



## Daily News 29 / 06 / 2020

Brussels, 29 June 2020

### Coronavirus Global Response: Saturday's summit raised €6.15 billion for universal access to coronavirus vaccines

Saturday was an important day for global solidarity against coronavirus. World leaders came together to raise funding to develop coronavirus vaccines, tests and treatments, and make them accessible and affordable everywhere in the world, for everyone who needs them. The 'Global Goal: Unite for our Future' Summit, co-hosted by President **von der Leyen**, raised €6.15 billion in financing from 40 countries, including a new pledge of €4.9 billion by the European Investment Bank and the European Commission. The money raised will also support economic recovery in the world's most fragile regions and communities. As a landmark of global solidarity, the summit resulted in commitments for the production capacity of over 250 million vaccine doses for middle and lower income countries. These new pledges bring the total funding raised under the [Coronavirus Global Response](#), the worldwide pledging marathon launched by President **von der Leyen**, to almost €16 billion. A concert followed the summit, where artists such as Coldplay, Usher, Miley Cyrus and Chris Rock expressed their commitment to a coronavirus-free future for all. A [press release, the breakdown of pledges per country](#) and the transcript of President **von der Leyen's interventions during the summit are available online. (For more information Dana Spinant - Tel.: +32 2 299 0150; Ana Pisonero - Tel.: +32 229 54320)**

### EU channels furthers assistance in response to floods in Ukraine

Following the devastating floods in the south-west of Ukraine last week, the EU continues to mobilise emergency assistance through the [EU Civil Protection Mechanism](#). Today, an airplane of the Italian government will deliver pumping equipment, personal safety material, chainsaws, power stations and tents to the affected population. Over the weekend, Sweden committed to sending flood barriers, hoses and technical experts. In addition to the Italian and Swedish assistance, the European Commission is providing mapping services of the affected areas through the EU Copernicus satellite system. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, said: "Sweden and Italy provide a proof of the Union's solidarity when climate disasters strike. We stand ready to provide further assistance to all those in the affected areas and to support the civil protection authorities striving to alleviate the most pressing needs on the ground." A [press release](#) published on Saturday provides further information regarding support mobilised over the weekend. (For more information: Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 2 295 4578; Gesine Knolle - Tel.: +32 2 295 4323)

### Intervention du Commissaire Breton sur le plan de relance et le secteur automobile

Le Commissaire au marché intérieur, Thierry **Breton**, a aujourd'hui inauguré la Table Ronde de l'Automobile en Espagne, organisée par la ministre de l'Industrie, du Commerce et du Tourisme, María Reyes Maroto Illera, avec la participation virtuelle de régions, représentants du secteur et partenaires sociaux. Dans son intervention, le commissaire s'est prononcé sur la sévérité de l'impact de la crise sur le secteur automobile et a partagé des réflexions sur comment le plan de relance pouvait favoriser l'émergence d'une industrie automobile plus verte, digitale et résiliente. Pour le commissaire **Breton**, « notre approche consiste non seulement à réparer notre économie au niveau européen et de chaque État membre, mais aussi – et c'est important – à la transformer. Il ne s'agit pas de financer le passé, mais d'investir dans l'avenir. L'Union européenne mobilisera tous les instruments pour réaliser notre vision commune d'un secteur automobile leader en mobilité propre, connecté, innovatrice et source d'emplois de qualité et durables. » Il a conclu : « Nous devons avancer rapidement. Personne n'est en capacité d'avancer seul. Nous devons discuter, coordonner et favoriser les échanges d'expériences et de bonnes pratiques en impliquant tous les acteurs des écosystèmes comme vous le faites. À ce titre, l'initiative que vous avez prise en constituant ce Forum de l'Automobile me paraît très prometteuse et je souhaite qu'elle soit recommandée aux autres États membres. » Le discours en entier est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova - Tél.: +32 229-66953; Federica Miccoli - Tél.: +32 229-58300)

