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Coronavirus: Commission receives first preliminary application for support from the EU Solidarity Fund for health emergency from Italy

The European Commission received its first preliminary application for financial support from the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) from Italy, to address the coronavirus outbreak and its effects. Italy is expected to submit further details in the weeks to come. Since 1 April 2020, following the [Commission's proposal for a Coronavirus Response Investment Initiative](#), EU Member States can apply for support from the EU Solidarity Fund for health emergency reasons. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira**, said: *"Italy is currently the Member State that is hardest-hit by the coronavirus crisis, and is the first country to apply for help from the EU Solidarity Fund in this context. Thanks to its extended scope, now also including public health emergencies, the Fund is part of the tools the Commission has rapidly put in place to alleviate the burden on Member States' budgets, as a concrete demonstration of European solidarity in these difficult times."* The European Commission will collect all coronavirus-related applications until 24 June 2020 and then assess them in a package in order to ensure an equitable treatment of all cases. It will then submit a proposal for financial aid to the European Parliament and the Council. More information is available in this [press release](#). (For more information: Vivian Loonela – Tel.: +32 229 66712; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Commission awards top-up funding to ERC grantees to spur innovation

The Commission announced today that 55 grantees of the [European Research Council](#) have been awarded [ERC Proof of Concept grants](#) to explore the commercial or societal potential of their research results. The grants, which are worth €150,000 each and are part of the EU's research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020, can be used to explore business opportunities, prepare patent applications or verify the practical viability of scientific concepts. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: *"The ERC grants announced today is yet another mean of EU support to our brightest scientists that will enable them to advance our knowledge across a broad front for the benefit of our societies and economies. Moreover, the coronavirus crisis we are faced with today prompts us to rethink the vital role of science and research in Europe and beyond. They are our best hope for progress and best insurance policy against the unexpected. This is why the European Research Council is a vital component of the Horizon 2020 programme, selecting and funding the very best and creative researchers in Europe."* The awarded projects announced today cover a variety of topics, for example a faster and cheaper approach to detect disease-causing microorganisms; low-power, energy-harvesting hearing implants; or developing a sustainable social business to manage and ethically distribute donated DNA data to scientists. Researchers based in 17 countries, among them many EU Member States as well as other countries, will be working on them. The European Research Council, set up by the European Union in 2007, is the premiere European funding organisation for excellent frontier research. Every year, it selects and funds the very best, creative researchers of any nationality and age, to run projects in Europe. More information is available in this [ERC press release](#), the list of the 55 grant recipients is [here](#) and examples of ERC projects are [here](#). (For more information: Johannes Bahrke - Tel.: + 32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou - Tel.: +32 229 83583)

Réponse mondiale au coronavirus: l'UE lance un appel aux dons

L'Union européenne s'associe à des partenaires mondiaux pour lancer un appel aux dons – la [Réponse mondiale au coronavirus](#) – qui débutera le 4 mai 2020. L'Organisation mondiale de la santé (OMS) et des acteurs mondiaux du domaine de la santé ont lancé un appel conjoint à l'action en vue de mettre en place un accès rapide et équitable à des tests de dépistage, des traitements et des vaccins contre le coronavirus. Afin de lever des fonds pour soutenir cet effort, l'Union européenne et ses partenaires organiseront un marathon mondial des donateurs. Les pays et les organisations du monde entier sont invités à effectuer des promesses de dons pour parvenir à l'objectif de 7,5 milliards d'euros de financement initial. Ursula **von der Leyen**, présidente de la Commission européenne, a déclaré :

« Nous devons amener le monde, ses dirigeants et les citoyens à s'unir contre le coronavirus. Nous allons lancer un appel mondial aux dons. Un véritable marathon. Car pour vaincre le coronavirus, il faut une réponse mondiale et mener sur de nombreux fronts des actions qui s'inscrivent dans la durée. Nous devons développer un vaccin, le produire et le distribuer partout dans le monde. Et nous devons faire en sorte que son prix soit abordable. » Un communiqué de presse est disponible [ici](#). (Pour plus d'informations : Dana Spinant – Tél.: +32 2 299 01 50, Ana Pisonero – Tél.: +32 229 54320;)

