



## Daily News 23 / 02 / 2021

Brussels, 23 February 2021

### **President von der Leyen opens the EU Industry Days: "let's accelerate the recovery and make Europe more competitive in the world"**

President Ursula **von der Leyen** opened today the EU Industry Days 2021 delivering a speech in which she praised the European industry its resilience amidst the coronavirus pandemic, while highlighting that we needed to draw the lessons from the crisis. President **von der Leyen** said: *"The pandemic has led to an unprecedented disruption of our Single Market. This should never happen again. This is why we are working on a Single Market Emergency Instrument. It will ensure the free movement of goods, services and people, with greater transparency and coordination."* The President also addressed some of the challenges ahead for the industrial sector: *"Another lesson we have learnt is our dependency on certain raw materials sourced from only a handful of producers. Green and digital technologies currently depend on a number of scarce raw materials. We must diversify our supply chains. This is the goal of our Action Plan on Critical Raw Materials. And this is why we have proposed to create a European Raw Materials Alliance."* Finally, she referred to the successful public-private cooperation of the last year, saying: *"In these months, as we fought the virus, we have explored new ways of working with European industries. I believe we should move from crisis mode to a new cruising speed of cooperation with European industries. Building new and agile alliances where the public sector joins forces with industry. Our Battery Alliance makes for a very good example. I want Europe to invest in this approach – building new alliances and partnerships with the private sector."* The full speech of President **von der Leyen** is available [here](#) and the video can be watched again [here](#). (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150).

### **EU to set up new European Partnerships and invest nearly €10 billion for the green and digital transition**

The Commission proposed today to set up 10 new [European Partnerships](#) between the European Union, Member States and/or the industry. The goal is to speed up the transition towards a green, climate neutral and digital Europe, and to make European industry more resilient and competitive. The EU will provide nearly €10 billion of funding that the partners will match with at least an equivalent amount of investment. This combined contribution is expected to mobilise additional investments in support of the transitions, and create long-term positive impacts on employment, the environment and society. The proposed Institutionalised European Partnerships, some of which are building on existing [joint undertakings](#), aim to improve EU preparedness and response to infectious diseases, develop efficient low-carbon aircraft for clean aviation, support the use of renewable biological raw materials in energy production, ensure European leadership in digital technologies and infrastructures, and make rail transport more competitive. The European Partnerships are approaches provided by [Horizon Europe](#), the new EU research and innovation programme (2021-2027). They aim to improve and accelerate the development and uptake of new innovative solutions across different sectors, by mobilising public and private resources. They will also contribute to the objectives of the [European Green Deal](#) and strengthen the [European Research Area](#). Partnerships are open to a wide range of public and private partners, such as industry, universities, research organisations, bodies with a public service mission at local, regional, national or international level, and civil society organisations including foundations and NGOs. More information is available in this [press release](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583).

### **Coronavirus: L'UE soutient le transfert transfrontalier d'équipes médicales vers la Slovaquie et fournit une aide à la Serbie**

L'UE coordonne le déploiement d'une équipe médicale en Slovaquie afin de soutenir le traitement de soin intensif des patients atteints de COVID-19, à la suite d'une demande introduite par la Slovaquie

dans le cadre du mécanisme de protection civile de l'UE. La Roumanie a déjà proposé une équipe de 5 médecins et 9 infirmiers spécialisés dans les soins intensifs. L'UE mobilise également des équipements de protection individuelle supplémentaires composés de 600 000 masques de protection FFP2 et de 650 000 paires de gants destinés à la Serbie à partir de sa réserve médicale RescEU hébergée par la Grèce. « *Je tiens à remercier la Roumanie d'avoir envoyé une équipe médicale à Bratislava pour soutenir le traitement des patients atteints de la COVID-19, mettant ainsi en œuvre la solidarité de l'UE. De même, les masques et gants de protection envoyés en Serbie à partir de la réserve RescEU contribueront à protéger le personnel médical qui lutte contre la COVID-19 dans le pays* », a déclaré Janez **Lenarčič**, commissaire chargé de la gestion des crises. Les États membres de l'UE peuvent également demander un financement pour soutenir le transfert de patients et le transport de personnel médical et d'équipes par l'intermédiaire de l'instrument d'aide d'urgence. Depuis le début de la pandémie de coronavirus, la Commission a aidé 13 États membres de l'UE et États participants par l'intermédiaire du mécanisme de protection civile et de RescEU. (For information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi- Tel.: +32 229 69140)

