



## Daily News 20 / 01 / 2022

Brussels, 20 January 2022

### President von der Leyen at the World Economic Forum

This morning, Commission President Ursula **von der Leyen** gave a speech on the 'State of the World' at the World Economic Forum, via videoconference. In her remarks, the President underscored the importance of trust, as our most valuable asset on the way to recovery. Trust and confidence in democracy, for example, but also in science and vaccines, in functioning societies based on the rule of law, and among countries, for good cooperation. The President highlighted that the pandemic has shown that democracies are the more powerful, more resilient and more sustainable form of government. European scientists whose work was enabled by our values - liberty of research, freedom of science and independent choices for investors - developed the mRNA vaccines which have put us on the way out of this crisis. On semiconductors and chips, President **von der Leyen** underlined the need to invest in the development, production and use of this key technology: *"By 2030, 20% of the world's microchips production should be in Europe. We have no time to lose. We will propose our European Chips Act in early February."* On energy, she underlined that today's gas crisis must also serve to accelerate the transition to clean energy and provide the impetus we need to further integrate our energy market. We must ensure that there are no energy islands or regions of Europe that are cut off from our network, focus on protecting those most affected, and ensure that we have the reliable suppliers we need. Lastly, President **von der Leyen** also spoke about Russian interference in our neighbourhood: *"We do not accept Russian attempts to divide Europe into spheres of influence. We reaffirm our solidarity with Ukraine and our European partners that are threatened by Russia. We want this dialogue. We want conflicts to be solved in the bodies that have been formed for this purpose. But if the situation deteriorates, if there are any further attacks on the territorial integrity of Ukraine, we will respond with massive economic and financial sanctions. The transatlantic community stands firm on this."* The full speech is available online in [English](#), and will be available in [French](#) and [German](#) shortly. Watch the video [here](#). (For more information: Eric Mamer – Tel.: +32 229 94073; Dana Spinant – Tel.: +32 229 90150)

### Propriété intellectuelle : une nouvelle ère commence avec l'application provisoire du brevet unitaire

La Commission se félicite du début de la période d'application provisoire de l'accord relatif à une juridiction unitaire en matière de brevets, ouvrant la voie au lancement complet du brevet unitaire. Au cours de cette période, le tribunal unitaire du brevet achèvera les mesures nécessaires pour assurer le lancement opérationnel du nouveau système. Le brevet unitaire permettra une protection simple et abordable des brevets en Europe, grâce à une procédure unique d'enregistrement des brevets et à des litiges centralisés. Le brevet unitaire réduira considérablement les coûts de la protection par brevet, au bénéfice des entreprises, et en particulier des PME. Cela devrait encourager à la fois les investissements dans la recherche et le développement et faciliter le transfert de connaissances dans l'ensemble du marché unique. Enfin, le brevet unitaire réduira également l'écart entre le coût de la protection par brevet en Europe et celui des États-Unis, du Japon et d'autres pays tiers. Le lancement opérationnel du système de brevet unitaire débutera le premier jour du quatrième mois suivant le dépôt du dernier instrument requis de ratification de l'accord relatif à une juridiction unitaire en matière de brevets. Une déclaration du commissaire chargé du marché intérieur, Thierry **Breton**, saluant l'application provisoire du brevet unitaire est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Federica Miccoli – Tél.: +32 229 58300)

### Protecting consumers from misleading reviews: 55% of screened websites violate EU law

Today, the European Commission and national consumer protection authorities released the [results](#) of an EU-wide website screening ("sweep") on online consumer reviews. Under the coordination of the Commission, authorities of 26 Member States, Iceland and Norway checked 223 major websites

for misleading consumer reviews. Almost two thirds of the online shops, marketplaces, booking websites, search engines and comparison service sites analysed, triggered doubts about the reliability of the reviews: In 144 out of the 223 websites checked, authorities could not confirm that these traders were doing enough to ensure that reviews are authentic, i. e. that they were posted by consumers that actually used the product or service that they reviewed. Consumer protection authorities concluded that at least 55% of the checked websites potentially violate the Unfair Commercial Practices Directive which requires that truthful information is presented to consumers to allow an informed choice. Authorities also had doubts for a remaining 18%. The Commission will continue working with the CPC Network on this important issue and support national authorities in their enforcement actions. More information is available in our [press release](#). (For more information: Christian Wigand — Tel.: +32 229 62253; Jördis Ferrolí — Tel.: +32 229 92729)

