Investment Plan for Europe: European Investment Bank to provide BioNTech with €100 million in financing for COVID-19 vaccine development

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and immunotherapy company BioNTech SE today signed a €100 million financing agreement to support the development of BNT162, the company's COVID-19 vaccine programme. BioNTech is the first European company to enter clinical testing, having started a clinical trial in Germany in April and a further clinical trial in the United States at the beginning of May. The EIB financing is backed by both Horizon2020 InnovFin and the European Fund for Strategic Investments. The deal will also fund the expansion of the company's manufacturing capacity. Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, said: "*As part of our efforts to counter the spread of the coronavirus we have embarked decisively on the worldwide race to find an effective and safe vaccine as quickly as possible. For this purpose we recently launched the Coronavirus Global Response initiative, while at the same time we mobilised significant funding through Horizon 2020 for research projects aimed at developing a prophylactic and a therapeutic vaccine. I am very pleased that today, together with the European Investment Bank, we are extending our support to BioNTech, which is yet another concrete step towards our goal of getting a vaccine and ensuring access to it for all."* More information can be found in the press release.*(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marta Wieczorek – Tel.: +32 229 58197; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)*

New Commission report shows the importance of digital resilience in times of crisis

Today the Commission released the results of the 2020 Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI), which monitors Europe's overall digital performance and tracks the progress of EU countries with respect to their digital competitiveness. This year's DESI shows that there is progress in all Member States and all key areas measured in the index. This becomes all the more important in the context of the coronavirus pandemic, which has demonstrated how essential digital technologies have become, by allowing work to continue, monitoring the spread of the virus, or accelerating the search for cures and vaccines. Furthermore, the DESI indicators relevant for the recovery show that EU Member States should step up their efforts to improve the coverage of

Very High Capacity Networks, assign 5G spectrum to enable the commercial launch of 5G services, improve citizens' digital skills and further digitise businesses and the public sector. Executive Vice-President, Margrethe **Vestager**, said: "*The coronavirus crisis has demonstrated how crucial it is for citizens and businesses to be connected and to be able to interact with each other online. We will continue to work with Member States to identify areas where more investment is needed so that all Europeans can benefit from digital services and innovations.*" Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, added: "*The data we publish today shows that industry is using digital solutions now more than ever. We need to ensure this is also the case for small and medium businesses and that the most advanced digital technologies are deployed throughout the economy.*" In the context of the recovery plan for Europe, adopted on 27 May 2020, DESI will inform country-specific analysis to support the digital recommendations of the European Semester. This will assist Member States to target and prioritise their reform and investment needs, thereby facilitating access to the Recovery and Resilience Facility worth €560 billion. The Facility will provide Member States with the funds to make their economies more resilient and ensure that investments and reforms will support the green and digital transitions. More information is available in this press release and these questions and answers. *(For more information: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Marietta Grammenou – Tel.: +32 229 83583)*

Financial Stability: Commission seeks feedback on draft EU rules on third-country central counterparties

The European Commission has today launched a public consultation on draft EU rules on the supervision of non-EU central counterparties (CCPs) that provide services to EU firms. The aim of this is to specify how EU rules on protecting financial stability will apply to these CCPs. CCPs play a systemic role in the financial system as they act as hubs for derivatives contracts. They are already well-regulated and subject to stringent supervision, thanks to a raft of measures adopted in the wake of the financial crisis. On 1 January 2020, new EU rules (referred to as the "European Market Infrastructure Regulation" or EMIR 2.2) became applicable, which upgraded how EU and non-EU CCPs are supervised. Today's consultation consists of three draft delegated acts. They will improve the EU's capacity to manage and address external risks to the financial system. These rules will also contribute to the resilience of financial market infrastructure, which is important to promote the international role of the euro and strengthen Europe's economic and financial sovereignty.

They specify how the European Securities and Markets Authority (ESMA) can supervise non-EU CCPs, depending on the degree of systemic risk that they pose to the EU's financial system or to any of its Member States. Executive Vice-President Valdis **Dombrovskis**, responsible for Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union said: *"Protecting financial stability is one of our key priorities and CCPs play a systemic role in our financial system. We need to have predictable, proportionate and effective rules to address risks related to non-EU CCPs. This is in line with international efforts to bring stability and transparency to global derivative markets. We look forward to receiving public feedback."* The consultation will run for four weeks in accordance with the Better Regulation guidelines. The Commission will examine the feedback before proceeding with the adoption of the three delegated acts and transmitting them to the European Parliament and the Council for scrutiny. For more information, see here. *(For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500; Aikaterini Apostola – Tel.: +32 229 87624)*