### **Rohingya Crisis: EU allocates €39 million for the most vulnerable to Bangladesh and Myanmar**

The European Commission has announced today €39 million in humanitarian aid to address the needs of displaced and conflict-affected communities in Bangladesh and Myanmar, in particular in the context of the pressing Rohingya refugee crisis, which has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, said: "*The recent military overthrow of the legitimate government in Myanmar risks worsening the already dire humanitarian crisis faced by displaced and conflict-affected populations. The EU will continue to provide strong humanitarian aid support directly to the most vulnerable population. In Bangladesh, the COVID-19 crisis is aggravating the already difficult conditions experienced by almost one million Rohingya refugees in camps and for host communities. In both countries, recurrent natural hazards further increase vulnerabilities. In this this challenging time, the EU is stepping up its long-standing humanitarian assistance to those most in need.*" Humanitarian organisations working in Bangladesh and Myanmar will receive €24.5 million and €11.5 million respectively to respond to key humanitarian and disaster preparedness needs. An additional €3 million will address vital protection needs of stateless Rohingya in other countries of the region. The newly announced emergency support will help EU humanitarian partners deliver food, nutrition, shelter, and essential health, water, and sanitation services to the most vulnerable and hard to reach populations, while continuing to sustain education and protection. The press release is available [online](#). (For information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Daniel Puglisi- Tel.: +32 229 69140)

### **La solidarité de l'UE en action: le Fonds de solidarité de l'UE verse une avance de 6 millions d'euros à la France afin de réparer les dégâts causés par la tempête Alex en octobre 2020**

La Commission a accordé une avance du [Fonds de solidarité de l'UE](#) (FSUE) à la France afin de venir en aide aux régions touchées par la tempête Alex en octobre 2020. La Commissaire chargée de la cohésion et des réformes, Elisa **Ferreira**, a déclaré: « *Cette décision est avant tout l'expression de ce que l'UE représente: la solidarité avec tous les États membres de l'UE face à des défis difficiles. En marge de nos efforts persistants pour vaincre la pandémie de coronavirus, nous voulons faire en sorte que les régions et les États membres bénéficient du soutien de l'UE en cas d'autres catastrophes* ». La Commission finalisera son évaluation et proposera au Parlement et au Conseil de mobiliser le paquet d'aide final. Les fonds couvriront une partie des coûts des opérations d'urgence et de redressement et de la restauration des infrastructures publiques endommagées par la tempête en région Provence-Alpes-Côtes d'Azur. Le FSUE a été créé à la suite de graves inondations en Europe centrale au cours de l'été 2002. Entre 2002 et 2020, le FSUE a mobilisé un total de plus de 6,5 milliards d'euros pour des interventions lors de 96 catastrophes naturelles dans 23 États membres et un pays en voie d'adhésion. La France a reçu un total de plus de 252 millions d'euros jusqu'à présent. De plus amples informations sur le FSUE sont disponibles sur la [plate-forme de données ouverte de l'ESIF](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Tim McPhie – Tél.: +32 229 66712; Veronica Favalli – Tél.: +32 229 87269)

### **Stimuler les investissements dans les entreprises numériques européennes afin d'exploiter tout le potentiel de la 5G**