## **Fonds européen d'ajustement à la mondialisation : 2,8 millions d'euros pour soutenir des travailleurs licenciés dans le secteur automobile espagnol**

La Commission européenne propose aujourd'hui de soutenir 450 travailleurs ayant perdu leur emploi dans le secteur automobile de la région espagnole de Catalogne à hauteur de 2,8 millions d'euros provenant du [Fonds européen d'ajustement à la mondialisation en faveur des travailleurs licenciés \(FEM\)](#). Ce financement aidera les travailleurs licenciés à trouver un nouvel emploi grâce à des orientations et des conseils adaptés, un soutien au développement de nouvelles compétences et une aide à la création de leur propre entreprise. Le soutien apporté aux travailleurs licenciés couvre notamment la rédaction de CV, la préparation aux entretiens d'embauche, l'apprentissage de nouvelles compétences grâce à la formation professionnelle, l'aide à la recherche d'emploi et le financement pour démarrer une entreprise. Le commissaire à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, Nicolas **Schmit**, a déclaré à ce sujet: « *L'UE fait preuve de solidarité à l'égard des travailleurs qui ont été touchés par des restructurations imprévues. Grâce au financement du Fonds européen d'ajustement à la mondialisation, nous aiderons 450 anciens travailleurs du secteur automobile en Catalogne, qui ont perdu leur emploi parce que les constructeurs automobiles ont réduit leur production en Europe, à retrouver du travail. Ce soutien de l'UE les aidera à acquérir de nouvelles compétences, à postuler à de nouveaux emplois ou à créer leur propre entreprise.* » Le coût total de ces mesures de soutien est estimé à 3,3 millions d'euros, dont 85 % (2,8 millions) seront pris en charge par le FEM. Le service public de l'emploi de Catalogne (SOC) financera les 15 % restants. La proposition de la Commission doit maintenant être approuvée par le Parlement européen et le Conseil. Comme prévu dans le nouveau [règlement relatif au FEM pour la période 2021-2027](#), le Fonds continue de soutenir les travailleurs licenciés et les travailleurs indépendants en cessation d'activité. Plus d'informations sont disponibles dans notre [communiqué de presse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Veerle Nuyts — Tél.: + 32 229 96302; Flora Matthaes — Tél.: + 32 229 83951)

## **Chemicals: Commission seeks views on revision of REACH, the EU's legislation on chemicals**

Today, the Commission is launching a [public consultation](#) on the revision of the Regulation on the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals ([REACH](#)). The revision will aim to align the EU's chemical rules with the Commission's ambition for safe and sustainable chemicals and a high level of protection of health and the environment, while preserving the internal market. The planned REACH revision is one of the actions announced in the [Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability](#). Commissioner for the Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: "Europe already plays a leading role in safe and sustainable chemicals. Our chemicals policy aims to accelerate this transition for the benefit of our citizens and the environment, while continuing to enable innovation by the chemicals industry. I count on industry, civil society, academia, and public authorities to help us identify the solutions that can support these efforts." Commissioner for the Environment, Oceans and Fisheries, Virginijus **Sinkevičius**, said: "We have come a long way regulating chemicals in the EU. But the ambition of our European Green Deal is that we all live in a truly toxic-free environment. We cannot afford to expose our health and our nature to harmful chemicals. The revision of REACH will deliver on this ambition." The Commission invites citizens and interested parties to express views on a wide range of policy matters including registration requirements, mixtures assessment factors, communication in the supply chains, dossier and substance evaluation, the authorisation and restriction processes, and control and enforcement. The public consultation will feed into the ongoing work on an impact assessment. The consultation will run until mid-April 2022 and is available [here](#). More information in our [news item](#). (For more information: Adalbert Jahnz – Tel.: +32 229 53156; Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tél.: +32 229 88199; Federica Miccoli – Tel.: +32 229 58300)

