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Commission pays a further €1.5 billion in macro-financial assistance to Ukraine

The Commission has today paid a **second instalment** of **€1.5 billion under the up to €18 billion [Macro-financial Assistance \(MFA\) 'Plus'](#) package** for Ukraine. With this instrument, the EU seeks to help Ukraine cover its immediate funding needs, with stable, predictable and sizeable financial support in 2023.

This support will help Ukraine to keep on paying wages and pensions and maintain essential public services running, such as hospitals, schools, and housing for relocated people. It will also allow Ukraine to **ensure macroeconomic stability and restore critical infrastructure** destroyed by Russia in its war of aggression, such as energy infrastructure, water systems, transport networks, roads and bridges.

Today's payment comes after the Commission found that Ukraine has made **satisfactory progress** towards implementing the agreed policy conditions and complied with reporting requirements, which aim to ensure the transparent and efficient use of the funds. Ukraine achieved important progress to **strengthen the rule of law** through the appointment of a new Head of the National Anti-corruption Bureau of Ukraine. **Financial stability is enhanced** thanks to progress towards better supervision of state-owned banks. The **functioning of the gas system** will be improved thanks to the selection of a supervisory board of Naftogaz and there will be a better business climate thanks to simpler licencing and permitting requirements.

A first payment of €3 billion under this package was [made](#) in January this year. The Commission will continue to disburse its financial support for Ukraine to the tune of €1.5 billion per month throughout the rest of 2023.

The total MFA support, including today's payment, disbursed to Ukraine since the start of Russia's war of aggression has reached €11.7 billion. The funds have been made available to Ukraine in the form of highly concessional loans.

Overall, since the start of the war, the support to Ukraine and Ukrainians amounts to around €67 billion. This includes financial, humanitarian, emergency budget, and military support to Ukraine from the EU, Member States and the European financial institutions, as well as resources made available to help Member States cater for needs of Ukrainians fleeing the war in the EU.

President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: *"Today's second payment to Ukraine of €1.5 billion shows the EU's steadfast support for Ukraine. The country achieved important progress on transformative reforms, like on the rule of law. This will also facilitate the international reconstruction effort and support Ukraine on its European path."*

More information is available in [this factsheet](#).

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Commission welcomes new IPCC climate change report highlighting the urgency of more ambitious climate action

The Commission welcomes the [Synthesis Report](#) released yesterday by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), with the latest scientific findings gathered over the past eight years on climate change, and calls on **all Parties to step up their ambition** and live up to their **commitments under the Paris Agreement**. The IPCC Report highlighted that the scale of the changes in the climate system caused by anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases is unprecedented in the history of humanity with grave implications for people and the planet.

In response to the evidence in the Report, the Commission reconfirms its intention to **stay at the**

forefront of the fight against climate change by progressing with its efforts to make the EU climate-neutral and climate resilient, while accelerating the clean energy transition. The EU is already a frontrunner through its [European Green Deal](#), with our 2030 emissions reductions legislated for in the EU Climate Law, and the [Fit for 55 package](#) of sectoral legislation. Limiting global warming to 1.5C requires global action on emissions reductions at all levels, across countries and economic sectors. The EU will continue to work with international partners on this front, towards COP28 and beyond.

With the Fit for 55 package, the EU is acting decisively to cut net emissions by at least 55% by 2030 and pave the way to reach climate neutrality by 2050. In parallel, it has stepped up its efforts to build climate resilience by implementing the [EU Climate change Adaptation Strategy](#), working together with 300 European regions and local authorities through the [EU Mission on Adaptation to Climate Change](#).

Climate action needs to go hand in hand with other policies, and hence other initiatives under the European Green Deal such as the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies, and the Zero Pollution and Circular Economy Action Plans are all crucial elements of the transition to a sustainable, climate resilient, nature-positive and equitable society.

More information on the EU contribution to the IPCC Report is available [here](#).

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Pact for Skills: Launch of large-scale renewable energy skills partnership

Today, renewable energy trade associations and representatives of installers of clean technologies, with the support of the European Commission, have set up a **large-scale skills partnership for the renewable energy industrial ecosystem**. They aim to empower workers with the skills needed for the manufacturing and management of renewable energy technologies to achieve the EU's energy and climate objectives for 2030 and climate neutrality by 2050. The partnership will do so by enabling quality job creation and career paths in Europe, proposing policy recommendations to advance skills development, involving relevant national authorities, education institutions, especially vocational education and training institutions, and training platforms; and attracting more women to clean energy-related jobs.

