

BRUSSELS' PULSE #1

NEWS-

EU budget for 2021: Council agrees position

Last 9th September the EU ambassadors agreed the Council's position on the 2021 EU draft budget. In total, the Council's position for next year's budget amounts to **€162.9 billion in commitments** and **€164.8 billion in payments**. According to Olaf Scholz, Germany's Federal Minister for Finance and Vice Chancellor, speech : "The 2021 budget will help the EU to address the damage of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has deeply affected our societies and economies. The Council's position is fully aligned with the priorities agreed by EU leaders in July for the next multiannual financial framework. It provides appropriate means to support a sustainable recovery as well as the EU's green and digital transition." The 2021 budget will be complemented by actions to support the COVID-19 recovery, which will be funded by Next Generation EU, the EU's €750 billion pandemic recovery plan. This is the first annual budget under the long-term EU budget for 2021-2027, the multiannual financial framework (MFF). As the trilateral talks with the Parliament on the next MFF are ongoing, the Council will re-evaluate its position in light of the final text of the MFF. As the trilateral talks with the Parliament on the next MFF are ongoing, the Council will re-evaluate its position in light of the final text of the MFF and the letter of amendment expected from the Commission later in the procedure ... [More](#)

Commission Presents Action Plan To Secure Europe's Sustainable Critical Raw Materials

The European Commission has presented a new action plan on critical raw materials. The plan, which includes the 2020 list of critical raw materials and a foresight study, will work to make Europe's raw materials supply more secure and sustainable. The plan looks at current and future challenges facing the sector and proposes actions to reduce Europe's dependency on third countries while improving efficiency and circularity. The actions will foster Europe's transition towards a green and digital economy and emphasise the EU's resilience and strategic autonomy. The plan aims to:

- Develop resilient value chains for EU industrial ecosystems
- Reduce dependency on primary critical raw materials
- Strengthen domestic sourcing of raw materials in the EU

Diversify sourcing from third countries and remove distortions to international trade, fully respecting the EU's international obligations. To kick off the action plan the Commission will soon establish a European Raw Materials Alliance [More](#)

Coronavirus: Commission proposes more clarity and predictability of any measures restricting free movement in the European Union

Commission adopted a [proposal for a council recommendation](#) to ensure that any measures taken by Member States that restrict free movement due to the coronavirus pandemic are coordinated and clearly communicated at the EU level. The proposal sets out four key areas where Member States should work closer together:

- Common criteria and thresholds for Member States when deciding whether to introduce travel restrictions;
- Mapping of common criteria using an agreed colour code;
- A common framework for measures applied to travellers from high-risk areas;
- Clear and timely information to the public about any restrictions

There is currently a wide discrepancy between national criteria for introducing measures that restrict free movement in the European Union. The Commission is proposing that each Member State takes into account the following criteria when putting in place any restrictive measures: the total number of newly notified COVID-19 cases per 100 000 people in a given area in a 14-day period; the percentage of positive tests from all COVID-19 tests carried out in given area during a seven-day period; the number of COVID-19 tests carried out per 100 000 people in a given area during a seven-day period. Member States should provide this data on a weekly basis to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control... [More](#)

European Green Deal: Commission prepares new initiatives to boost the organic farming sector

The European Commission has launched a [public consultation](#) on its future Action Plan on Organic Farming. This sector will play an important role in achieving the European Green Deal ambition, and reaching the objectives set out in the Farm to Fork and Biodiversity Strategies. It is a priority for the Commission to ensure that the organic farming sector has the right tools in place as well as a well-functioning and consensual legal framework which is key to achieving the objective of 25% of agricultural land dedicated to organic farming. While the new organic regulation provides a solid basis, secondary legislation still to be adopted needs to be equally resilient. At the request of Member States, the European Parliament, third countries, and other stakeholders, the Commission has therefore proposed today as well to postpone the entry into force of the new organic legislation by one year, from 1 January 2021 to 1 January 2020...[More](#)

EU solidarity in Action:€211 million to Italy to repair the damage of the harsh weather conditions in autumn 2019