## **Agriculture: The Commission approves new geographical indication from Mongolia**

The Commission has approved today the addition of '[Увс чацаргана/Uvs chatsargana](#)' from Mongolia in the register of Protected Geographical Indication (PGI). The 'Увс чацаргана/Uvs chatsargana', meaning the Seabuckthorn from Uvs, refer to berries cultivated in the Uvs Province, in north-western Mongolia. They are generally yellow or orange but can also sometimes be reddish, cream or maroon and are characterised by their juicy pulp, an aromatic smell and a sour taste. The 'Увс чацаргана/Uvs chatsargana' grow in a natural environment that is extremely harsh with temperatures fluctuating between +36°C in summer and -49.6°C in winter, so they develop a high content of oil and carotene, and a rich aroma. Thanks to their specific qualities and nutrients, the 'Увс чацаргана/Uvs chatsargana' also enjoy a reputation both nationally and internationally. This new denomination is the first Protected Geographical Indication from Mongolia registered. It will be added to the list of 1573 agricultural products and foodstuffs from the EU and from non-EU countries already protected in the [eAmbrosia](#) database. More information online on [quality schemes](#) and in our [GIView](#) portal. (For more information: Miriam Garcia-Ferrer - Tel.: +32 229 99075; Thérèse Lerebours - Tel.: +32 229 63303)

## **Antitrust: Commission publishes final report on consumer Internet of Things sector inquiry**

The European Commission has published today the findings of its competition sector inquiry into the consumer Internet of Things (IoT). The [final report](#) and its accompanying [staff working document](#) identify potential competition concerns in the rapidly growing markets for IoT related products and services in the European Union. The documents published today present the Commission's findings, taking account of comments received during the [public consultation](#) on the preliminary report of [June 2021](#) and confirming the [preliminary report's conclusions](#) published in June 2021. Comments include input from stakeholders such as leading consumer IoT players, smart device manufacturers, creative content service providers, associations, or telecommunication operators. The main findings of the sector inquiry on the Consumer IoT cover the following points also covered in the preliminary report: (i) the characteristics of consumer IoT products and services, (ii) the features of competition in these markets, (iii) the main areas of potential concern raised by stakeholders in relation to the current functioning of consumer IoT markets, as well as to their future outlook. The information collected in the context of the sector inquiry on the consumer IoT will provide guidance to the Commission's future enforcement and regulatory activity. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy said: "*The consumer Internet of Things sector is increasingly becoming part of our everyday life. The final findings of our sector inquiry confirm concerns identified in the preliminary report. This is a market with high barriers to entry, few vertically integrated players and concerns about access to data, interoperability or exclusivity practices amongst others. We are confident that the sector inquiry's findings will provide guidance on the Commission's future enforcement and regulatory activity. We are also hopeful that it will stimulate companies to proactively address those concerns.*" A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **State aid: Commission approves 2022-2027 regional aid map for Austria**

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules Austria's map for granting regional aid from 1 January 2022 to 31 December 2027 within the framework of the [revised Regional aid Guidelines](#) ('RAG'). The revised RAG, adopted by the Commission on 19 April 2021 and in force since 1 January 2022, enable Member States to support the least favoured European regions in catching up and to reduce disparities in terms of economic well-being, income and unemployment – cohesion objectives that are at the heart of the Union. They also provide increased possibilities for Member States to support regions facing transition or structural challenges such as depopulation, to contribute fully to the green and digital transitions. At the same time, the revised RAG maintain strong safeguards to prevent Member States from using public money to trigger the relocation of jobs from one EU Member State to another, which is essential for fair competition in the Single Market. Austria's regional aid map defines the Austrian regions eligible for regional investment aid. The map also establishes the maximum aid intensities in the eligible regions. The aid intensity is the maximum amount of State aid that can be granted per beneficiary, expressed as a percentage of eligible investment costs. Under the revised RAG, regions covering 22.42% of the population of Austria will be eligible for regional investment aid under the derogation of Article 107(3)(c) of the TFEU. A press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **State aid: Commission approves three Portuguese schemes to support companies in Azores**

## **in the context of the coronavirus pandemic**

The European Commission has approved three Portuguese schemes to support companies in the outermost region of the Azores in the context of the coronavirus pandemic. The measures were approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). The first measure, a €8.7 million wage subsidy scheme that goes under the name "Suporte ao Emprego Regional", replaces three regional aid measures that the Commission previously approved ([SA.57050](#), [SA.61239](#) and [SA.61240](#)). Under the second €6.4 million scheme, which goes under the name "Apoio Extraordinário à Empregabilidade Açores 21", the aid takes the form of wage subsidies, with varying levels of aid intensity depending on the size of the company. Under the third €5.9 million scheme, which goes under the name "Incentivo Regional à Normalização da Atividade Empresarial", the aid takes the form of wage subsidies for a period of either three or six months. In case the wage subsidies are granted for a period of six months, the eligible beneficiaries are also entitled to receive an exemption from the payment of 50% of the social security contributions for a two-month period. The Commission found that the three Portuguese schemes are in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the measures will assist companies that are particularly affected by the coronavirus pandemic and are aimed at avoiding layoffs; (ii) the monthly wage subsidies will not exceed 80% of the monthly gross salary of the benefitting personnel; and (iii) the aid will be granted no later than 30 June 2022. The Commission therefore concluded that the schemes 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 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 numbers SA.63265, SA.63546 and SA.63547 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 – Tél.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **State aid: Commission approves €2 million Cypriot scheme to support tour operators affected by the coronavirus pandemic**