Road safety: Europe's roads are getting safer but progress remains too slow

Compared to previous years, fewer people lost their lives on EU roads in 2019, according to preliminary figures published today by the European Commission. An estimated 22 800 people died in a road crash last year, almost 7 000 fewer fatalities than in 2010 – a decrease of 23%. Compared with 2018, the number fell by 2%. With an average of 51 road deaths per 1 million inhabitants, Europe remains by far the safest region in the world when it comes to road safety. Commissioner for Transport Adina **Vălean** said: "*No deaths and serious injuries on European roads by 2050. This is our goal. We aim at 50% fewer deaths, and 50% fewer serious injuries by 2030, and we know our target is achievable. The EU has seen a substantial decrease in road fatalities in the past, but stagnating figures in recent years. In addition, disparities among countries remain huge. We will reach our goal only through a combination of legislative measures, adequate funding, standards for vehicles and infrastructure, digitalization, and best practices exchange."* A press release and memo are available online. *(For more information: Stefan De Keersmaecker – Tel.: +32 229 84680; Stephan Meder – Tel.: +32 229 13917)*

Relations with the UK: Second meeting of EU-UK Joint Committee takes place on Friday, 12 June

On Friday 12 June, Commission Vice-President Maroš **Šefčovič**, together with Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier, will take part in the second meeting of the EU-UK Joint Committee established by the Withdrawal Agreement. It will take place by means of video conference. "*The full and timely implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement is key for building a solid future partnership. We will be asking the UK detailed questions about its commitment to implement it, in particular the Protocol on Ireland / Northern Ireland. It is now time to see concrete actions by the UK authorities*", Vice-President **Šefčovič** said. The Joint Committee is made up of representatives from both the EU and the UK and is responsible for overseeing the implementation and application of the Withdrawal Agreement. One of its many tasks include resolving possible disputes over the interpretation of the Agreement. If such a scenario were to occur, the EU and the UK can refer each other to this Committee. Both sides will take stock of the state of play of the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement and exchange on the actions planned by the UK with regard to the implementation of the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland. The meeting will also take stock of the implementation of the citizens' rights part of the Withdrawal Agreement, including the registration of EU citizens in the UK and UK nationals in EU Member States. The agenda for the meeting is available online. For more information on the Withdrawal Agreement, see here. *(For more information: Daniel Ferrie – Tel.: +32 229 86500)*

2020 Blue Economy Report: Blue sectors contribute to recovery and pave way for EU Green Deal

Today, the European Commission published "The EU Blue Economy Report 2020", providing an overview of the performance of the EU economic sectors related to oceans and the coastal environment. With a turnover of €750 billion in 2018, the EU blue economy is in good health. There were also 5 million people working in the blue economy sector in 2018, representing a significant increase of 11.6% compared to the year before. Although sectors such as coastal and marine tourism, as well as fisheries and aquaculture are severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the blue economy as a whole presents a huge potential in terms of its contribution to a green recovery. European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries

Virginijus **Sinkevičius** said: *"Maritime renewable energy, food from the sea, sustainable coastal and maritime tourism, the blue bio-economy and many other activities constituting the blue economy will help us come out of this crisis stronger, healthier, more resilient and more sustainable. We are doing everything we can to cushion the impact of the lockdown, protect the jobs in the blue economy and the wellbeing of our coastal communities, while retaining our environmental ambitions."* Mariya **Gabriel**, Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth, responsible for the Joint Research Centre (JRC), said: "*We continue to support sustainable growth in the marine and maritime sectors through the European Union Blue Growth Strategy. Research and innovation are fundamental pillars of this European response. We will make sure that research, innovation and education contribute to the transition towards a European Blue Economy. Today's report is part of this scientific support. It provides valuable insights into the economic performance of European marine activities and highlights the areas for priority action.*" More details on the main takeaways of the report are available in this press release. (*For more information: Vivian Loonela – Tel.: +32 229 66712; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of OceanConnect Marine by Bunker Holding

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of OceanConnect Marine ("OCM") of Singapore by Bunker Holding A/S of Denmark. OCM is a bunker trading company currently owned by Glencore. OCM is primarily active in the trading and brokering of marine fuels, and operates the online bunker purchase platform AuctionConnect. Bunker Holding specialises in purchasing, selling, and supplying marine (bunker) fuel, marine gas oil and lube oil as well as risk management and associated services. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns because of the limited overlaps between the activities of Bunker Holding and OCM. 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.9836. *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

State aid: Commission approves €33 million Cypriot scheme deferring payment of VAT to support companies affected by coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has approved a €33 million Cypriot aid scheme deferring VAT payments to ease the liquidity constraints ofcompanies 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. Cyprus notified to the Commission under the Temporary Frameworka scheme allowing companies facing difficulties due to the coronavirus outbreak to delay the payment of VAT due by 10 April, 10 May and 10 June 2020. Under the scheme, no interests or penalties are imposed on those companies that will pay the due VAT by 10 November 2020 instead. The total estimated budget of the measure is €33 million. The scheme will be accessible to companies of all sizes and all sectors, except the sectors which continued to operate during the lockdown in Cyprus. The aim of the scheme is to ease the liquidity constraints faced by those companies that are most severely affected by the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak, thus helping them continue their activities. The Commission found that the scheme notified by Cyprus is in line with the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. The Commission concluded that the Cypriot 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 €33 millionCypriot scheme will allow the delayed payment of VAT by companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak. This will help businesses to address their immediate liquidity constraints and continue their activities in these difficult times. The Commission works in close cooperation with Member States to swiftly approve measures during these difficult times, in line with EU rules."* *(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 €286 million Finnish measure to recapitalise Finnair

