instruments, where National Promotional Institutions and traditional financiers played a key role. The main beneficiaries of such tools have been smaller companies. At the same time, many Member States have also offered new tools such as subordinated loans and mezzanine finance, which are particularly helpful for over-indebted companies, as well as grants and blending schemes which combine repayable and non-repayable support. The full report is available [here](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Céilia Dejong – Tel.: +32 229 88199)

EU and US agree to start discussions on a Global Arrangement on Sustainable Steel and Aluminium and suspend steel and aluminium trade disputes

European Commission President **von der Leyen** and United States President Biden agreed on Sunday to start discussions on a Global Arrangement on Sustainable Steel and Aluminium. This marks a new milestone in the transatlantic relationship, and in EU-US efforts to achieve the decarbonisation of the global steel and aluminium industries in the fight against climate change. The two Presidents also agreed to pause the bilateral World Trade Organization disputes on steel and aluminium. This builds on our recent successes in rebooting the transatlantic trade relationship, such as the launch of the EU-US Trade and Technology Council and the suspension of tariffs in the Boeing-Airbus disputes. Steel and aluminium manufacturing is one of the highest carbon emission sources globally. For steel and aluminium production and trade to be sustainable, we must address the carbon intensity of the industry, together with problems related to overcapacity. The Global Arrangement will seek to ensure the long-term viability of our industries, encourage low-carbon intensity steel and aluminium production and trade, and restore market-oriented conditions. The arrangement will be open to all like-minded partners to join. Furthermore, following the United States' announcement that they will remove Section 232 tariffs on EU steel and aluminium exports up to past trade volumes, the European Union will take the steps to suspend its rebalancing measures against the United States. The two sides have also agreed to pause their respective WTO disputes on this issue. European Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: *"The global arrangement will add a powerful new tool in our quest for sustainability, achieving climate neutrality, and ensuring a level playing field for our steel and aluminium industries. Defusing yet another source of tension in the transatlantic trade partnership will help industries on both sides. This is an important milestone for our renewed, forward-looking agenda with the US."* More information is available in a [press release](#), [Q&A](#) and [factsheet](#). (For more information: (For more information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Sophie Dirven - Tel.: +32 229 67228)

Incendies de forêt en Autriche: L'UE déploie une assistance immédiate

L'Autriche a activé le mécanisme de protection civile de l'UE (MPCU) le 29 octobre 2021, demandant de l'aide pour lutter contre les incendies de forêt qui avaient éclaté dans la région de Hirschwang en Basse-Autriche. Le centre de coordination de la réaction d'urgence de l'UE a mobilisé 2 avions Canadair CL-415 de lutte contre les incendies, basés en Italie. Les avions, qui font partie de la flotte de l'UE en transition rescEU, sont déjà déployés en Autriche. En outre, l'Allemagne et la Slovaquie ont proposé des hélicoptères de lutte contre l'incendie par l'intermédiaire du MPCU. Les deux offres ont été acceptées et leur déploiement est en attente. Le service Copernicus a également été activé pour soutenir les opérations de lutte contre les incendies en Autriche. Les produits cartographiques sont disponibles [ici](#). Saluant le déploiement rapide des moyens de rescEU, le commissaire européen chargé de la gestion des crises, Janez **Lenarčič**, a déclaré: « Par notre réponse rapide à la demande d'aide de l'Autriche, l'UE démontre une nouvelle fois sa pleine solidarité face aux incendies de forêt destructeurs. Le soutien est en cours. Je remercie les États membres qui ont déjà mobilisé ou proposé de mobiliser des moyens de lutte contre les incendies. Nos pensées vont aux personnes concernées, aux pompiers et aux autres premiers intervenants. Nous sommes prêts à fournir une aide supplémentaire. » Vous pouvez accéder au communiqué de presse [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Balazs Ujvari - Tél.: +32 229 54578 ; Gesine Knolle - Tél.: +32 229 54323)

State aid: Commission approves amendment to Greek aid scheme aiming to protect primary residences of vulnerable borrowers affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found the modifications of an existing Greek aid scheme aiming to support households affected by the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with EU State aid rules. The purpose of the [existing scheme](#), approved by the Commission on 13 November 2020 ([SA.58555](#)), is to assist in repaying their mortgage loans those households that are at risk of losing their primary residence following the coronavirus outbreak. Greece notified the following modifications to the existing scheme: (i) a three-month extension of the loan support period from nine to twelve months, and (ii) a reduction of the maximum aid amount per beneficiary (between 33% and 40% lower compared to the last quarter of subsidies deployed under the existing scheme). The other elements of the scheme will remain unchanged. As for the existing aid scheme, the Commission found that the grant to the homeowners under the amended scheme will provide an indirect advantage to the banks that issued the loans. Where homeowners with performing loans receive the subsidy, the Commission has assessed the indirect advantage as compatible in analogy with section 3.1 of the [Temporary Framework](#) (under [Article 107\(3\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU)), which allows grants of up to €1.8 million per beneficiary. This is subject to safeguards, including that banks will not receive an undue indirect advantage. For homeowner's non-performing loans, the Commission made an assessment under the [Articles 107\(2\)\(a\) and 107\(3\)\(c\)](#) TFEU, recognizing the social character of the aid. The Commission's assessment further showed that the indirect aid would not create undue distortions of competition because it is limited to what is necessary to achieve the objective of ensuring that borrowers do not lose their primary residence. Moreover, the amended scheme is non-discriminatory among banks and supports homeowners with loans at any bank operating in Greece. 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.100197 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)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Energi Danmark by Andel

