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Brussels, 18 February 2021

Coronavirus: EU Health Security Committee agrees on a common list of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests

Today, the EU Health Security Committee agreed on a common list of COVID-19 rapid antigen tests, a selection of rapid antigen tests for which Member States will mutually recognise their results, and a common standardised set of data to be included in COVID-19 test result certificates. These three deliverables, agreed by Member States and as called for by the [Council Recommendation](#) of 21 January on a common framework for the use of rapid antigen tests, will be continuously reviewed and updated. Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Stella **Kyriakides**, said: *"Rapid antigen tests are crucial to slow down the spread of COVID-19 and should be part of our overall response to the pandemic. If negative COVID-19 tests are to be required or recommended for any activity, it is essential that they are mutually recognised, and result in certificates recognised across the EU. This is essential, particularly in the context of travel. Our citizens need clarity and predictability."* The Joint Research Centre (JRC) is currently in the process of updating its [COVID-19 in vitro diagnostic medical devices database](#), with the aim of integrating all the information on rapid antigen tests that was collected and agreed on by the Health Security Committee. The document agreed by the Health Security Committee is available [here](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela – Tel.: +32 229 66712; Darragh Cassidy – Tel.: +32 229 83978)

Procédures d'infraction du mois de février: la Commission prend des mesures en vue d'une mise en œuvre complète, correcte et en temps utile du droit de l'Union dans l'intérêt des citoyens et des entreprises

Pour aider les citoyens et les entreprises à pleinement profiter du marché intérieur, la Commission européenne est en dialogue permanent avec les États membres qui ne respectent pas le droit européen et, au besoin, ouvre des procédures d'infraction à leur égard. Les décisions prises aujourd'hui, dans le cadre des décisions régulières d'infraction, comprennent 145 lettres de mise en demeure. Plus précisément, il s'agit de 31 mises en demeure and 10 mises en demeure complémentaire, 13 avis motivés et 1 avis motivé complémentaire, et 4 renvois à la Cour de justice de l'UE au titre de l'article 258 du Traité sur le fonctionnement de l'Union européenne (TFUE). Elle clôt également 100 dossiers en cours lorsque l'État membre concerné, en coopération avec la Commission, a résolu le problème et assuré le respect du droit de l'Union et que, dès lors, une saisine de la Cour de justice de l'Union européenne n'est pas nécessaire. Un résumé des principales décisions et les références des communiqués de presse correspondants figurent [ici](#). Les aspects essentiels des procédures d'infraction de l'UE sont décrits [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Eric Mamer – Tél.: + 32 229 94073; Ewelina Juszcak – Tél.: +32 229 91745)

Nagorno-Karabakh: EU allocates additional €3 million in humanitarian aid for conflict-affected civilians

The Commission has announced today €3 million in humanitarian aid to assist those affected by the recent large scale hostilities in and around Nagorno-Karabakh, including a significant number of displaced people. Since the beginning of the hostilities in September 2020, the EU has mobilised a total of €6.9 million in humanitarian assistance. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, said: *"Following the cessation of hostilities, the humanitarian crisis in the region remains dire and is currently exacerbated by the harsh winter and the coronavirus pandemic. The EU is stepping up its support for the conflict-affected population in and around Nagorno-Karabakh. It will help provide emergency supplies to those most in need."* The newly announced emergency support will help EU humanitarian partners to deliver food, shelter, winter items and other basic needs, as well as essential health services and psychosocial support to the affected population. All EU humanitarian funding is provided in line with the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence. The full press release is available [here](#). (For information: Balazs

Agriculture : la Commission approuve deux nouvelles indications géographiques de Hongrie et de Slovaquie

La Commission européenne a approuvé la demande d'inscription de la « [Újfehértói meggy](#) » de Hongrie et des « [Liptovské droby](#) » de Slovaquie dans le registre des indications géographiques protégées (IGP). La « Újfehértói meggy » désigne les griottes produites dans la région de Nyírség, à l'Est de la Hongrie. La « Újfehértói meggy » se caractérise par une absence d'amertume, une peau de couleur bordeaux ou rouge foncé, une pulpe colorée et un goût agréablement acidulé. Ces caractéristiques sont liées aux conditions climatiques de la région, ainsi qu'aux connaissances humaines associées à la sélection variétale et au mode de culture. Les « Liptovské droby » sont un type particulier de saucisses fabriquées à l'ancienne, selon une méthode artisanale, dans la région de Liptov, au Nord de la Slovaquie. La spécificité de ce produit tient à sa farce, élaborée à partir de pommes de terre, de fritons et d'épices et embossée dans des boyaux naturels de porc ou de bœuf. L'habileté des fabricants de « Liptovské droby » s'est développée grâce aux compétences et à l'expérience transmises de génération en génération, dont rend bien compte la qualité du produit final. Les « Liptovské droby » ont toujours constitué un mets très prisé sur les tables de fête, sur les marchés et dans les foires. Ces nouvelles appellations vont rejoindre 1514 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)