The European Commission granted €211.7 million from the [EU Solidarity Fund](#) to Italy following the extreme weather damages in late October and November 2019. This EU assistance will contribute to alleviate the extraordinary financial burden of the severe damages caused by floods and landslides, including the flooding in Venice. It will finance retroactively the restoration of vital infrastructures, measures to prevent further damage and to protect cultural heritage, as well as cleaning operations in the disaster-stricken areas. This is part of an [aid package](#) of a total of €279 million addressed to Portugal, Spain, Italy and Austria hit by natural disasters in 2019. Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms, Elisa **Ferreira** commented: *“This decision is yet another sign of the EU solidarity with Italy and Member States suffering from adverse effects of natural disasters. It also reminds us of the importance of investing into the EU climate action to prevent and manage consequences of bad weather conditions and side-effects of climate change.”* The EU Solidarity Fund is one of the main EU instruments for disaster recovery and, as part of the EU coordinated response to the coronavirus emergency, its scope has been recently extended to cover [major health emergencies](#). More information on the EU Solidarity Fund is available on the [data story...More](#)

Tackling pollution and climate change in Europe will improve health and well-being, especially for the most vulnerable

Air and noise pollution, the impacts of climate change such as heatwaves, and exposure to dangerous chemicals cause ill health in Europe. Poor quality environments contribute to 13 % (one in every eight) of deaths according to a major assessment on health and environment released today by the European Environment Agency (EEA).Improving the health and well-being of European citizens is more important than ever, with attention currently focused on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic provides a stark example of the complex links between the environment, our social systems, and our health. A significant proportion of the burden of disease in Europe continues to be attributed to environmental pollution resulting from human activity, according to the EEA report [‘Healthy environment, healthy lives: how the environment influences health and well-being in Europe](#). The report, which draws extensively on World Health Organization data on the causes of death and disease, highlights how the quality of Europe's environment plays a key role in determining our health and well-being. It shows how social deprivation, unhealthy behaviours and shifting demographics in Europe influence environmental health, with the most vulnerable hardest hit.... [More](#)

Finalists Announced for European Capital of Innovation

Twelve cities from nine countries are in the final stage of the contest to become the European Capital of Innovation 2020. The H2020 prize recognises European cities that have developed vibrant innovation ecosystems to address public challenges and improve citizen's lives.

This year's finalists, spanning nine countries, are: Cluj-Napoca (Romania); Espoo (Finland); Ghent (Belgium); Groningen (The Netherlands); Helsingborg (Sweden); Leeuwarden (The Netherlands); Leuven (Belgium); Linz (Austria); Milano (Italy); Reykjavik (Iceland); Valencia (Spain); Vienna (Austria)

A high-level jury of independent experts selected the 12 finalists by analysing how cities use innovative solutions to respond to societal challenges, how they use such practices in the urban development process and how they engage broad local communities in decision-making. The winner city will receive the title of European Capital of Innovation 2020 as well as €1,000,000 to support its innovation activities and to enhance its capacity to connect individuals, public sector, academia, and businesses to deliver societal benefits for its communities. Five runners-up will get €100,000 each [..More](#)

Review of renewables and energy efficiency directives- Commission launches first steps in process

One of the aims of the European Green Deal is to increase the EU's climate ambition so that greenhouse gas emissions can be reduced by at least 50% and towards 55% in a responsible way by 2030. This was a key pledge from President von der Leyen when she was confirmed in office by the European Parliament. The European Green Deal communication has identified a series of climate, energy and environmental legislation that needs to be reviewed and if necessary revised in order to achieve such increased ambition. Both the Renewable Energy Directive (2018/2001/EU) and the Energy Efficiency Directive (2012/27/EU and 2018/2002/EU) are among the instruments that are assessed.

As the first step in this process, the Commission has today published roadmaps for the review of both directives to inform stakeholders and citizens of what the goals of this initiative are and which policy options are being considered, and opened a seven-week period (3 August – 21 September) for public feedback on the concept. This will feed in to the Commission's further preparatory work for these reviews.

For renewables, the [roadmap](#) is in the form of an inception impact assessment. It will assess whether the EU renewable energy target should be raised and whether other parts of the directive would need to be modified, in line with the ongoing assessment underpinning the Climate Target Plan for 2030 and other initiatives already adopted as the Biodiversity Strategy, the Energy System Integration Strategy and the Hydrogen Strategy, as well as Member State national energy and climate plan...[More](#)

Commission adopts proposal to make EU-U.s. agreement on tariffs effective

The European Commission today published a proposal for a Council and European Parliament regulation to scrap duties on certain imports to the EU. In return, the United States will reduce its duties on certain EU exports to the U.S. market. This will put into effect the [agreement](#) announced by the EU and the U.S. on 21 August 2020. These tariff reductions between the EU and the U.S. will increase access to both EU and U.S. markets by around €200 million per year.