Overall, **around 1.3 million persons were employed in the EU renewable energy sector in 2020. This number is set to increase** following the accelerated deployment of clean energy solutions. Accounting for all renewable energy sectors, achieving our REPowerEU targets will require the creation of over 3.5 million jobs by 2030. For instance, the skills needs for the biomethane and heat pumps sectors are estimated at more than 1 million workers by the year 2030, according to industry. In the photo-voltaic solar energy sector, the industry estimate also amounts to 1 million workers by 2030, with up to 66,000 jobs needed in manufacturing alone.

Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: *"Reskilling and upskilling workers across all industrial ecosystems is essential for our twin transition objectives. The renewable energy skills partnerships will contribute to the Net Zero Industry Act objectives, creating growth and jobs while reducing dependencies."*

Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights, Nicolas **Schmit**, said: *"Well-trained workers are essential for the many jobs created in the renewable energy ecosystem and therefore a prerequisite for a successful transition to carbon neutrality. The new large-scale skills partnership for renewable energy will ensure the sector remains competitive and relevant to the energy market's evolving demands."*

Commissioner for Energy, Kadri **Simson**, said: *"This large-scale partnership under the Pact for Skills will help the massive deployment of renewables that we need for the clean energy transition. It will also help us achieve the 2030 REPowerEU targets for renewable energy, which require the creation of millions of jobs across all renewables' sectors."*

Following [commitments in other industrial ecosystems](#), this 15th skills partnership is a concrete implementation of the [Pact for Skills](#), the flagship initiative under the [European Skills Agenda](#). It will underpin the objectives set out in the recently presented [Net-Zero Industry Act](#), following up on the [Green Deal Industrial Plan](#), the [REPowerEU plan](#) and the [European Year of Skills](#). It also contributes to the EU headline target that by 2030, at least 60% of all adults should participate in training every year. Since the launch of the Pact, more than 1,000 organisations have pledged to reskill over 6 million people in Europe.

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Forêts en bonne santé : de nouvelles recommandations pour soutenir les actions de plantation d'arbres et protéger les anciennes forêts

Aujourd'hui, à l'occasion de la Journée internationale des forêts, la Commission a publié **deux lignes directrices visant à soutenir la protection et la restauration des forêts de l'UE, à en améliorer la qualité et à les rendre plus résistantes au changement climatique.**

[Les premières concernant le boisement, le reboisement et la plantation d'arbres respectueux de la biodiversité](#) fournissent un ensemble de recommandations pratiques à l'intention des autorités, des propriétaires forestiers et fonciers, des gestionnaires et de la société civile concernant les projets de boisement, de reboisement et de plantation d'arbres respectueux de la biodiversité. Elles traitent du boisement dans les terres agricoles, du reboisement dans les zones forestières, y compris les actions de restauration, et de la plantation d'arbres dans les environnements urbains et périurbains, ainsi que dans les terres agricoles (agroforesterie).

Les [lignes directrices pour la définition, la cartographie, le suivi et la protection stricte des forêts primaires et anciennes de l'UE](#) fournissent des conseils pratiques aux responsables politiques et aux décideurs nationaux pour l'identification et la protection des forêts primaires et anciennes restantes dans l'UE. Elles définissent notamment des critères d'identification fondés sur une liste d'indicateurs ou de principes et suggèrent un calendrier pour la cartographie et la protection stricte de ces forêts.

