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Strong EU trade enforcement rules enter into force

Robust new trade enforcement rules have entered into force that will further strengthen the EU's toolbox in defending its interests. With the update of the EU's Trade Enforcement Regulation, the EU is able to act in a broader range of circumstances. The new rules upgrade the EU's enforcement by introducing the following changes: empowering the EU to act to protect its trade interests in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and under bilateral agreements when a trade dispute is blocked despite the EU's good faith effort to follow dispute settlement procedures (the regulation previously only allowed action after the completion of dispute settlement procedures); and expanding the scope of the regulation and of possible trade policy countermeasures to services and certain trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights (IPR) (the regulation previously only permitted countermeasures in goods). Executive Vice-President and Commissioner for Trade, **Valdis Dombrovskis**, said: *"The European Union must be able to defend itself against unfair trading practices. These new rules will help protect us from those trying to take advantage of our openness. We continue to work towards our first preference, which is a reformed and well-functioning multilateral rulebook with an effective Dispute Settlement System at its core. But we cannot afford to stand defenseless in the meantime. These measures allow us to respond resolutely and assertively."* A press release is available [here](#). (For more information: Miriam Garcia Ferrer – Tel.: +32 229 99075; Sophie Dirven – Tel.: +32 229 67228)

Réunions de l'Eurogroupe et du Conseil Affaires économiques et financières (ECOFIN), 15-16 février 2021

Le vice-président exécutif **Dombrovskis** et le commissaire **Gentiloni** représenteront la Commission à la réunion de l'Eurogroupe qui se tient aujourd'hui par visioconférence. Les membres de l'Eurogroupe procéderont à un échange de vues sur les évolutions macroéconomique et les perspectives dans la zone euro, sur la base des [prévisions économiques de la Commission pour l'hiver 2021](#) et la présentation du Dr Michael Ryan de l'Organisation mondiale de la santé sur l'évolution de la situation sanitaire. La réunion abordera également le rôle international de l'euro à la suite des orientations formulées lors du sommet de l'euro de décembre 2020 et de la publication de la [communication de la Commission européenne sur ce sujet](#) en janvier. Les membres de l'Eurogroupe examineront l'évolution récente de la solvabilité du secteur des entreprises, sur la base d'une note préparée par la Commission, et le projet de plan budgétaire actualisé de la Lituanie pour 2021, sur la base de [l'avis que la Commission a publié en janvier 2021](#). Enfin, le ministre Keit Pentus-Rosimannus présentera les priorités politiques du nouveau gouvernement estonien. Le commissaire **Gentiloni** représentera la Commission lors de la [conférence de presse](#) qui suivra la réunion. Le vice-président exécutif **Dombrovskis** et les commissaires **Hahn**, **Gentiloni**, **Urpilainen** et **McGuinness** représenteront la Commission au Conseil Affaires économiques et financières (ECOFIN) qui se tiendra demain par vidéoconférence. Le Conseil ECOFIN procédera à un échange de vues sur les priorités des plans nationaux de relance et de résilience, après une présentation de la présidence portugaise sur l'état d'avancement de la facilité pour la reprise et la résilience. La présidence informera les ministres de l'état d'avancement des ratifications nationales de la décision relative aux ressources propres. La Commission présentera brièvement les éléments de sa stratégie d'emprunt dans le cadre de NextGenerationEU. La présidence informera également les participants de l'état d'avancement des conclusions sur les orientations pour le budget de l'UE pour 2022 et de la recommandation sur la décharge à donner à la Commission pour l'exécution du budget général de l'UE pour 2019. Les participants auront un échange de vues sur la manière de promouvoir une [initiative de l'UE pour la relance au niveau mondial](#) afin de répondre aux défis croissants auxquels sont confrontés les pays en développement et à faible revenu pour financer la reprise et afin de discuter des priorités financières et politiques pour leur relance, dans le cadre d'une approche « Team Europe ». La présidence présentera également l'état d'avancement des propositions législatives relatives aux services financiers. Le vice-président exécutif **Dombrovskis** représentera la