Executive Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis** said: *“The EU and the U.S. share the most important economic partnership in the world, with trade in goods and services worth over €1.3 trillion annually. This deal provides both sides with a true win-win outcome, helping us to strengthen our partnership even further. Lowering tariffs on both sides improves access for our exporters and reduces the cost of imported goods. Those are both critically important factors in this time of coronavirus-related economic crisis. From the EU side, we view this agreement as an important step towards improving our relationship and resolving outstanding disputes ...”*

Once approved in line with the relevant procedures on either side of the Atlantic, the agreement will entail the reduction of U.S. tariffs on EU exports worth some \$160 million a year. This includes prepared meals, crystal glassware, surface preparations, propellant powders, lighters and lighter parts. On its side, the EU will eliminate tariffs on imports of U.S. live and frozen lobster products. U.S. exports of these products to the EU are worth some \$111 million. .. [More](#)

State aid: Commission invites comments on State aid rules for the deployment of broadband networks

The European Commission has launched a [public consultation](#) inviting Member States and other stakeholders to provide their views and comments on the existing EU State aid rules on public support for the deployment of broadband networks. The public consultation is part of an overall evaluation by the Commission of the relevant rules with a view to assess whether they are still fit purpose or whether they will need to be updated in light of recent technological and market developments. All interested parties can respond to the public consultation until 5 January 2021. The [2013 Broadband State aid Guidelines](#) enable Member States to provide support for the deployment of broadband networks, subject to certain conditions. In particular, they allow for public investments where a market failure exists and where these investments bring a significant improvement to the market in terms of service availability, capacity, speeds and competition (step change). This ensures that public interventions focus on areas that would otherwise be left behind due to the absence of commercial interest to invest and that support “state of the art” technologies. At the same time, the Guidelines also aim at protecting private investments by providing that no public intervention can take place where private operators have invested or credibly plan to invest and fostering fair competition through competitive selection procedures, technological neutrality and open access requirements for the benefit of all European citizens and businesses.. [More](#)

The European Week of Regions and Cities

The 2020 edition of the European Week of Regions and Cities (#EURegionsWeek) is just around the corner. The European Week of Regions and Cities is the biggest annual Brussels-based event dedicated to regional policy. The event has grown to become a unique communication and networking platform, bringing together regions and cities from all over Europe, including their political representatives, officials as well as experts and academics. Over the last 17 years, it has done much to promote policy learning and exchange of good practices. In 2019, the #EURegionsWeek reached a record high of more than 9000 participants and more than 330 sessions, which shows the event's relevance and potential as a platform for political communication in relation to the development of EU cohesion policy, raising the awareness of decision-makers about the fact that regions and cities matter in EU policy-making. In response to the Covid-19 crisis and restrictions put in place around the world and to limit the spread of the virus, this year the European Week of Regions and Cities will be held as a virtual-only event. While some of the sessions will be web streamed in real time and open to public, most of the sessions will only be accessible to a restricted number of participants. Register to the sessions [Here](#)

-OPPORTUNITIES-

Test Web Authoring Tools and Share your Experience

WE4Authors Cluster project is looking for volunteering web authors who would like to test accessibility by default in authoring tools within a research project. The idea of the WE4Authors Cluster project is to encourage the market to integrate accessibility by default in authoring tools, both generating automatic accessibility and supporting authors to publish in an accessible way. It is something that could change the lives and work of many people around the world. The project has brought together market leading web authoring tool providers to prototype and test how to best support web authors in creating accessible content. Time investment required of the web authors who sign up to this experience is roughly one hour for testing, plus time for sharing the learning about the built-in functionality that they tested. The user testing will happen this October and a demonstration webinar/workshop will be held early next year. What is the reward? The end result, at least ten accessibility by default features, will be shared among the community for free, to inspire the rest of the market to follow.

Deadline to express your interest: 25 September 2020.. [More](#)

Innovation Fund: First call for large-scale projects

The European Commission has launched the first call for proposals under the [Innovation Fund](#), one of the world's largest programmes for the demonstration of innovative low-carbon technologies, financed by revenues from the auction of emission allowances from the EU's Emissions Trading