State aid: Commission publishes additional State aid guiding template on support for cloud capabilities under the Recovery and Resilience Facility

The European Commission has today published a new State aid [guiding template](#) to assist Member States in the design of their national recovery and resilience plans in line with EU State aid rules, with respect to support for cloud and edge data processing capabilities. This follows the publication of 11 State aid guiding templates on [21 December 2020](#) and of the guiding template on support to the digitalisation of news media on [11 February 2021](#). Under the [Recovery and Resilience Facility](#), each national Recovery and Resilience plan will have to earmark a minimum level of 20% of expenditure to support the digital transition. Investments in cloud and edge capabilities are key to strengthen Europe's innovative performance in developing and deploying the next generation of data processing. The template published today covers investment projects within the '[Scale Up](#)' flagship of the [Commission's Annual Sustainable Growth Strategy 2021](#). Such investments will directly contribute to the objective of doubling the share of EU companies using advanced cloud services and big data by 2025, and will help achieving the [European Strategy for Data](#). Furthermore, digital technologies will be central in achieving the sustainability goals of the [Green Deal](#). In this context, investments in cloud and edge computing can help accelerate and maximise the impact of policies to deal with climate change and to protect the environment. The guiding template, like the other guiding templates, is a technical document which is intended to provide sector-specific guidance as to when (i) support does not involve State aid, and therefore prior notification to the Commission is not necessary; (ii) State aid would be involved, but no notification is necessary because it falls under a block exemption; and (iii) State aid would be involved and a notification is necessary, with reference to the main applicable State aid rules. Under the guiding template, projects on cloud and edge capabilities that can receive State aid can, for example, be focused on Research and Development (R&D) and Innovation, environmental protection, energy efficiency, support to Small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups and regional development. Member States can use the dedicated mailbox and hotline set up by the Commission for queries on this and other guiding templates. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves €19.8 million Greek scheme to support a certain category of bus companies (K.T.E.L. bus companies) in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €19.8 million Greek scheme to support a certain category of bus companies (K.T.E.L. bus companies) providing both local and long-distance regular bus services within the Greek territory in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The measure was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). K.T.E.L. and K.T.E.L. S.A. bus companies ('K.T.E.L. bus companies') have been assigned the exclusive right of providing both local/urban (namely, in urban areas of provincial towns) and long-distance (namely, inter and intra-regional per Regional Unit) regular bus services within the Greek territory. A K.T.E.L. bus company is a type of

company established under the national law and may operate in the legal status of an anonymous company (S.A.) or not. There are 34 urban and 62 long-distance K.T.E.L. bus companies, in total, in Greece. Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The objective of the scheme is to mitigate the sudden liquidity shortages that these companies are facing because of the restrictive measures imposed by the government to limit the spread of the virus. The Commission found that the scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the support (i) will not exceed €1.8 million per company; and (ii) will be granted no later than 30 June 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 of 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.61573 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)

State aid: Commission approves €26.3 million Estonian scheme to support companies in Ida-Viru and Harju Counties affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €26.3 million Estonian scheme to support companies in Ida-Viru and Harju Counties that had to suspend or limit their activities due to the restrictions imposed by the government to limit the spread of the 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 aim of the scheme is to address the liquidity needs of the beneficiaries and to help them continue their activity during and after the outbreak and it consists of two measures. The maximum amount of support per company under each measure is €180,000. The first measure applies to companies, foundations, non-profit associations and self-employed persons registered in Ida-Viru and Harju Counties and active in the accommodation and food service, information and communication, education, health, entertainment and recreation sectors, whose activities have been suspended from 28 December 2020 until 31 January 2021. The aid amount per beneficiary will correspond to 1.5 times the wage costs of the employees for November 2020. The second measure applies to companies, non-profit associations and self-employed persons active in the accommodation and food service, health care and social work sectors registered in the Ida-Viru County, whose activities have been suspended from 12 December 2020 until 3 January 2021. The aid amount per beneficiary will correspond to double the wage cost of the company for November 2020. Credit and financial institutions, as well as companies active in the agricultural, fisheries or aquaculture sectors are excluded from the scope of the notified measure. The Commission found that the Estonian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €1.8 million per company; and (ii) the aid 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.61615 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)