The European Commission has approved a €2 million Cypriot scheme to support tour operators affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The measure was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants. The measure will be open to tour operators active in the Republic of Cyprus that have concluded contracts with air carriers travelling to Cyprus via the airports of Larnaca and Paphos. The purpose of the scheme is to incentivize incoming tourism, while indirectly benefitting many related businesses such as hotels, restaurants, the food industry, cultural and sports events. The Commission found that the Cypriot measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the aid (i) will not exceed €2.3 million per beneficiary; and (ii) will be granted no later than 30 April 2022. 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.101278 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 – Tél.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## **Mergers: Commission preliminarily concludes Hungary breached Article 21 of the EU Merger Regulation by vetoing the acquisition of AEGON's Hungarian subsidiaries by VIG**

The European Commission has preliminarily concluded that the decision of 6 April 2021 by Hungary to veto the acquisition of the Hungarian subsidiaries of the AEGON Group by Vienna Insurance Group AG Wiener Versicherung Gruppe ('VIG') constitutes a breach of Article 21 of the Merger Regulation. The European Commission opened an investigation in this respect on [29 October 2021](#). The acquisition forms part of a wider transaction unconditionally cleared by the Commission under the EU Merger Regulation on [12 August 2021](#), whereby VIG would acquire AEGON's Hungarian, Polish, Romanian and Turkish life and non-life insurance, pension fund, asset management and ancillary services businesses. Prior to the Commission's clearance, Hungary issued a veto decision based on emergency amendments to the Hungarian foreign direct investment screening legislation introduced in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, arguing that the acquisition threatened Hungary's

legitimate interests. Under Article 21 EU Merger Regulation, the Commission has exclusive competence to examine concentrations with a Union dimension and requires Member States not to apply their national laws to these transactions. Member States can only take appropriate measures to protect legitimate interests provided that such measures are compatible with the general principles and other provisions of EU law, and are communicated to the Commission except for limited instances. The Commission exercises a control not only on the appropriateness of these measures and on their compatibility with EU law, but also ascertains that such measures are genuinely aimed at protecting a legitimate interest. The Commission's preliminary assessment takes a preliminary position that there are reasonable doubts as to the measure being aimed to protect Hungary's legitimate interests within the meaning of the EU Merger Regulation. Therefore, the Commission preliminarily considers that Hungary's reasoning is insufficient and that the veto should have been communicated to, and approved by, the Commission before Hungary implemented it. The preliminary assessment also argues that the veto decision is incompatible with Article 21 of the EU Merger Regulation as it infringes the freedom of establishment. The preliminary assessment invites Hungary to respond within 10 working days. The Commission will assess Hungary's response and consider next steps. If the response is not adequate to remove the concerns, the Commission might adopt a final decision concluding that Hungary has infringed Article 21 of the EU Merger Regulation and ordering it to withdraw the veto. More information on the investigation under Article 21 of the Merger Regulation will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the public [case register](#) under the case number M.10494. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel.: +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **Réunion informelle des ministres de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie : les points forts pour la Commission – la transition juste, le prix de l'énergie, l'efficacité énergétique, l'hydrogène et la lutte contre la déforestation**