Une nouvelle étude de la Commission européenne et de la Banque européenne d'investissement souligne la nécessité pour l'Europe d'accroître considérablement ses investissements dans les projets numériques de la 5G afin de libérer tout le potentiel des innovations dans le domaine de la 5G. Il

montre en quoi les innovations dans le domaine de la 5G sont un élément clé pour stimuler la compétitivité européenne et stimuler notre reprise économique. Il est essentiel d'accroître les investissements en fonds propres pour la poursuite du développement et de l'adoption des technologies 5G et pour l'essor des innovateurs de premier plan en Europe. L'étude met en évidence un important déficit de financement de 4,6 à 6,6 milliards d'euros par an entre l'Europe et les États-Unis en termes de financement de capital-risque pour l'écosystème d'innovation 5G, ce qui accroît le risque d'investissements insuffisants dans la 5G, en particulier dans le contexte actuel de la relance européenne. Bien qu'une stratégie commune pour le marché unique doive allouer suffisamment de capitaux publics aux écosystèmes 5G par l'intermédiaire des budgets nationaux et des programmes de l'UE, y compris le [Fonds pour la relance](#) et [InvestEU](#), le capital-risque reste nécessaire pour combler cet écart. La Commission va maintenant examiner les résultats et les recommandations lors de l'examen des prochaines étapes pour le capital-risque 5G en Europe. De plus amples informations sur cette étude sont disponibles [ici](#) et dans ce [communiqué de presse](#) de la BEI. (Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke — Tél.: + 32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou — Tél.: + 32 229 83583).

### **State aid: Commission invites stakeholders to provide comments on revised State aid rules on Important Projects of Common European Interest**

The European Commission has launched today a [public consultation](#) inviting all interested parties to comment on a proposed targeted revision of the Communication on State aid rules for Important Projects of Common European Interest (the "IPCEI Communication"). Stakeholders can respond to the consultation for eight weeks, until 20 April 2021. The Commission has conducted an evaluation of the current IPCEI Communication as part of the [State aid Fitness Check](#). The evaluation showed that the current provisions of the IPCEI Communication work well overall, and are an effective tool in facilitating the emergence of IPCEIs. At the same time, some targeted adjustments may be necessary. In this context, the Commission is proposing a number of targeted changes to reflect the experience gained from the application of the current rules and to align the Communication with current EU priorities: (i) to clarify certain notions and provide further guidance on certain criteria set out in the Communication; (ii) to facilitate the direct and indirect involvement in IPCEIs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs); (iii) to further enhance the open character of IPCEIs and their consistency with EU policies, notably enabling the green and digital transformation. The [current IPCEI Communication](#) has been prolonged until the end of 2021 in order to provide predictability and legal certainty during the revision process. The adoption of the new IPCEI Communication is planned for the second half of 2021. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "To tackle those massive innovation and infrastructure challenges to green and digitise our economy, the risks can be too big for just one Member State or one company to take alone. Our rules on Important Projects of Common European Interest have recently paved the way for three cross-border projects for more innovative and sustainable batteries and microchips. They pool public and private knowledge and resources across Europe, while ensuring that State aid crowds in private investment and competition distortions are minimised. We now invite stakeholders to comment on a targeted revision of these rules, for example to further facilitate the participation of small and medium-sized enterprises in these projects and to ensure they are truly open and transparent to all Member States that wish to participate." 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 €254 million Romanian aid to support rehabilitation of district heating system in Bucharest**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State Aid rules, Romanian plans to support the upgrade of the district heating system of the municipality of Bucharest. Romania notified the Commission of its plans to provide public support of approximately €254 million (1,208 billion RON) for the rehabilitation of the distribution network (notably the "transmission" pipelines of hot water to the main distribution points) of the district heating system in the urban area of Bucharest. The planned support will take the form of a direct grant financed by EU Structural Funds managed by Romania. EU State aid rules allow Member States to support district heating generation installations and distribution networks, subject to certain conditions set out in Commission's [2014 Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy](#). In particular, the Guidelines provide that the projects must meet the criteria of "efficient district heating" set out in the [Energy Efficiency Directive](#) in order to be considered compatible under EU State aid rules. On the basis of the type of heat fed into the system - about 80% of its input comes from "cogeneration" sources - the Commission has found that the Bucharest system fulfils the definition of efficient district heating and cooling system, as set out in the Energy Efficiency Directive and in line with State aid rules. The Commission also

found that the measure is necessary, as the project would not be carried out without the public support, and proportionate, as the project will deliver a reasonable rate of return. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure does not distort competition and is in line with EU State aid rules, notably thanks to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and other polluting substances and the improvement of the energy efficiency of the district heating system. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"This €254 million aid measure, funded thanks to EU structural funds, will help Romania achieve its energy-efficiency targets and will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas and other pollutants emissions, without unduly distorting competition."* The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