State aid: Commission approves €3.2 million Estonian scheme to support organisers of cultural events in Ida-Viru County and Harju County in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €3.2 million Estonian scheme to support organisers of cultural events in Ida-Viru County and Harju County in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the support will take the form of direct grants. Beneficiaries will receive up to €60,000 to compensate costs related to their activities that have been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak and other costs incurred to ensure the continuation of their operations. The purpose of the scheme is to mitigate the sudden liquidity shortages that companies are facing due to the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the Estonian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the support will not exceed €1.8 million per company; and (ii) the aid 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 of 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.61586 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)*

State aid: Commission approves modification of 12 Hungarian schemes to support companies in context of coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found the modification of 12 Hungarian aid schemes to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with the EU State aid rules. The existing schemes were approved by the Commission under the [State aid Temporary Framework](#) (case numbers [SA.56994](#), [SA.57121](#), [SA.57064](#), [SA.57198](#), [SA.57269](#), [SA.57285](#), [SA.57329](#), [SA.57468](#), [SA.58202](#), [SA.58420](#), [SA.59477](#), and [SA.60910](#)). Hungary notified to the Commission the following modifications to the schemes: (i) the prolongation of the duration of the schemes until 31 December 2021; (ii) the granting of limited amounts of aid up to €225,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products (previously €100,000), €270,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector (previously €120,000), and €1.8 million per company active in all other sectors (previously €800,000); and (iii) other technical amendments. In line with such amendments, the budgets of several schemes are increased, notably in case [SA.56994](#), from approximately €1 billion (HUF 350 billion) to approximately €2.8 billion (HUF 1 000 billion), and in case [SA.57121](#), from approximately €3.9 billion (HUF 1 400 billion) to approximately €5.8 billion (HUF 2 100 billion). The Commission concluded that schemes, as modified, are 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 to facilitate the development of certain economic activities not adversely affecting trading conditions and competition to an extent contrary to the common interest, in line with Article 107(3)(c) TFEU. 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.61842 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)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of a newly created joint venture by ION, NN and bpfBOUW

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of ION Residential Platform NV ('IRP JV'), a newly established joint venture based in Belgium, by ION Real Estate Services NV ('ION') of Belgium, NN Group NV ('NN') of the Netherlands and Stichting Bedrijfstakpensioenfondsvoor de Bouwnijverheid ('bpfBOUW') of the Netherlands. IRP JV will aim to build a sustainable long-term residential real estate portfolio in selected urban areas in Belgium. ION develops residential and commercial real estate in Belgium. NN provides pension and insurance products as well as asset management and banking services. bpfBOUW is a pension fund for the construction sector. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because of the limited impact the transaction 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.10116](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of joint control of Compre by Cinven and BCI

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control over Cambridge Topco Limited and Cambridge Holdco Limited (together 'Compre', of Malta) by Cinven Capital Management General Partner Limited ('Cinven') of Guernsey and the British Columbia Investment Management Corporation ('BCI') of Canada. Compre is an insurance and reinsurance company specialising in the consolidation of discontinued, 'closed' non-life insurance

portfolios from other non-life insurance companies. Cinven is a private equity business engaged in the provision of investment management and investment advisory services to a number of investment funds. Cinven controls a number of portfolio companies active in a variety of sectors across a range of jurisdictions. BCI is an investment manager for British Columbia public sector clients in fixed income, public equities, private equity, infrastructure, renewable resources, real estate and commercial mortgages. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that the overlaps between the companies' activities are very limited and that a number of strong players would remain in the market after the merger. 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.10109](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Les commissaires Schmit et Breton organisent une table ronde sur le pacte européen pour les compétences avec des représentants de l'écosystème agroalimentaire

Cet après-midi, les commissaires **Schmit** et **Breton** organisent une table ronde sur le pacte pour les compétences avec des représentants de l'écosystème agroalimentaire. Cette table ronde s'inscrit dans le cadre d'une série d'échanges visant à encourager la participation de l'industrie au [pacte sur les compétences](#). Annoncé dans le cadre de la [stratégie européenne pour les compétences](#) adoptée par la Commission le 1^{er} juillet 2020, le pacte a été lancé le [10 novembre](#). Son objectif est de mobiliser tous les acteurs concernés - partenaires industriels, sociaux, régionaux et éducatifs - afin d'aider les travailleurs à développer les compétences nécessaires à une reprise durable, sociale et résiliente à la suite de la pandémie du coronavirus. Les partenariats établis dans le cadre du pacte bénéficieront du soutien de la Commission sous la forme d'une plateforme de partenariat ou encore de conseils sur les options de financement de l'UE. Le secteur agroalimentaire est directement impacté par la pandémie. Il a par ailleurs réalisé d'importants progrès dans le cadre de l'[initiative actuelle de coopération sectorielle en matière de compétences](#). Il a en conséquence été identifié comme un écosystème prioritaire à associer au pacte. L'amélioration des compétences existantes et le développement des nouvelles compétences sont des moteurs importants pour la relance économique ainsi que pour la restructuration à long terme du secteur. Une attention particulière est donnée aux compétences qui facilitent la double transition écologique et numérique de l'écosystème. (Pour plus d'informations : Marta Wieczorek — Tél.: +32 229 58197; Sonya Gospodinova — Tél.: +32 229 66953)