Le commissaire à l'environnement, aux océans et à la pêche, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, a déclaré : « *Nous avons besoin de l'aide de tous pour soigner les poumons de l'Europe. Les recommandations adoptées aujourd'hui permettront d'atteindre deux objectifs essentiels : d'une part, protéger nos forêts primaires et anciennes, dont il reste si peu en Europe, et d'autre part, augmenter le nombre et la qualité des forêts en suivant le principe « du bon arbre au bon endroit ».* La plantation d'arbres peut renforcer le sentiment d'appartenance à une communauté et permettra à des générations d'Européens de profiter d'un héritage vert dans les années à venir. »

La santé des forêts européennes et des écosystèmes qui y sont liés est toutefois confrontée à un nombre croissant de défis, ainsi que le souligne l'Agence européenne pour l'environnement (AEE) dans son rapport intitulé « [How are European forest ecosystems doing](#) » (Comment se portent les écosystèmes forestiers européens ?). L'AEE a également publié aujourd'hui une note d'information sur les pratiques de gestion durable, intitulée « [European forest ecosystems : key allies in sustainable development](#) » (Les écosystèmes forestiers européens : des alliés essentiels pour le développement durable). La nouvelle PAC soutient également le boisement. Grâce aux plans stratégiques de la PAC, les États membres peuvent contribuer au boisement et aux interventions agroforestières.

Les recommandations publiées aujourd'hui sont le fruit d'une collaboration entre les experts nationaux de l'UE, les parties prenantes, les acteurs concernés et la société civile. Elles permettront d'atteindre les objectifs de [la stratégie de l'UE en faveur de la biodiversité à l'horizon 2030](#) et de la [stratégie forestière de l'UE](#), et notamment [l'engagement de l'UE à planter 3 milliards d'arbres supplémentaires d'ici à 2030](#). Elles soutiennent également les engagements de l'UE au titre du [cadre mondial pour la biodiversité de Kunming-Montréal](#).

Pour plus d'informations, lire le [bulletin de presse](#).

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InvestEU: signature d'un accord visant à débloquer 18,7 millions d'euros pour soutenir les entreprises sociales en Italie

Le Fonds européen d'investissement (FEI), soutenu par le [programme InvestEU](#), fournira une garantie de 18,75 millions d'euros à CGM Finance pour financer des investissements dans des entreprises sociales en Italie, organisations dont les activités ont une forte incidence sociale et dont le modèle privilégie les personnes par rapport au profit. Le FEI accordera 18,75 millions d'euros — pouvant être prolongés jusqu'à 25 millions d'euros — de garanties disponibles au moyen de prêts approuvés par la CGM Finance pour la période de trois ans allant de 2023 à 2025. Cela permettra à CGM Finance d'investir dans un plus grand nombre de projets et d'entreprises sociaux innovants.

Le commissaire à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, Nicolas **Schmit**, a déclaré à ce sujet: « *L'Italie dispose d'une économie sociale florissante et, grâce à cette garantie soutenue par l'UE, la CGM*

Finance peut l'aider à s'épanouir encore davantage. C'est un bon exemple de la manière dont InvestEU soutient les entreprises qui ont un impact social important et créent des emplois. »

Le [programme InvestEU](#) fournit à l'UE un financement à long terme en mobilisant des fonds privés et publics à l'appui des priorités stratégiques de l'UE. Dans le cadre du programme, le Fonds InvestEU est mis en œuvre par l'intermédiaire de partenaires financiers qui investiront dans des projets utilisant la garantie du budget de l'UE et mobiliseront ainsi au moins 372 milliards d'euros d'investissements supplémentaires.

Un communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#).

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Antitrust: Commission carries out unannounced inspections in the energy drinks sector

On 20 March 2023, the European Commission has started unannounced inspections at the premises of a company active in the energy drinks sector in various Member States.

The Commission has concerns that the inspected company may have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit cartels and restrictive business practices ([Article 101](#) of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union ('TFEU')) and [Article 53](#) of the European Economic Area Agreement ('EEA')). The inspected company may also have violated EU antitrust rules that prohibit abuses of a dominant position ([Article 102](#) of the TFEU and [Article 54](#) of the EEA).

Unannounced inspections are a preliminary step in an investigation into suspected anticompetitive practices. The fact that the Commission carries out such inspections does not mean that the company is guilty of anti-competitive behaviour, nor does it prejudge the outcome of the investigation itself.

A press release is available [online](#).

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State aid: Commission approves €103 million Romanian scheme under the Recovery and Resilience Facility to support construction of electricity storage facilities

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, a **€103 million** (RON 512 million) Romanian scheme to support the construction of **electricity storage facilities**. The measure will be partly funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility ('RRF'), following the Commission's positive assessment of the [Romanian Recovery and Resilience Plan](#) and its adoption by the Council.