## **Antitrust: Commission publishes report on the impact of the Interchange Fees Regulation**

The European Commission has published a report on the impact of the Interchange Fees Regulation ("IFR") for card-based payment transactions. In line with the requirements on the IFR itself, it has been sent to the European Parliament and the Council. The report concludes that the main objectives of the Regulation have been achieved, as interchange fees for consumer cards have decreased, leading to reduced merchants' charges for card payments, and ultimately resulting in improved services to consumers and lower consumer prices. Furthermore, market integration has improved through the increased use by merchants of acquirers (banks servicing merchants) located in other Member States (cross-border acquiring services) and more cross-border card transactions. However, further monitoring and reinforced data gathering are necessary in some areas, including those where only limited time has elapsed since the Regulation entered into force. Given the positive impact of the IFR and the need for more time to see the full effects of the Regulation, the report is not accompanied by a revision legislative proposal. The main objectives of the IFR, which entered into force in 2015, were to address interchange fees for cards and card-based payment transactions, which were highly diversified, elevated and non-transparent. These fees represented an obstacle to Single Market integration and created distortions of competition, including higher costs for retailers and consumers. To this effect, the IFR caps interchange fees for consumer cards, introduces business rules and prohibits practices that create market barriers, such as territorial restrictions or the prevention of choice of payment brand or payment application by merchants and consumers. The Commission's report builds on a comprehensive [study](#) on the application of the IFR, commissioned by the Commission to an external contractor and [published on 11 March 2020](#). It further relies on extensive additional input provided by stakeholders including major card schemes, retailers and payment service providers including business associations, consumers and national competent authorities. 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)

## **Aides d'État: la Commission autorise des régimes fiscaux italiens de 7,6 milliards d'euros pour soutenir les entreprises et les travailleurs indépendants touchés par la pandémie de coronavirus**

La Commission européenne a autorisé quatre régimes d'aides italiens destinés à soutenir les entreprises et les travailleurs indépendants touchés par la pandémie de coronavirus. Les quatre mesures ont été autorisées au titre de l'[encadrement temporaire](#) des aides d'État adopté par la Commission le 19 mars 2020 et modifié le [3 avril](#) et le [8 mai](#) 2020. L'Italie a notifié à la Commission quatre régimes d'aides, représentant un montant total estimé à 7,6 milliards d'euros, consistant en la renonciation à certaines taxes et en l'octroi de crédits d'impôt aux entreprises et aux travailleurs indépendants touchés par la pandémie de coronavirus. Ces mesures s'inscrivent dans un train de mesures plus large visant à soutenir l'économie italienne dans le contexte de la pandémie de coronavirus, énoncé dans le *Decreto Rilancio*. Les mesures visent i) à alléger les contraintes de liquidité que connaissent les entreprises et les travailleurs indépendants en raison des effets négatifs de la pandémie de coronavirus et ii) à encourager l'adaptation des processus de production et des lieux de travail aux nouvelles exigences sanitaires. La Commission a conclu que les mesures étaient nécessaires, appropriées et proportionnées pour remédier à une perturbation grave de l'économie d'un État membre, conformément à l'article 107, paragraphe 3, point b), du TFUE et aux conditions énoncées dans l'encadrement temporaire. Sur cette base, la Commission a autorisé les mesures en vertu des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État. Mme Margrethe **Vestager**, vice-présidente exécutive chargée de la politique de concurrence, s'est exprimée en ces termes : « *Par cet ensemble de mesures, d'un budget total de 7,6 milliards d'euros, l'Italie renforcera son soutien aux entreprises et aux travailleurs indépendants durement touchés par la pandémie de coronavirus, en allégeant leurs contraintes de liquidité au moyen d'exonérations et de crédits d'impôt. Ces mesures encourageront aussi l'adaptation des processus de production et des environnements de travail aux nouvelles exigences sanitaires. Nous continuerons à travailler en étroite coopération avec les États membres afin de trouver des solutions pratiques permettant d'atténuer les répercussions économiques de la pandémie de coronavirus dans le respect de la réglementation de l'UE.* » Le communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +32 229 90526)