Zero Pollution: Clean Air Dialogue between the Commission and the Netherlands

The Commission is holding on 17 and 18 February a Clean Air Dialogue with the Netherlands to promote actions to improve air quality and reduce air pollution in the country. This bilateral dialogue focuses on the main challenges faced by the Netherlands, such as emissions from residential heating, transport and agriculture. Special emphasis is placed on collaboration between the public and private sector, as well as the role of cities and local and regional authorities – including green public procurement, green urban planning and other green policies. Taking part in the Clean Air Dialogue, Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: *"Further reducing air pollution in the Netherlands, and across Europe, would improve quality of life, decrease premature deaths from respiratory diseases and reduce pressure on ecosystems and biodiversity. It also makes economic sense. This is the approach we are taking with our Zero Pollution ambition set in the European Green Deal. Events such as this Clean Air Dialogue are important, as they improve collaboration and create the opportunity for cross-sector and cross-level discussions and exchanges."* While emissions of several air pollutants have decreased significantly in the Netherlands since the 1990s, air pollution still gives cause for concern and has a significant impact on the health of citizens. The Netherlands also faces other challenges, especially regarding the reduction of ammonia and nitrogen pollution from agriculture. This Clean Air Dialogue gathers the Dutch authorities, European Commission representatives and over 200 stakeholders in a structured discussion. Clean Air Dialogues have been put in place by the Commission in 2016 and to date seven such dialogues have taken place: in Ireland, Luxembourg, Hungary, Slovakia, Spain, Czech Republic and Italy. Clean Air Dialogues are voluntary and can be organised upon request by the

Member States. More information is available in the [news release](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela - Tel : +32 229 66712 ; Daniela Stoycheva - Tel : +32 229 53664)

Le vice-président Schinas et les commissaires Gabriel et Schmit participent à la réunion informelle des ministres de l'éducation

Margaritis **Schinas**, vice-président chargé de la promotion de notre mode de vie européen, Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire à l'innovation, à la recherche, à la culture, à l'éducation et à la jeunesse, ainsi que Nicolas **Schmit**, commissaire à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, représenteront la Commission lors de la [vidéoconférence informelle des ministres de l'éducation](#) demain matin. Les ministres acteront de l'avancée concernant la résolution du Conseil relative à un cadre stratégique pour la coopération européenne dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation. Cette résolution, qui fixera un cadre de travail entre la Commission et les États membres, représente une étape importante pour permettre l'achèvement de [l'espace européen de l'éducation](#) en 2025 ainsi que pour mieux répondre ensemble aux défis amplifiés par la pandémie de COVID-19. La Commission européenne publiera à cette occasion une étude montrant que des investissements ciblés dans les secteurs de l'éducation et de la formation contribuent à une meilleure résilience sociale et économique de nos sociétés. Afin de guider les autorités nationales dans l'utilisation optimale des fonds européens disponibles, la commissaire **Gabriel** annoncera la création d'un groupe d'experts sur les investissements dans l'éducation et la formation. L'appel à candidature pour ce groupe ouvrira demain, le 19 février et sera [disponible en ligne](#), ainsi que l'étude qui sera publiée [ici](#). Les discussions durant la réunion informelle des ministres porteront aussi sur l'équité en matière d'accès, l'inclusion et la réussite pour toutes et tous dans le domaine de l'éducation et de la formation. L'inclusion et l'égalité entre les filles et les garçons, les femmes et les hommes, font partie des six priorités de [l'espace européen de l'éducation](#). Le nouveau programme [Erasmus+](#) a également vocation à être plus inclusif. Une conférence de presse avec la commissaire **Gabriel** aura lieu à la fin de la réunion vers 13h, et sera [diffusée sur EbS+](#). (Pour plus amples d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Sinéad Meehan - van Druten - Tel.: +32 229 84094)

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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