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of sole control of Energi Danmark A/S by Andel a.m.b.a., both of Denmark. Energi Danmark is active in physical and financial trading of electricity, certificates trading, trading of natural gas, oil, carbon, and wind energy, in Denmark and other European countries. Andel is active in energy production, distribution and sales, primarily in Denmark. The companies' activities overlap mainly in the retail supply of gas and electricity to industrial customers in Denmark. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that (i) the companies are not close competitors; (ii) there are several alternative suppliers in the market; and (iii) there are no barriers to expansion. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition website](#), in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10212](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of the Fast Group by ECI and Bonak

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of Fast Group, consisting of various companies incorporated in Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, by EC Investments a.s. ('ECI') and Bonak a.s., both of Czechia. Fast Group is active in the wholesale and retail of consumer electronics, household appliances, IT, telecommunication and other non-food products. ECI is active in the wholesale of food and non-food products via Metro Group, and in e-commerce retail via Mall Group, which it jointly controls with Bonak. Bonak is also active in e-commerce retail via Mall Group, and in the provision of mobile telecommunication services via O2 and Telenor. Fast Group, ECI and Bonak are active primarily in Central and Eastern Europe. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given that, following the transaction, sufficient alternative players would remain active in the relevant markets. The transaction was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number [M.10364](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024)

STATEMENTS

Journée internationale de la fin de l'impunité pour les crimes commis contre des journalistes

Pour commémorer la Journée internationale de la fin de l'impunité pour les crimes commis contre des journalistes, le haut représentant/vice-président Josep **Borrell** et la vice-présidente Věra **Jourová** ont publié une déclaration commune : « *Il y a quelques semaines, Maria Ressa et Dimitri Mouratov ont reçu le Prix Nobel de la paix 2021 en reconnaissance de leurs efforts pour préserver la liberté d'expression. Avec leurs reportages, ils ont révélé des violations des droits de l'homme, de la corruption et des abus de pouvoir, au péril de leur vie. Malheureusement, les histoires et les voix de nombreux journalistes indépendants continuent d'être réduites au silence dans le monde entier. Les journalistes sont confrontés à un nombre croissant de menaces et d'attaques, notamment des assassinats dans les cas les plus tragiques. Les journalistes indépendants protègent la liberté d'expression et garantissent l'accès de tous les citoyens à l'information. Ils contribuent aux fondements de la démocratie et des sociétés ouvertes. Que ce soit sur notre territoire ou dans le monde entier, il faut mettre fin à l'impunité pour les crimes contre les journalistes. Nous soutiendrons et protégerons les journalistes, où qu'ils se trouvent. Nous continuerons à soutenir un environnement médiatique libre et diversifié, à soutenir un journalisme collaboratif et transfrontière et à lutter contre les violations de la liberté des médias. Il n'y a pas de démocratie sans liberté et pluralisme des médias. Une attaque contre les médias est une attaque contre la démocratie.* » Voir le texte intégral de la [déclaration commune](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Peter Stano – Tél.: +32 229 54553; Christian Wigand – Tél.: +32 229 62253; Xavier Cifre Quatresols – Tél.: +32 229 73582; Katarzyna Kolanko – Tél.: +32 229 63444)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner McGuinness attends events on taxonomy and sustainable finance at COP26

On 4 November, Commissioner for Financial Services, Financial Stability and Capital Markets Union, Mairead **McGuinness**, will participate via videoconference in three side events at COP26. First, the Commissioner will take part in the annual event of the International Platform on Sustainable Finance (IPSF) 'Driving the transition to a sustainable economy: towards more globally interoperable sustainable finance approaches', co-organised by the Commission and the IPSF. The Commissioner will then join an event on 'The role of taxonomies to drive market alignment with the Paris Agreement', co-organised by the Commission, the European Investment Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Finally, she will take part in an event on 'EU Sustainability Reporting Standards and the future of sustainability reporting', organised by the Commission. The [full programme](#) of side events is available online. On the same day the Commission

will publish three reports: the Annual Report of the IPSF, the report on sustainability disclosures and the report on the Common Ground Taxonomy. The IPSF annual report stakes stock of the progress on sustainable finance across member jurisdictions/observers, showing their continued commitment to steering money towards sustainable activities. The report also welcomes work on this issue at G20 level, and the acknowledgement of the IPSF as an important contributor. The IPSF report on sustainability disclosures aims at supporting global efforts to improve these disclosures as a key cornerstone of sustainable finance, and at facilitating co-operation amongst members of the IPSF – and beyond. The Common Ground Taxonomy report is an important milestone towards the achievement of more globally comparable taxonomies. It provides more clarity and transparency about the commonalities and differences between EU and China taxonomies. The report on the Common Ground Taxonomy is a first step towards providing a solid methodology in view of broadening the scope of comparison to other taxonomy features and other jurisdictions' taxonomies. (For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Francesca Dalboni – Tel: +32 229 88170)

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