The European Commission has approved Finnish plans to contribute to the recapitalisation of Finnair through the subscription of new shares by the State in the rights issue launched by Finnair on 10 June 2020 in the context of the

coronavirus outbreak. Finnair plays a major role in the Finnish economy, notably because it ensures domestic and international air services for Finland that are essential to the recovery of the national economy after the coronavirus outbreak. With 55.8% of the shares, Finland is Finnair's largest shareholder. The total capital increase is expected to be of approximately €500 million. The State is expected to receive rights to subscribe for new shares in an amount of €286 million, corresponding to its current shareholding level. The remaining shares will be offered on the market, subject to pre-emptive subscription rights of other existing shareholders. The Commission found that the Finnish measure is in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU, which enables the Commission to approve State aid measures to remedy a serious disturbance to the economy of a Member State, and the general principles set out in the Temporary Framework adopted by the Commission on 19 March 2020, as amended on 3 April 2020and 8 May 2020. The Commission concluded that the recapitalisation measure will contribute to manage the economic impact of the coronavirus outbreak in Finland. It 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 general principles as 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: "*Finnair ensures the essential domestic and international connectivity needs of Finland. Given the geographic location of the country, the national economy, many jobs and the development of foreign trade rely on these services. The €286 million public contribution to Finnair's recapitalisation will help the company in an industry that has been particularly hard hit by the coronavirus crisis. The substantial participation of market investors in the transaction is a positive signal that the Commission strongly encourages, as it limits the distortion of competition while contributing to the recovery of undertakings affected by the coronavirus outbreak*." *(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 Italian tax measures for maritime transport

The European Commission has approved under EU State aid rules the prolongation until end 2023 of various Italian support measures for maritime transport under Italy's "International Registry" scheme. The scheme encourages shipping companies to register their ships in Europe and so

ensure higher social, environmental and safety standards. Italy has also committed to a number of changes to its scheme to avoid undue competition distortion as well as to prevent any discrimination between shipping companies and registries of different European Economic Area (EEA) States.

Under the “International Registry” scheme, shipping companies are granted a corporate tax reduction and other benefits. The Italian measure, as amended and approved today, requires that if a shipping company wants to benefit from the “International Registry” regime, at least a large part of its fleet flies the flag of an EU or EEA State. In this respect, the Italian authorities have committed to extend the benefits of the scheme to all eligible ships that fly an EEA flag. The Commission assessed the amended measures under EU State aid rules, in particular its Guidelines on State aid to maritime transport. It concluded that, in light of commitments to which Italy will have to comply within seven months from the adoption of the Commission decision, the Italian scheme is in line with EU State aid rules. In particular, the scheme will contribute to the competitiveness of the EU maritime transport sector and encourage ship registration in Europe, while at the same time preserving Europe's high social, environmental and safety standards and ensuring a level playing field. On this basis, the Commission approved the Italian scheme and its prolongation until 2023 under EU State aid rules. The full press release is available online. *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*

State aid: Commission approves €1.2 billion Portuguese urgent liquidity support to TAP

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, Portugal's plans to grant a €1.2 billion rescue loan in favour of Transportes Aéreos Portugueses SGPS S.A. (“TAP”). On 9 June 2020, Portugal notified the Commission of its intention to grant a €1.2 billion rescue loan to TAP. The measure aims at providing TAP with sufficient resources to address its immediate liquidity needs, with a view of preparing a plan for the long-term viability of the company. TAP has been facing financial difficulties already before the coronavirus outbreak, i.e. on 31 December 2019. Since the start of the coronavirus outbreak, TAP Air Portugal, as many other companies in the aviation sector, has suffered a significant reduction of its services, resulting in high operating losses. TAP is not eligible to receive support under

the Commission's State aid Temporary Framework, aimed at supporting otherwise viable companies. The Commission therefore assessed the measure under its Guidelines on rescue and restructuring. Rescue aid can be granted for maximum six months to give a company time to work out solutions in an emergency situation. In particular, the Portuguese authorities have committed that TAP will reimburse the loan or submit a restructuring plan within six months, to ensure future viability of TAP. The Commission found that the measure will help avoiding disruptions for passengers in particular in view of the easing of travel restrictions and the upcoming touristic season. At the same time, the strict conditions attached to the loan in terms of remuneration and use of the funds and its duration limited to six months will reduce the distortion of competition potentially triggered by the State support to a minimum. On this basis, the Commission concluded that the measure is compatible with EU State aid rules. Executive Vice President Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: "*This €1.2 billion Portuguese rescue aid will help TAP Air Portugal face its liquidity needs and pave the way for its restructuring to ensure its long-term viability. In a sector that has been hit particularly hard by the coronavirus outbreak, the measure will help avoiding disruptions for passengers. With the progressive lifting of travel restrictions and the upcoming touristic season, it also indirectly benefits the Portuguese tourism sector and economy as a whole. We continue working closely with Member States to find solutions to support companies in these difficult times in line with EU rules." The full press release is available in* EN*,* PT*,* DE *and* FR.*(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)*