Le vice-président exécutif Frans **Timmermans** et les commissaires Kadri **Simson** et Virginijus **Sinkevičius** participent à la réunion informelle des ministres de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie [organisée par la présidence française du Conseil de l'UE](#) d'aujourd'hui à samedi à Amiens, France. Cette réunion informelle comportera une série de sessions dédiées aux problématiques environnementales, en présence des ministres de l'Environnement, et une série de sessions consacrée aux questions énergétiques, avec les ministres de l'Énergie. Tous les ministres se retrouveront pour deux sessions conjointes, l'une sur le rôle de la forêt et du bois dans les politiques climatiques, énergétiques et environnementales, l'autre sur la transition juste. Aujourd'hui, le commissaire Virginijus **Sinkevičius** représente la Commission dans la réunion des ministres de l'Environnement. Il aura également plusieurs réunions bilatérales, dont une avec la ministre néerlandaise, Christianne van der Wal, sur la politique liée à l'azote, et une autre avec la secrétaire d'État française, Bérangère Abba, sur la déforestation. Vendredi, la réunion informelle aura lieu dans un format conjoint avec les ministres de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie, en présence du vice-président exécutif **Timmermans** et des deux commissaires **Simson** et **Sinkevičius**. Le vice-président exécutif ouvrira la session conjointe sur la transition juste et il aura aussi une réunion bilatérale avec la ministre suédoise du Climat et de l'Environnement, Annika Strandhäll. Samedi, la commissaire **Simson** participera à la réunion des ministres de l'Énergie avec pour points principaux à l'agenda les prix de l'énergie, l'efficacité énergétique et l'hydrogène en Europe. Une conférence de presse aura lieu à la fin de chaque journée de réunion et pourra être suivi [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Tim McPhie – Tél.: +32 229 58602; Adalbert Jahnz – Tél.: + 32 229 53156)

### **Erasmus+ : les commissaires Gabriel et Schmit fêtent le 35e anniversaire du programme et discutent de la mobilité des apprentis**

Cet après-midi, les commissaires Mariya **Gabriel** et Nicolas **Schmit** participent à la [célébration](#) du 35e anniversaire du programme phare Erasmus+ de l'UE, diffusé depuis la Maison de la Radio et de la Musique à Paris. L'événement est organisé par la présidence française du Conseil de l'UE. Les participants au programme témoigneront de leur expérience Erasmus. Mariya **Gabriel**, commissaire à l'innovation, à la recherche, à la culture, à l'éducation et à la jeunesse, a souligné : « *Erasmus a fondamentalement transformé la manière dont les citoyens perçoivent l'Europe. L'Europe est désormais associée à la mobilité et aux études. Au cours de ses 35 années d'existence, 10 millions*

*de personnes ont bénéficié de ses nombreuses possibilités d'apprendre et d'étudier à l'étranger. Le programme a contribué à former une véritable génération d'Européens. L'augmentation des ressources financières permettra au programme de mettre en œuvre des actions autour de quatre grandes priorités: l'inclusion, les transitions verte et numérique, et la participation citoyenne. Erasmus est plus que jamais un programme phare de l'Union européenne et continue à changer la vie de millions de jeunes. »* Ce matin, le commissaire **Schmit** a participé à une conférence ministérielle organisée par la présidence française sur le thème « Nouvelle génération Erasmus : développer la mobilité des apprentis », qui met en lumière les possibilités offertes aux apprentis dans le cadre de ce programme et les moyens d'encourager leur mobilité. Le commissaire à l'emploi et aux droits sociaux, Nicolas **Schmit**, a déclaré à ce sujet : « *Le programme Erasmus renforcé offre également davantage de possibilités aux apprenants de l'enseignement et de la formation professionnels, ainsi que de l'éducation et de la formation des adultes. L'augmentation du budget permettra d'offrir environ deux millions d'expériences de formation professionnelle à l'étranger. Il faut aussi offrir aux apprentis la même possibilité d'une expérience européenne d'autant plus que les financements sont disponibles. La Commission en étroite collaboration avec les États membres entend faciliter la mobilité des jeunes apprentis qui, par ce biais, pourront développer de nouvelles compétences.* » Avec un [budget accru](#) de près de 3,9 milliards d'euros pour l'année prochaine, Erasmus+ continuera à offrir des possibilités de périodes d'études à l'étranger, de stages, d'apprentissages, d'échanges de personnel et de projets de coopération transfrontalière dans différents domaines de l'éducation et de la formation, de la jeunesse et du sport, contribuant ainsi significativement aux objectifs de l'[Année européenne de la jeunesse](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Sonya Gospodinova – Tél.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tél.: +32 229 88199)

[Tentative agendas](#) for forthcoming Commission meetings

*Note that these items can be subject to changes.*

[Upcoming events](#) of the European Commission

[Eurostat](#) press releases

**The Spokesperson's Service has re-opened the Berlaymont press room to a limited number of journalists. For more information, please see [here](#).**

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