Antitrust: Commission seeks feedback on commitments offered by Broadcom concerning TV set-top box and modem chipset markets

The European Commission invites comments from interested parties on commitments offered by Broadcom to address competition concerns in relation to Broadcom's conduct in various TV set-top box and modem chipset markets. In [June 2019](#), the Commission initiated proceedings into alleged anti-competitive practices by Broadcom and at the same time issued a Statement of Objections seeking the imposition of interim measures. In [October 2019](#), the Commission took a decision concluding that interim measures were warranted to prevent serious and irreparable damage to competition from occurring in the worldwide markets for Systems-on-a-Chip ("SoCs") for (i) TV set top boxes, (ii) xDSL modems, (iii) fibre modems, as well as (iv) cable modems. Broadcom has offered set of commitments to address the Commission's competition concerns at worldwide level (excluding China), and at European Economic Area (EEA) level. The commitments also include additional provisions with regard to obligations and inducements to bid equipment based on Broadcom products as well as certain commitments with regard to service providers in the EEA. The commitments would apply for a period of five years. Broadcom also committed not to circumvent or attempt to circumvent these commitments in any way. As regards the monitoring of the commitments' implementation, Broadcom would submit to the Commission a report on their implementation within two weeks from the date of their implementation, and on an annual basis thereafter for the duration of the commitments. A summary of the proposed commitments will be published in the EU's Official Journal. Interested parties can submit their views on the [commitments](#) within six weeks of their publication in the EU's Official Journal. The full text of the commitments will be available on the case website. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "TV set-top boxes and modems are part of our daily lives, for both work and for leisure, even more so in these days of confinement. We are assessing whether the commitments proposed by Broadcom after our interim measures decision of last October will ensure that final consumers reap the benefits of choice and innovation on these markets. We want to hear stakeholders' views before taking any decision." 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)

State aid: Commission approves €550 million German State-guaranteed loan to compensate airline Condor for damage caused by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found a State-guaranteed €550 million public loan in favour of German charter airline Condor to be in line with EU State aid rules. Germany notified to the Commission an aid measure to partly compensate charter airline Condor for the damage suffered due to the cancellation or re-scheduling of its flights as a result of the imposition of travel restrictions introduced by Germany and by many destination countries to limit the spread of the coronavirus. The support will take the form of a State-guaranteed €550 million public loan granted via the German development bank Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW). The measure aims at partly compensating the airline for the damage suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission assessed the measure under Article 107(2)(b) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors (in the form of schemes) for damage directly caused by exceptional occurrences, such as the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the German measure will compensate part of the damage suffered by Condor that is directly linked to the coronavirus outbreak. It also found that the measure is proportionate, as the foreseen compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. The Commission therefore concluded that the measure is in line with EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "This State-guaranteed €550 million loan will allow Germany to compensate Condor, operating in the particularly hard hit aviation sector, for part of the damage suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak. We cooperate with Member States to find workable solutions to support companies in these difficult times, in line with EU rules." 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 un régime de garantie français en faveur des entreprises exportatrices touchées par la pandémie de coronavirus