Commission lors de la [conférence de presse](#) qui suivra la réunion. (Pour plus d'informations : Marta Wieczorek - Tél.: +32 229 58197; Balazs Ujvari - Tél.: +32 229 54578)

State aid: Commission approves €1.4 billion Swedish scheme to support uncovered fixed costs of companies affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved an approximately €1.4 billion (SEK 14 billion) Swedish scheme to support the uncovered fixed costs of companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid Temporary Framework. Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The scheme will be open to companies active in all sectors except the financial sector. The scheme covers three eligible periods: (i) August–October 2020, (ii) November–December 2020, and (iii) January–February 2021. The aid will be granted to companies that suffered a turnover decline exceeding 40% in the period August-October 2020 or 30% in each of the periods November-December 2020 and January-February 2021, compared to the same periods in 2019. The beneficiaries will receive grants covering up to 70% of their uncovered fixed costs during the eligible periods. In the case of micro and small enterprises, the grants will cover up to 75% of the uncovered fixed costs with regard to the period August-October 2020, or 90% in the other periods. The purpose of the scheme is to mitigate the economic difficulties and the sudden liquidity shortages that the beneficiaries are facing due to the restrictive measures imposed by the Swedish government to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The Commission found that the Swedish scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "Swedish companies have experienced a significant decline in their revenues because of the restrictive measures put in place to limit the spread of the coronavirus. This €1.4 billion scheme will enable Sweden to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak, by helping them cover their fixed costs that are not covered by their revenues. We continue working in close cooperation with Member States to find workable solutions to mitigate the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak, 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 €1.2 billion Czech scheme to support self-employed and partners in small limited liability companies affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €1.2 billion Czech scheme ('compensation bonus') to support self-employed and partners in small limited liability companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The aim of the scheme is to mitigate the adverse effects of the coronavirus outbreak on the liquidity of the eligible small businesses for the periods when they have been – or will be – prevented, completely or partially, from carrying out business activities. The scheme is expected to support more than 1 million self-employed and partners in small limited liability companies. The Commission found that the Czech scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €225,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products, €270,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and €1.8 million per company active in all other sectors; and (ii) the aid will be granted before 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.61358 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; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Concentrations: La Commission autorise l'acquisition de Winoa par Blackstone

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition de Winoa, basée en France, par The Blackstone Group Inc. basée aux États-Unis. Winoa,

contrôlée par Elastikos, SAS, basée en France, fabrique et commercialise des abrasifs métalliques. Blackstone est active dans le secteur de la gestion alternative des actifs au niveau global. La Commission a conclu que la concentration envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, dans la mesure où les deux entreprises ne sont pas actives sur le même marché ou sur des marchés liés ou complémentaires. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de 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.10024](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of control over Riverstone Europe by CVC

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of control over RiverStone Barbados Limited ('Riverstone Europe') of Barbados by CVC Capital Partners SICAV-FIS S.A. ('CVC') of Luxembourg. Riverstone Europe is active in the management of run-off insurance businesses and portfolios. CVC and/or its subsidiaries manage investment funds and platforms. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the limited overlaps between Riverstone Europe and CVC's portfolio entities and their low combined market shares. 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.10112](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Miller by Cinven and Raffles

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Miller Insurance Services LLP of the UK by Cinven Capital Management (SSF) General Partner Limited of Guernsey and Raffles Private Holdings Limited of the UK. Miller is active in the provisions of non-life insurance and reinsurance broking services. Cinven is a private equity business. Raffles is an investment vehicle ultimately controlled by GIC Private Limited of Singapore, which manages a diverse portfolio of private equity global investments. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited market position of Miller in the European Economic Area. 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.10076](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

[Eurostat](#) press releases

Renewal of media accreditations for Brussels-based journalists

The renewal of the annual accreditations for Brussels-based journalists is ongoing. All media representatives who are based in Brussels and cover EU affairs can request an annual, interinstitutional accreditation, which is valid for the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council. Applications should be submitted until 28 February 2021. More information is available [here](#), and for questions, please contact the [press accreditation team](#).

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