## **State aid: Commission approves €600 million Slovenian scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a €600 million Slovenian scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#) adopted by the Commission on 19 March 2020, as amended on [3 April 2020](#) and [8 May](#)

[2020](#). Under the scheme, which will be open to companies active in different sectors, the support will take the form of direct grants, payment advantages and wage subsidies. The aim of the scheme is to help companies counter the liquidity shortages they face due to the coronavirus outbreak, continue their activities and preserve employment. The Commission found that the Slovenian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, with respect to direct grants and payment advantages, the aid will not exceed €100,000 per company active in the primary production of agricultural products, €120,000 per company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector, and €800,000 per company active in other sectors as provided by the Temporary Framework. With respect to wage subsidies, (i) the aid will be granted over a period of not more than twelve months after the aid application, (ii) the subsidies will concern employees that would have otherwise been made redundant, (iii) and it is subject to the condition that the benefitting personnel is maintained in continuous employment for at least the entire period for which the aid is granted. 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.57558 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 €102 million Bulgarian scheme to support medium-sized companies affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a BGN 200 million (approximately €102 million) Bulgarian scheme to support medium-sized companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#) adopted by the Commission on 19 March 2020, as amended on [3 April 2020](#) and [8 May 2020](#). The public support will be co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (€87 million). It will take the form of direct grants of up to €75,000 per company and will be accessible to companies active in all sectors, except in the primary production and processing of agricultural products, fishery, aquaculture, forestry and the financial and gambling sectors. The purpose of the scheme is to address the liquidity needs of medium-sized companies and to help them to continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The measure is expected to benefit approximately 1,500 medium-sized companies. The Commission found that the Bulgarian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid will be granted before 31 December 2020 and will not exceed €800,000 per company. 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 measures 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.57795 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 €1.4 billion Dutch scheme to support small and medium-sized enterprises affected by coronavirus outbreak**

The European Commission has approved a Dutch scheme, with an estimated budget of €1.4 billion, to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#) adopted by the Commission on 19 March 2020, as amended on [3 April](#) and [8 May 2020](#). The public support will take the form of direct grants of up to €50,000 per company. The scheme will be open to SMEs active in all sectors, with some exceptions defined by the Netherlands, namely companies active in the primary production of agricultural products, in the processing and marketing of agriculture products as well as in the fishery and aquaculture sector will not be eligible for aid under this scheme. The measure is expected to benefit 200,000 companies. The purpose of the scheme is to address the liquidity needs of companies affected by the current crisis and to help them to continue their activities, start investments and maintain employment during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the Dutch scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid will not exceed €800,000 per company. 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 measures 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.57712 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 prolongation of tax exemption for non food-based biogas and bio propane used for heating or as motor fuel in Sweden**

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rule, the prolongation of tax exemption measures for non food-based biogas and bio propane used for heating or as motor fuel in Sweden. Under two separate schemes, Sweden exempts from energy and CO taxation (i) biogas that is used in heat generation (former scheme last prolonged in 2018) and (ii) biogas that is used as motor fuel (former scheme last prolonged in 2015). With today's decisions, the Commission approves for both schemes a 10-year prolongation of the tax exemption (2021-2030), with two modifications: i) limiting the tax exemption to only non-food based biogas and ii) extending the tax exemption to non-food based bio-propane. The objective of the tax exemption is to increase the use of biogas and bio-propane and to reduce the use of fossil fuels and their greenhouse gas emissions, while facilitating the transition towards advanced biofuels. The Commission assessed the measures under EU State aid rules, in particular the [Guidelines on State Aid for environmental protection and energy](#) 2014-2020. The Commission found that the tax exemptions were necessary and appropriate for stimulating the production and consumption of domestic and imported biogas and bio propane, without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. In addition, the schemes will contribute to the efforts of both Sweden and the EU as a whole to deliver on the Paris agreement and move towards the 2030 renewables and CO targets. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measures are in line with EU State aid rules. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [State Aid Register](#) under the case numbers SA.56125 (heat generation) and SA.56908 (motor fuel). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