La Commission européenne a autorisé un régime de garantie français pour les petites et moyennes entreprises dont les activités d'exportation pâtissent de la pandémie de coronavirus. Le régime devrait permettre de mobiliser 150 millions d'euros. Ce régime a été autorisé en vertu de l'[encadrement temporaire](#) des aides d'État adopté par la Commission le 19 mars 2020, tel que modifié le [3 avril 2020](#). L'aide, accordée sous la forme de garanties d'État sur les prêts, sera accessible à toutes les entreprises exportatrices françaises dont le chiffre d'affaires annuel est inférieur à 1,5 milliard d'euros. Le régime vise à limiter les risques liés à l'octroi de crédits aux entreprises exportatrices les plus durement touchées par les répercussions économiques de la pandémie de coronavirus et à garantir ainsi la poursuite de leurs activités. La Commission a constaté que le régime notifié par la France était conforme aux conditions énoncées dans l'encadrement temporaire. La Commission a conclu que la mesure était nécessaire, appropriée et proportionnée 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 la mesure en vertu des règles de l'UE en matière d'aides d'État. Margrethe **Vestager**, vice-présidente exécutive chargée de la politique de concurrence, s'est exprimée en ces termes : « *Le régime de garantie français, qui devrait permettre de mobiliser 150 millions d'euros, soutiendra les exportations des petites et moyennes entreprises touchées par la pandémie de coronavirus. La mesure aidera ces entreprises à poursuivre leur activité pendant et après la crise. Nous continuons à travailler en étroite collaboration avec les États membres pour faire en sorte que des mesures nationales de soutien puissent être mises en place de façon coordonnée et efficace, dans le respect des règles de l'UE.* » Le communiqué de presse est disponible [en ligne](#). (Pour plus d'informations: Arianna Podesta – Tél. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tél.: +3 229 90526; Giulia Astuti – Tél.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves €2 billion Slovenian “umbrella” scheme to support the economy in coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €2 billion Slovenian State aid scheme to support the Slovenian economy in the context of 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](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants, wage subsidies, exemption from paying social security contributions, reduction of certain taxes and water fees, bank guarantees, deferred payment of certain credits and compensatory payments. The Commission found that the Slovenian scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission therefore concluded that the scheme 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: “*The Slovenian scheme of €2 billion we approved provides for aid for the whole economy of Slovenia through wage subsidies, tax exemptions and reductions, guarantees and deferred payment of loans. This will improve the liquidity of businesses and help them continue their activities in these difficult times. We continue working closely with Member States to ensure that national support measures can be put in place quickly and effectively, in line with EU rules.*” 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)

State aid: Commission approves €5 million Lithuanian scheme for SMEs active in road freight transport affected by the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €5 million direct grant scheme to support the Lithuanian economy in the context of 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](#). Following the approval of a €110 million guarantee scheme on [8 April 2020](#) and two €150 million aid schemes in the form of subsidised loans on [9 April 2020](#), Lithuania notified to the Commission under the [Temporary Framework](#) a €5 million scheme to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) active in road freight transport. The support takes the form of direct grants. The scheme is intended to cover interest on existing debt obligations until 31 December 2020 and for a maximum period of six months. It will apply to the whole territory of Lithuania and will be open to SMEs active in road freight transport, a sector negatively affected by the coronavirus outbreak. The Commission found that the scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission therefore concluded that the Lithuanian 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"Road freight transport is also one of the sectors affected by the pandemic. The €5 million Lithuanian scheme will help SMEs active in this sector to ease their financial burden and maintain their activity during and after the outbreak. This is the first scheme we have approved to support this sector in these difficult times. We will continue to work closely with Member States to find solutions to support the economy, in line with EU rules."* 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)

State aid: Commission approves second Spanish "umbrella" scheme to support economy in coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved the second Spanish "umbrella" scheme to support the Spanish economy in the context of 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](#). The measure allows for the provision of aid in light of the [amendments to the Temporary Framework](#) approved by the Commission on 3 April 2020. The notified measure also expands the form of aid that can be granted under the first National Temporary Framework approved by Commission on 2 April, as support can also be granted in the form of guarantees, subsidised interest rates, as well as equity for a nominal amount of up to €100,000 to a company active in the primary agricultural sector, up to €120,000 to a company active in the fishery and aquaculture sector and up to €800,000 to a company active in all other sectors. The measure allows aid to be granted by Spanish authorities at all levels, including central government, regional and local authorities. The measure is targeted at SMEs and large corporates and applies to the whole territory of Spain. The Commission found that the measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission concluded that the scheme is necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy both a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, as well as contribute to fight the health crisis, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU, Article 107(3)(c) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measures under EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The second Spanish "umbrella" scheme will enable Spain to give more support to the economy in this crisis. This includes support for the research and development, the testing and the production of coronavirus relevant products. It also includes wage subsidies and deferrals of tax and social security contributions, helping companies maintain employment. We continue working closely with Member States to ensure that national support measures can be put in place in a timely, coordinated and effective way, in line with EU rules"*. 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)