System. The Innovation Fund will finance breakthrough technologies for renewable energy, energy-intensive industries, energy storage, and carbon capture, use and storage. It aims to boost the green recovery by creating local future-proof jobs, paving the way to climate neutrality and reinforcing European technological leadership on a global scale. For the period 2020-2030, the Innovation Fund will allocate around €10 billion from the auctioning of allowances under the EU Emissions Trading System, in addition to undisbursed revenues from the Innovation Fund's predecessor, the NER 300 programme. The first call will provide grant funding of €1 billion to large-scale projects for clean technologies to help them overcome the risks linked to commercialisation and large-scale demonstration. For promising projects which are not yet ready for market, a separate budget of €8 million is set aside for project development assistance. The call is open for projects in eligible sectors from all EU Member States, Iceland and Norway. The funds can be used in cooperation with other public funding initiatives, such as state aid or other EU funding program. The deadline for submission of applications is **29 October 2020**. .. [More](#)

Open Access to JRC Research Infrastructures

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) opens its scientific laboratories and facilities to people working in academia and research organisations, industry, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and more in general to the public and private sector. The JRC offers access to its non-nuclear facilities to researchers and scientists from EU Member States and countries associated to the EU Research Programme Horizon 2020. For nuclear facilities, the JRC opens to EU Member States and to countries associated to the Euratom Research Programme. Offering access to visiting researchers is part of JRC's strategy to: enhance dissemination of scientific knowledge; boost competitiveness ; bridge the gap between research and industry; provide training and capacity building. Scientists will have the opportunity to work in the following fields: nuclear safety and security (Euratom Laboratories); chemistry; biosciences/life sciences; physical sciences; ICT; Foresight. The results will also feed into JRC's mission to support EU policymaking ... [More](#)

Worldwide Perspectives on Geographical Indications: An International Conference for Researchers, Policy Makers, and Practitioners

Save the date for the 6-9 July 2021. The international conference organized by FAO (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation) and CIRAD (Agriculture research for development) has the objective to allow for dedicated discussions on most recent research and about best practices about GIs, while also sharing views between the academic world, practitioners network and policy sphere. As the Geneva Act of WIPO's Lisbon Agreement recently entered into force, thereby establishing the first international system of registration and protection of GIs, it is time to wrap up the research outcomes and practical experiences of the last 25 years in all parts of the world and bring new ideas, perspectives and inspiration. Nature and legal definition, public and private management, impacts in the marketplace and outside the market, sustainable development including social dimensions and the protection of biodiversity and environment, relationships with other intellectual property rights, engagement with other formal and informal forms of norm-

making, consumers' welfare, competition policies, technical innovation and terroir effect, collective organization and collaboration, participation and empowerment of local actors: these are some of the topics that will feed the debates in this conference, with the objective to grasp the dynamic nature of GIs and understand better their many dimensions and the diversity of their manifestations across the world. The conference will consist of 3 days of presentations and discussions at FAO headquarter and one day field visit (Latium or Tuscany region). The conference will alternate plenary sessions, parallel sessions, feedback and exchange between participants ..[More](#)

Save the date: Europe's First "Greenathon" will happen in October!

This new fully remote event, inspired by the co-creation spirit of a classical hackathon, focuses on creating new ideas and forging unique collaborations for sustainability and business growth. We're looking for open-minded EIC beneficiaries (both [EIC Pathfinder](#) and [EIC Accelerator](#)), with excellent problem-solving capabilities that are passionate about contributing to a greener and cleaner Europe. But that's not all...Take a chance, apply, and you will:

- **GAIN** further knowledge on innovative technologies that will help Europe reach its European Green Deal goals;
- **CO-CREATE** disruptive solutions to a more sustainable future;
- **MEET** like-minded innovators and representatives from big European players;
- **TRANSFORM** environmental challenges into business opportunities;
- **COMPETE** for one of several prizes offered by our business partners. For now, get your minds ready and stay tuned!

Applications will open in early September 2020! .. [More](#)

-CALLS FOR PROPOSALS-

Call for proposals 2020 - Internship opportunities for minority language media

The objective is to develop effective responses and tools to prevent and counter all forms of radicalisation (including in particular Islamist and violent right wing extremism) in priority areas highlighted in the annual Strategic Orientations on a coordinated EU approach to prevention of radicalisation, focusing on approaches for disengagement and reintegration of extremist offenders and radicalised individuals, including on returning foreign terrorist fighters and their families.

Deadline: 24th of November, 2020.
More information [here](#).

Call for proposals 2020 - Framework Partnership Agreement in European low-power microprocessor technologies

The EuroHPC Joint Undertaking will contribute to the ambition of value creation in the Union with the overall mission to develop, deploy, extend and maintain in the Union an integrated world class supercomputing and data infrastructure and to develop and support a highly competitive and innovative High Performance Computing (HPC) ecosystem.

Deadline: 12th of January, 2020.

More information [here](#)

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