### **Mergers: Commission approves acquisition of Intesa Sanpaolo's merchant acquiring business by Nexi**

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed acquisition of the bank Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A. ("ISP")'s merchant acquiring business ("ISP Acquiring") by the digital payment services supplier Nexi S.p.A., both of Italy. ISP Acquiring is the in-house merchant acquiring business of ISP and provides merchant acquiring services primarily in Italy and exclusively to ISP customers. Nexi is active in the card payment systems sector in Italy and provides a range of services for merchants, such as (i) merchant acquiring services, enabling merchants to accept card payments); (ii) acquiring processing services which technically process the transactions of merchants, and (iii) point of sale ("POS") terminals, which are the physical card readers in the store and related services. The transaction gives rise to horizontal overlaps between the activities of the companies in the market for the provision of merchant acquiring services at retail level and in the market for the provision of POS terminals and related services. In addition, the transaction creates several vertical links between the activities of the companies, including between wholesale merchant acquiring (upstream) and retail merchant acquiring (downstream). The Commission found that the horizontal overlaps would raise no competition concerns, given that, following the transaction, there would still be a sufficient number of alternative suppliers, to which customers could switch. As regards the vertical links between wholesale and retail merchant acquiring, the Commission found no competition concerns, as the merged entity will have neither ability nor incentive to restrict competitors' access to essential input and/or to a sufficient customer base. As regards the other vertical relationships, the Commission found that they are not problematic, considering that they mostly consolidate the high level of integration already existing between Nexi and ISP Acquiring's activities. The Commission therefore concluded that the transaction would raise no competition concerns in Europe nor in Italy. The Commission carried out its assessment with the constructive cooperation of the Italian Competition Authority. 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.9759](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **EU-Republic of Korea Leaders' videoconference: Focus on the coronavirus response and strengthening bilateral cooperation**

On Tuesday, 30 June, Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** and Council President Charles Michel, together with High Representative/Vice-President Josep **Borrell**, will hold a videoconference with the President of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in. The leaders will exchange views on the respective responses to the coronavirus pandemic, including as regards lessons learned to strengthen resilience, cooperation in research and vaccine development, and a green socio-economic recovery. In this context, they are likely to confirm the importance they attach to effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order. The leaders will discuss areas related to the EU-Republic of Korea bilateral strategic partnership, including trade relations under the [EU-Republic of Korea Free Trade Agreement](#). The leaders are also expected to touch on international and regional security matters, including the shared objective of building trust and establishing lasting peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, free of nuclear weapons. A joint press conference of President **von der Leyen** and President Michel will take place upon conclusion of the videoconference, at 10:00 CEST, and will be available to watch live on [EbS](#). More information on the Leaders' meeting is available on the [website](#). More information on EU-Republic of Korea relations is available on the [website of the EU Delegation in Seoul](#). *(More information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 299 4073; Virginie Battu-Henriksson - Tel.: +32 229 54438; Adam Kaznowski – Tel.: +32 229 89359)*