State aid: Commission approves €100 million Dutch subsidised loan scheme to support SMEs affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €100 million Dutch State aid scheme to support small and medium-sized companies (SMEs) in the context of 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](#). The public support, which will take the form of subsidised interest rates on loans, will be accessible to those SMEs whose main source of financing derives from external equity, venture capital or microcredit. The aim of the scheme is to help those companies which are experiencing difficulties in accessing liquidity due to the coronavirus outbreak cover their immediate working capital and investment needs, thus helping them to continue their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the scheme notified by the Dutch authorities is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission therefore concluded that the Dutch 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"This €100 million Dutch scheme will enable the Netherlands, through the granting of loans at subsidised interest rates, to help SMEs affected by the coronavirus outbreak enhance their access to liquidity to continue their activities in these difficult times. We cooperate closely with Member States to ensure that national support measures can be put in place as quickly and effectively as possible, in line with EU rules."* 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)

State aid: Commission approves €200,000 direct grant scheme to support agricultural and aquaculture sectors in Brussels-Capital region following coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €200,000 Belgian regional scheme to support agricultural and aquaculture sectors in the Brussels-Capital region in the context of 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](#). The support will be accessible to companies of all sizes active in this sector in the Brussels-Capital region. The public support, which will take the form of direct grants, aims at ensuring that those companies which are experiencing cash difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak have liquidity for their activities during and after the outbreak. The Commission found that the measure is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"This €200,000 scheme will support companies active in agricultural and aquaculture sectors in the Brussels-Capital region, which are currently experiencing difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak. It will help these companies cover their immediate liquidity needs to support them in continuing their crucial activities during these challenging times. Our work with Member States continues and ensures that national support measures can be put in place in a coordinated and effective way, in line with EU rules."* 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)

State aid: Commission approves €3 billion Finnish scheme to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a Finnish scheme to support the Finnish economy in the context of 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](#). Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants, equity injections, selective tax advantages and advance payments, as well as repayable advances, State guarantees and loans. The scheme aims at enhancing access to liquidity by those companies, which are most severely affected by the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak, thus allowing them to continue their activities, start investments and maintain employment. The scheme will be open to all companies, with the exception of companies active in the primary agricultural, fishery and aquacultural sectors. It will apply to the whole territory of Finland. The Commission found that the scheme notified by Finland is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission therefore concluded that the Finnish 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"This €3 billion Finnish scheme will enable Finland to support companies suffering from the economic consequences of the coronavirus outbreak. The public support will take various forms in the value of up to €800,000 per company, including direct grants, equity injections, tax and payment advances and State guarantees. It will ensure that companies can meet their liquidity needs and continue their activities during and after the crisis. We continue to work with Member States to ensure that national support measures can be put in place in a coordinated and effective way, in line with EU rules."* 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)

State aid: Commission approves €700 million Polish aid scheme to support companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €700 million scheme to support the Polish economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak. The support measures available under the scheme will be co-financed by EU structural funds (ESIF). Member States can decide how to use EU structural funds, in compliance with ESIF rules and - where these funds are used to grant support to companies, possibly with co-financing from the Member State - in compliance with EU State aid rules. The scheme was approved under the State aid [Temporary Framework](#) adopted by the Commission on 19 March 2020, as amended on [3 April 2020](#). The scheme will be open to all companies, which have access to European structural funds and are facing difficulties in consequence of the coronavirus outbreak. The aim of the measure is to ensure that companies that are experiencing cash difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak have sufficient liquidity to maintain their activities during and after the outbreak. The

Commission found that the scheme notified by Poland is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission concluded that the Polish 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. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"This €700 million Polish scheme will provide grants and repayable advances, co-financed by the European structural funds, to support companies active in all sectors that are suffering from the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak. Our work with Member States continues to ensure that national support measures can be put in place in a coordinated and effective way, in line with EU rules.* 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)