### **Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Applegreen by Blackstone and B&J**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Applegreen of Ireland by Blackstone of the US and B&J of Malta. Applegreen is a roadside convenience retailer, operating at motorway service areas, trunk road service areas and petrol filling stations, with presence in Ireland, the UK and the US. Blackstone is a global asset management company. B&J is a holding company, owned by Joseph Barrett and Robert Etchingham and currently Applegreen's largest shareholder. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, because it would not create any overlaps between the activities of the companies. 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.10132](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Over 10,000 children take part in consultation on upcoming EU Strategy on Rights of the Child and the European Child Guarantee**

Today, the results of the report *"Our Europe, Our Rights, Our Future"* will be officially launched at a virtual event with Vice-President for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka **Šuica**, Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas **Schmit** and Commissioner for Justice, Didier **Reynders**. The views and suggestions of over 10,000 children between 11 and 17 years old will feed into the first-ever comprehensive Strategy on the rights of the child and the European Child Guarantee, to be presented by the Commission in coming weeks. Speaking ahead of the event, Vice-President **Šuica** said: *"Children are the experts in the things that concern them. Participation, equality and inclusion are the guiding principles for both the EU Strategy on the rights of the child and the Child Guarantee. We must and will ensure that all children have an equal start in life and thrive in this world, free from fear and want."* The upcoming Strategy strives to protect the rights of all children in the EU's internal and external actions, and to mainstream children's rights in EU policies and instruments, within the EU and beyond. The upcoming European Child Guarantee aims to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and inequality by guaranteeing access to quality services for children in need, such as early childhood education and care, education and play and leisure activities, healthcare, nutrition and housing. Today's results show that one in five children in the EU who responded to the survey are growing up unhappy and anxious for the future. A third of the children surveyed have experienced discrimination or exclusion. That rate rose to one-half when consulting children with disabilities, migrants, ethnic minorities or those who identify as LGBTQ+. Child participation will be a key priority of the EU Strategy on the rights of the child. The Commission has recently published [a study on child participation in EU political and democratic life](#), which will feed into the EU Strategy and to which over 200 children and young people contributed. Read today's [report](#) and [press release](#). (For more information: Daniel Ferrie — +32 229 86500 / Christian Wigand — Tel. + 32 229 62253; Sinéad Meehan – van Druten — +32 229 84094 / Katarzyna Kolanko — Tel.: +32 229 63444)

### **Launch of Civil society consultation for Brussels V Conference 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region'**

In the framework of the upcoming 5<sup>th</sup> Brussels Conference 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region' on 29-30 March, the Commission launched a virtual [consultation with civil society organisations](#) to gather recommendations on key issues affecting the civil society, people inside Syria, Syrian refugees and hosting communities in the neighbouring countries. The survey remains open until 2 March. In parallel, EU Delegations and the United Nations are organising discussions with civil society actors in Syria and the region. The outcomes of these consultations will be presented during the Conference and will contribute to shape the international community's response and ensure its relevance. Co-chaired by the EU and the United Nations, the Conference will consist of the Day of Dialogue with civil society (29 March) and the Ministerial meeting (30 March). To stay updated on the civil society consultations and the programme of the Conference, register [here](#). (*For more information: Peter Stano – Tel.: +32 229 54553; Ana Pisonero – Tel.: +32 229 54320; Balazs Ujvari – Tel.: +32 229 54578; Zoï Muletier - Tel.: +32 229 94306*)

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