The aim of the scheme is to support investments in battery electricity storage facilities, allowing for a smooth integration of renewable energy coming from wind and solar sources in the Romanian power system.

Under the scheme, the aid will take form of a direct grant to projects selected through a competitive bidding process. The aid per beneficiary will not exceed: (i) 100% of the project's funding gap, (ii) €167,000 per MWh of installed storage capacity, or (iii) a maximum amount of €15 million. The projects will be selected by 31 December 2023 and must be completed by 31 December 2025.

The Commission assessed the scheme under [Article 107\(3\)\(c\) TFEU](#), which allows Member States to support the development of certain economic activities under certain conditions and the [Guidelines on State aid for climate, environmental protection and energy](#) (CEEAG). The Commission found that the Romanian scheme is necessary and appropriate to speed up investments in electricity storage facilities, thereby contributing to the EU's strategic objectives related to the green transition. Furthermore, the Commission concluded that the scheme is proportionate, as the aid will be limited to the minimum necessary, and will not have undue negative effects on competition and trade in the EU. On this basis, the Commission approved the Romanian scheme under EU State aid rules.

The Commission assesses measures entailing State aid contained in the national recovery plans presented in the context of the RRF as a matter of priority and has provided guidance and support to Member States in the preparatory phases of the national plans, to facilitate the rapid deployment of the RRF. The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the number SA.102761 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's competition [website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved.

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State aid: Commission approves €100 million Irish scheme to support the microelectronics-manufacturing sector in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine

The European Commission has approved a **€100 million Irish scheme** to support the **microelectronics-manufacturing sector** in the context of Russia's war against Ukraine. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework](#), adopted by the Commission on [9 March 2023](#) to support measures in sectors which are key to accelerate the green transition and reduce fuel dependencies. The new Framework amends and prolongs in part the [Temporary Crisis Framework](#), adopted on [23 March 2022](#) to enable Member States to support the economy in the context of the current geopolitical crisis, already amended on [20 July 2022](#) and on [28 October 2022](#).

The purpose of the scheme is to provide **financial support** to microelectronics-manufacturing companies, which have been particularly affected by the current geopolitical crisis. The measure will consist in **aid for additional costs due to exceptionally severe increases in natural gas and electricity prices** in the form of **direct grants**, up to a maximum individual amount of **€50 million**.

The Commission found that the Irish measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Crisis Framework. In particular, the individual aid amount (i) will not exceed 40% of the eligible costs, up to a maximum of €100 million; (ii) cannot lead to an EBITDA for the supported period exceeding 70% of the beneficiary's EBITDA in 2021; and (iii) will be granted no later than 31 December 2023. 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 Crisis and Transition Framework**. On this basis, the Commission approved the scheme under EU State aid rules.

More information on the Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of Russia's war against Ukraine and foster the transition towards a net-zero economy can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the number SA.105803 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's competition [website](#) once any confidentiality issues have been resolved.

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Mergers: Commission clears creation of joint venture by Mitsubishi Corporation and Mitsubishi HC Capital

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the creation of a joint venture by Mitsubishi Corporation ('MC') and Mitsubishi HC Capital Inc. ('MHC'), both of Japan.

The joint venture will operate auto leasing, buying and selling, as well as vehicle management-related services in Japan. **MC** is a trading company active worldwide across a variety of industries, including automotive and mobility. **MHC** is active worldwide in the provision of financial services including, among others, auto, finance and real estate leases, as well as operating leases focused on asset values.

The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that the joint venture has no current or foreseen activities 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.11045](#).

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Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Luwei Wind Power, Chungwei Wind Power, Tongwei Wind Power, Chinfeng Wind Power, and Anwei Wind Power by Macquarie and wpd

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of joint control of Luwei Wind Power Co., Ltd., Chungwei Wind Power Co., Ltd., Tongwei Wind Power Co., Ltd., Chinfeng Wind Power Co., Ltd., and Anwei Wind Power (the 'acquired companies') of Taiwan by

Macquarie Group Limited ('Macquarie') of Australia and wpd AG of Germany.

The **acquired companies** operate onshore **wind turbines** in Taiwan. **Macquarie** is a provider of banking, financial, advisory, investment and funds management services, active worldwide. **wpd** develops and operates wind farms and solar parks in Asia, Chile, Europe and the US.