### **Brussels IV Conference 'Supporting the future of Syria and the region': highlighting the role of civil society**

The fourth edition of the Brussels Conference on '[Supporting the Future of Syria and the Region](#)' (#SyriaConf2020) will culminate on Tuesday with the Ministerial segment. Co-chaired by High Representative/Vice-President Josep **Borrell** and UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordination, Mark Lowcock, it will gather over 80 delegates from more than 60 countries and a dozen international organisations. Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér **Várhelyi**, and Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez **Lenarčič**, will also participate to address together with all participants the crucial political, humanitarian and regional development aspects of the crisis. Civil society representatives from inside Syria and the region will convey the main recommendations resulting from the [online consultation](#) process that preceded the Ministerial segment. The entire Ministerial meeting will be [webstreamed](#) and starts at **10:00**, followed by plenary sessions. A press conference will take place at **12:30**. The Conference pledges will be announced in the closing session at +/- **17:45**. The opening ceremony, press conference and pledge announcement will be broadcast live on [EbS](#). The Conference is also giving voice to those directly caught up in the conflict, which is a theme at the heart of the [Conference's virtual exhibition](#). During the past week, it has placed particular emphasis on dialogue with civil society. On 22-23 June, the '[Days of Dialogue](#)' virtually gathered civil society organisations, including from the region, Ministers and senior decision-makers from refugee-hosting countries, the EU, the United Nations and other international partners to discuss the main issues at stake in the Syrian crisis. More than 35,000 people have followed these discussions, which were designed around 1,400 responses to an [online consultation](#) run by the European Union in May. From 24 to 29 June, a number of [side events](#) hosted by EU Member States, partner countries, UN agencies and other international organisations also took place online. The speeches of Commissioners **Várhelyi** and **Lenarčič** at the Days of Dialogue and side events are available online. This afternoon High Representative/Vice-President Josep **Borrell** and UN Special Envoy for Syria, Geir Pedersen, will have exchanges via videoconference with a diverse group of representatives from Syrian civil society and Syrian women. BOZAR will also host tonight at 19:00 a [conversation](#) with visual artist Sulafa Hijazi, and clarinetist and composer Kinan Azmeh on the role of arts in the Syrian conflict. Follow it live [here](#). More information on the Conference, including the full programme and link to the live webcast, is available on the dedicated [website](#). See also our factsheets on [the EU and the Syria crisis](#) and on the [EU assistance's impact inside Syria](#), in [Lebanon](#), in [Jordan](#) and in [Turkey](#). *(For more information: Peter Stano - Tel.: +32 229 54553; Balazs Ujvari - Tel.: +32 229 54578; Ana Pisonero – Tel. : +32 229 54320; Lauranne Devillé – Tel. : +32 229 80833; Zoï Muletier – Tel. : +32 229 94306)*

### **Commissioner Dalli speaks at 'Equality 2020' conference marking the 20th anniversary of the Race Equality Directive**

Today, Commissioner for Equality, Helena **Dalli**, participated in the '[Equality 2020](#)' conference, marking the adoption of the [Race Equality Directive](#) 20 years ago. The Directive, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin, is one of the building blocks of EU's efforts to fight discrimination in Europe. Helena **Dalli**, Commissioner for Equality, said: " *Over the past 20 years, equality bodies in the EU, equipped with robust legal tools have boosted equality across Europe, triggering positive changes at societal, institutional and individual levels. But recent events, such as the 'Black Lives Matter' protests, show that big challenges remain deeply rooted in Europe. Today, our main goal is to strengthen the adequate application of the Race Equality Directive and to ensure that equality bodies are well equipped to perform their tasks independently, effectively and efficiently.*" The Conference co-hosted by the European Commission, the Council, the Croatian Presidency of the EU and the [European Network of Equality bodies 'EQUINET'](#) will bring together representatives from Member States, equality bodies, and civil society to discuss the future of equality in Europe. The EU has a strong legal framework in place to fight racism, including the Race Equality Directive and the Framework Decision on combatting racism and xenophobia. However, as pointed out by President **von der Leyen** in her [speech in the European Parliament](#) on 17 June, the EU needs to do more, as there is a need to talk about racism – openly and honestly. In this context, last week, [the College of Commissioners held a structured debate](#) 'Against Racism and For More Diversity and Equality in the European Union'. During the debate, the College explored various potential avenues for action, with concrete actions to be announced in autumn. More information on the conference as well as the closing remarks by Commissioner **Dalli** are available [online](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand - Tel.: +32 229 62253; Guillaume Mercier - Tel.: +32 229 80564; Katarzyna Kolanko - Tel.: +32 229 63444)

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