State aid: Commission approves Swedish public guarantee of up to €137 million to compensate airline SAS for damage caused by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found a Swedish State guarantee of up to approximately €137 million on a revolving credit facility in favour of Scandinavian airline SAS to be in line with EU State aid rules. The measure aims at partly compensating the airline for the damage suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak. Since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, SAS has suffered a significant reduction of its services, resulting in high operating losses. On [11 April 2020](#) the Commission approved a State guarantee scheme for airlines notified by Sweden. However, the significant drop in travel demand in relation to the coronavirus outbreak and to the emergency measures necessary to limit its spread continues deteriorating the airlines' financial situation. Sweden notified to the Commission an aid measure to partly compensate SAS for the damage suffered due to the cancellation or re-scheduling of its flights as a result of the imposition of travel restrictions linked to the coronavirus. The support will take the form of a State guarantee on a revolving credit facility in favour of SAS. Sweden will guarantee up to approximately €137 million of such revolving credit facility. If SAS will ultimately not be eligible to receive a State guarantee for the loan under the already approved guarantee scheme for airlines, it will receive it under the present individual aid measure. The Commission assessed the measure under Article [107\(2\)\(b\)](#) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures granted by Member States to compensate specific companies or specific sectors (in the form of schemes) for damage directly caused by exceptional occurrences. The Commission found that the measure is proportionate, as the foreseen compensation does not exceed what is necessary to make good the damage. The Commission therefore concluded that the scheme is in line with EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The aviation sector has been hit particularly hard by the coronavirus outbreak. The measure approved will enable Sweden to compensate SAS for part of the damage suffered due to the coronavirus outbreak through a public guarantee of up to €137 million. Putting in place the necessary support measures in a timely, coordinated and effective way, in line with EU rules, is of paramount importance in these challenging times."* 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)

State aid: Commission approves €215 million Maltese employment aid scheme to support sectors affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €215 million Maltese wage subsidies scheme to support companies operating in the sectors 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](#). The scheme will be accessible to companies of all sizes and also self-employed individuals operating in sectors that are strongly affected by the current health crisis and the containment measures adopted by national authorities. The aim of the scheme is to preserve employment and avoid lay-offs of employees at a time when many business activities are either suspended or significantly reduced. The Commission found that the Maltese scheme is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission concluded that the Maltese 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. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. Executive Vice-President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The €215 million Maltese scheme will help employers maintain jobs in these difficult times. Preserving employment and skills is of utmost importance for the European economy to be able to recover effectively once the health crisis recedes. We are working closely with Member States to ensure that this is done in line with the EU rules"*. The full press release is available [online](#).

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State aid: Commission consults Member States on proposal to further expand State aid Temporary Framework to subordinated debt

On 24 April, the European Commission has sent to Member States for consultation a further draft proposal to clarify one aspect of the [State aid Temporary Framework](#) adopted on 19 March 2020 to support the economy in the context of the coronavirus outbreak, as first [amended on 3 April 2020](#). The Commission is preparing a second amendment to the Temporary Framework. In particular, as of 9 April the Commission has consulted Member States on the proposal to further extend the scope of the Temporary Framework by enabling Member States to provide recapitalisations to companies in need. This further proposed amendment now sent for consultation would complement the existing Framework as regards loans, by defining the conditions under which Member States could grant subordinated debt on favourable terms to support their economies during the coronavirus outbreak, while ensuring sufficient safeguards to limit the distortion of competition in the EU Internal Market. It follows requests by several Member States in the first consultation. Member States have the possibility to comment on the Commission's draft proposal. *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of InfraRed Partners LLP by Sun Life Financial Inc.

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of InfraRed Partners LLP (“InfraRed”) of the UK by Sun Life Financial Inc. (“SunLife”) of Canada. InfraRed is an investment management firm, managing equity capital primarily for institutional investors worldwide. SunLife is a financial services organisation providing insurance, wealth and asset management solutions to individual and corporate clients, primarily in Canada and the US. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns, given the very limited horizontal overlaps and the absence of any vertical relationships between the companies' activities. 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.9770](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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