The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given that the acquired companies have no activities 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.11052](#).

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Concentrations: la Commission autorise l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de Groupe BZ par Bunge, SC Frich'Envol and SC One

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l'acquisition du contrôle conjoint de BZ SAS et SCI de Maison Bleue (« Groupe BZ »), basé en France, par Bunge SA, basée en Suisse, SC Frich'Envol et SC One, toutes deux basées en France.

Le **Groupe BZ** est actif dans l'achat, le stockage et la vente de céréales, oléagineux et protéagineux, principalement dans l'Espace économique européen. **Bunge** est une entreprise agroalimentaire active dans l'achat, le stockage, le transport, la transformation et la vente de matières premières agricoles et de produits de base, en particulier les céréales et oléagineux. **SC Frich'Envol** et **SC One** détiennent des actions du Groupe BZ.

La Commission a conclu que l'acquisition envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence compte tenu de son impact limité sur la structure du marché. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée du 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.10891](#).

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Commissioner Gabriel visits Silicon Valley for European Innovation Days

Today and tomorrow, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel** will lead a [high-level delegation](#) of over 40 entrepreneurs, university rectors, investors, innovation actors and policy makers to Silicon Valley, California.

During these first European Innovation Days, the participants will engage in discussions with the Silicon Valley innovation community. It will be a call to attract talents and increase investments in Europe, share best practices among senior executives in open innovation and venture capital, and bridge the gap between two ecosystems to strengthen the way forward. Amongst others, the European Innovation Agora provides an opportunity for venture capitalists, entrepreneurs, investors and businesses to share their distinctive perspectives of the European innovation model.

At the European Innovation Days, Commissioner **Gabriel** will also launch an [Innovation Talent Platform](#) under the [New European Innovation Agenda](#), Europe's top initiative to spearhead the next wave of innovation in fast evolving industries, including sustainable energy, aerospace, automotive, health, security and bio-diversity. The Platform aims to attract talent and increase investment in Europe. In a first phase, the platform will offer information about funding opportunities, and contact points in several countries, as well as a digital toolkit for start-ups to launch businesses in the EU. In the second phase, it will be a matchmaking tool for innovators, entrepreneurs, and all talent across the globe who wish to create, work, and live in Europe.

Commissioner **Gabriel** said: *"Europe is now on equal footing with Silicon Valley in the area of ground-breaking deep-tech innovations. Together with a high level delegation, we are launching the first EU innovation days in the Silicon Valley. We will promote innovation by investing in R&I, creating favourable policies, and supporting entrepreneurship to attract talents and increase investments in Europe. The Innovation Talent Platform is a further step in the right direction."*

More information is available [here](#) and the live stream of the European Innovation Agora can be followed [here](#).

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UN Water Conference: EU joins efforts to address the global water crisis and ensure water security for all by 2050

From tomorrow, at the [United Nations Water Conference](#) in New York from 22 to 24 March, the EU will be confirming its strong engagement for global water security by announcing 33 commitments for action starting now. These commitments will underpin the EU vision that by 2050, the world should be resilient to increasing water stress, providing water security for all.

The world is currently facing a **water crisis driven by overdemand, mismanagement** and the impacts of the **triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution**. 40% of the world's population live in areas affected by water stress. **Water resilience** is key to prevent and address the current and future health, food and energy crises.

European Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** said: *"On the path we are on, half of the world's population will suffer from acute water stress by 2030. The good news is, collectively, we have what it takes to make a difference. We have the scientific, technological, and policy know-how. And most importantly, we have the ability to learn from each other and the will to work together. With Global Gateway, we have committed over €1 billion to water management, working with countries in Africa and Central Asia to support livelihoods, energy, food, and peace."*

The UN 2023 Water Conference is the first of its kind in almost 50 years, aiming to **mobilise global action for water resilience and security**. The EU delegation, led by Commission Vice-President Dubravka **Šuica**, will present the EU voluntary commitments to the [Water Action Agenda](#) – a range of commitments that draw on a number of policy actions and EU laws, leading water technologies, as well as extensive support to partner countries on water and sanitation.

More information is in the [press release](#).

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[Liste des points prévus](#) à l'ordre du jour des prochaines réunions de la Commission

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[Prochains événements](#) de la Commission européenne

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse