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2022

BRUSSELS' PULSE



HIGHLIGHTS

EU DIGITAL DIPLOMACY: COUNCIL AGREES A MORE CONCERTED EUROPEAN APPROACH TO THE CHALLENGES POSED BY NEW DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Digital technologies have brought new opportunities and risks into the lives of EU citizens and people around the globe. They have also become key competitive parameters that can shift the geopolitical balance of power. The Council invites all relevant parties to ensure that digital diplomacy becomes a core component and an integral part of the EU external action, and is closely coordinated with other EU external policies on cyber and countering hybrid threats, including foreign information manipulation and interference. In this context, to enhance the EU's Digital Diplomacy in and with the US, the EU will soon open a dedicated office in San Francisco, a global centre for digital technology and innovation. More: [here](#).

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION GREEN LIGHTS € 5.4 BILLION FOR HYDROGEN TECHNOLOGY AND PAVES THE WAY FOR THE RAMP-UP OF THE SECTOR

The European Commission has given its green light to Hy2Tech, the first Important Project of Common European Interest (IPCEI) in support of hydrogen technologies, just one month after its official notification by 15 Member States. The Technology IPCEI approved under EU State Rules will provide up to €5.4 billion of Member States funding to 35 companies for 41 research, development and deployment projects on a wide range of hydrogen technologies, including electrolyzers, fuels cells and storage. The funding is expected to unlock €8.8 billion of private investments. Hydrogen Europe welcomes the positive decision of the European Commission and the engagement of Member States and of industry in the building process of this IPCEI wave. More: [here](#).

NEWS

AGRICULTURE

EUREKA! AN INTERACTIVE PLATFORM FOR KNOWLEDGE IS CREATED!

During the last two years, the EUREKA Horizon 2020 project has developed and tested a user-friendly platform: the EU FarmBook. The platform brings together new knowledge from EU-funded research and innovation projects to make it available in one place for the farmers, foresters and advisors across Europe, who need it the most. Research knowledge and innovation are key enablers of the changes needed in agriculture, forestry and the broader rural economy to accelerate the necessary transition to more sustainable production systems by 2030. EUREKA (and its sister project EURAKNOS) were founded on the idea that innovation in European agriculture and forestry can be accelerated by improved (digital) exchange of best practices between farmers, researchers and advisors from different sectors and Member States. More: [here](#).



INDUSTRY

NEW RULES TO IMPROVE ROAD SAFETY AND ENABLE FULLY DRIVERLESS VEHICLES IN THE EU

The new Vehicle General Safety Regulation has been already implemented. It introduces a range of mandatory advanced driver assistant systems to improve road safety and establishes the legal framework for the approval of automated and fully driverless vehicles in the EU. The new safety measures will help to better protect passengers, pedestrians and cyclists across the EU, expectedly saving over 25,000 lives and avoid at least 140,000 serious injuries by 2038. As the coming into force of the General Safety Regulation empowers the Commission to complete the legal framework for automated and connected vehicles, the Commission will deliver this summer technical rules for the approval of fully driverless vehicles, making EU a pioneer in the field. These will help to increase public trust, boost innovation and improve the competitiveness of Europe's car industry. More: [here](#).



EDUCATION

EUROPEAN COUNCIL APPROVES MEASURES TO STANDARDISE MICRO-CREDENTIALS

A European Commission recommendation adopted by the Council of the European Union (EU) provides new building blocks to help make micro-credentials work across institutions, businesses, sectors and borders. Micro-credentials certify the learning outcomes of short-term learning experiences, for example a short course or training. They offer a flexible, targeted way to help people develop the knowledge, skills and competences they need for their personal and professional development. They form part of a culture of lifelong learning, which helps people thrive in society, the labor market and their personal lives. More: [here](#).



CULTURE

EU AND WHO CALL FOR SUPPORT FOR THE MENTAL WELL-BEING OF FORCIBLY DISPLACED PEOPLE THROUGH ART AND CULTURE

The European Commission, the World Health Organisation and the project CultureForHealth have published an analysis of how art activities help improve the health and well-being of displaced people. The connection between art and mental well-being has long been recognised. Arts activities are made of multiple components known to promote health, including social interaction; sensory activation; emotional expression; cognitive stimulation; physical activity. It is important to support the arts, as investing in the field is an investment in the mental, physical and social health of forcibly displaced people. More: [here](#).

ENVIRONMENT

FIT FOR 55: PARLIAMENT PUSHES FOR GREENER AVIATION FUELS

Parliament adopted its position on new draft EU rules to increase the uptake of sustainable fuels by EU planes and airports, in order to cut emissions from aviation and ensure Europe becomes climate neutral by 2050. MEPs increased the Commission's original proposal for the minimum share of a sustainable aviation fuel that should be made available at EU airports. From 2025, this share should be 2%, increasing to 37% in 2040 and 85% by 2050, taking into account the potential of electricity and hydrogen in the overall fuel mix (Commission proposed 32% for 2040 and 63% for 2050). Parliament amended the proposed definition of sustainable aviation fuel, a term that covers synthetic fuels or certain biofuels, produced from agricultural or forestry residues, algae, bio-waste or used cooking oil. More: [here](#).



HEALTH

HEALTH UNION: HERA DELIVERS LIST OF TOP-3 HEALTH THREATS TO PREPARE AGAINST

The Commission's Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) presents a priority list of top-3 health threats that require coordination of measures at EU level in the context of medical countermeasures. The HERA Board agreed on a list which includes three threat categories of life-threatening or otherwise seriously harmful hazards to health which have the potential of spreading across Member States: (1) pathogens with high pandemic potential, (2) chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear threats, and (3) threats resulting from antimicrobial resistance. More: [here](#).



DIGITAL

COMMISSION PRESENTS NEW EUROPEAN INNOVATION AGENDA TO SPEARHEAD THE NEW INNOVATION WAVE

Building on the substantive work that have been done already to foster innovation in the EU, the New European Innovation Agenda aims to accelerate the development and scaling up of innovation across the Union through a coherent set of actions. On 05 July, the Commission adopted a New European Innovation Agenda to position Europe at the forefront of the new wave of deep tech innovation and start-ups. It will help Europe to develop new technologies to address the most pressing societal challenges, and to bring them on the market. The New European Innovation Agenda is designed to position Europe as a leading player on the global innovation scene. More: [here](#).



MARITIME

SUSTAINABLE FISHERIES: EU AND NORWAY CONCLUDE ARRANGEMENTS TO MODERNISE THE EXCHANGE OF FISHERIES CONTROL DATA

On 29 June, the EU and Norway concluded fisheries consultations that will modernise the exchange of fisheries data for control purposes. The two delegations agreed to use a common software platform for data exchanges, the FLUX Transportation Layer, developed by the European Commission. They agreed to start using the software to exchange vessel position data as of 1 January 2023, with other types of data to follow. The harmonisation of data exchange formats reduces costs, making fisheries control more accessible to public authorities. The EU and Norway also agreed to increase the frequency of transmissions of vessel positions to 30 minutes for Danish, Swedish and Norwegian vessels fishing in the Skagerrak. More: [here](#).



CITIES

IN FOCUS: ENERGY AND SMART CITIES

European cities are a hub for all sorts of activities – a pathway for study opportunities, jobs and services because of their key infrastructure and economic activity. More than three-quarters of the EU population live in urban areas and this figure is expected to rise to almost 85% by 2050. Due to their large concentration of population, urban areas also consume the largest volumes of energy and have the highest levels of greenhouse gas emissions. As the fight against climate change increasingly involves the deployment of solutions at all levels and the participation of citizens, cities are well-placed to show leadership in the clean energy transition and can achieve significant benefits through the early adoption of policies aimed at achieving climate neutrality. To this end, the European Commission is placing smart cities at the forefront of its efforts to reach the European Green Deal objectives and make Europe climate-neutral by 2050. More: [here](#).



EVENTS

SUSTAINABLE ENERGY DAYS

Sustainable Energy Days are activities and events organised by local public and private organisations around the world to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency. They are a key component of the European Sustainable Energy Week.

Sustainable Energy Days can take place anywhere around the world, in cities and local communities during the months of June–September 2022. Previous events have been held online, in schools, market squares, conference centres, and many other places. The call to register Sustainable Energy Days will be open from Tuesday 26 April to 16 September 2022. Register and learn more: [here](#).

COVENANT OF MAYORS INVESTMENT FORUM 2022

The Covenant of Mayors Investment Forum – Energy Efficiency Finance Market Place will take place in Brussels next 18 October. The 2022 edition of the forum will be jointly organised by the European Commission's Directorates-General for Energy and Climate Action and the European Climate, Infrastructure and Environment Executive Agency (CINEA), in collaboration with the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.

The conference will include plenary sessions with high-level representatives from the European Commission, cities and investment community. Pioneering initiatives that encourage change at local level, such as sustainable plans and strategies for the energy transition, energy efficiency financing in the public and private sector and investments in home renovation, will be presented. More: [here](#).

JUST TRANSITION PLATFORM CONFERENCE

The sixth edition of the Just Transition Platform Conference (including the Coal Regions in Transition workstream and Carbon-Intensive Regions seminars) will take place in a hybrid format in Brussels on 24–26 October. This event will be co-hosted by the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO) and the Directorate-General for Energy (DG ENER). The conference will also include the Multilevel Dialogue organised by the European Committee of the Regions. More: [here](#).

EUROPEAN CLUSTER CONFERENCE 2022

The Czech Ministry for Industry and Trade under the Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU and the European Commission are pleased to announce the organisation of the 8th edition of the European Cluster Conference on 26 and 27 September 2022 in Prague (CZ). Organised with the support of the European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP), this event is a unique opportunity as it brings together cluster policy makers, cluster managers, practitioners and other stakeholders. This event is following the cycle of European Cluster Conferences that have taken place every two years since 2008, every time with a different theme enabling participants to focus on different priorities. More: [here](#).

SUPPORTING INNOVATIONS IN ROAD TRANSPORT: HORIZON EUROPE & ITS SYNERGIES WITH OTHER EU PROGRAMMES

Please save the date in your agenda for the online workshop “Supporting innovations in road transport: Horizon Europe and its synergies with other EU programmes” which will take place on 4 October. The objective of this half-day workshop is to inform road transport stakeholders about EU funding and financing opportunities beyond Horizon Europe, which can help new technologies and systems entering and scaling-up the market. This workshop will also discuss how to improve synergies between Horizon Europe and other EU programmes, in order to increase the uptake and deployment of innovative road transport solutions deriving from R&I actions. Register and learn more: [here](#).



OPEN CALLS

SHARE THE OBSTACLE YOU FACE: MAKE OF A SPECIFIC PROBLEM A EUROPEAN SOLUTION!

AEBR launched the present call for proposals in the framework of the b-solutions 2.0. Solving Cross-Border Obstacles initiative with the aim to facilitate cooperation across borders. The objective is to identify 120 cases of legal or administrative obstacles which hinder cooperation across national borders. Selected cases will receive technical assistance from legal experts who will suggest potential solutions to overcome the obstacles. Moreover, the evidence collected will help raise awareness on cross-border cooperation and on ways forward to promote solutions at the local, national and European level to support border regions. Deadline date: 21 October 2022, 17:00, Brussels time. More: [here](#).



NEARLY EUR 100 MILLION AVAILABLE FOR FUNDING YOUR PROJECT IDEAS FOR THE CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

The new Call for Proposals 2022 for the LIFE Clean Energy Transition (CET) sub-programme was launched on 17 May. There are 18 dedicated topics open to submit your project ideas to: build the policy framework for the Clean Energy Transition at local, regional and national level; accelerate the market for the Clean Energy Transition with the roll-out of technology, digitalisation, new services and business models and enhancing related professional skills; attract private finance for sustainable energy investments and support the development of local and regional clean energy investment projects; involve and empower citizens in the Clean Energy Transition. Deadline date: 16 November 2022, 17:00, Brussels time. More: [here](#).

EUROPEAN RESEARCH COUNCIL GRANT FUNDING PLANS FOR 2023

The ERC has announced its Work Programme for 2023 with a total budget of around €2.2 billion for grants. This amount will support more than a thousand top researchers across Europe. Established by the ERC Scientific Council, the Work Programme for the coming year has been adopted by the European Commission. While the plan contains all the well-known grant schemes: Starting, Consolidator, Advanced and Synergy Grants, there are also new elements: The budget for the Proof of Concept grant scheme will increase from €25 million to €30 million; Two additional grounds for extension of the eligibility windows for the candidates for Starting and Consolidator Grants will be introduced for researchers seeking asylum or being a victim of a natural disaster; A special grant is foreseen to support ERC Science Journalism Initiative that will entail a support for journalists wishing to spend time at research institutions to better understand frontier research. Deadline date: 25 October 2022 More: [here](#).

The aim is to provide support for a small group of two to four Principal Investigators to jointly address ambitious research problems that could not be addressed by the individual Principal Investigators and their teams working alone. Synergy projects should enable substantial advances at the frontiers of knowledge, stemming, for example, from the cross-fertilization of scientific fields, from new productive lines of enquiry, or new methods and techniques, including unconventional approaches and investigations at the interface between established disciplines.

The transformative research funded by Synergy Grants should have the potential of becoming a benchmark on a global scale. Deadline date: 08 November 2022, 17:00, Brussels time. More: [here](#).

CALL FOR TENDERS FOR SETTING UP AND MANAGING A "SUPPORT OFFICE" THAT WILL ASSIST IT IN FACILITATING THE RURAL PACT

The Contractor will provide an EU-level support office to assist DG AGRI with the facilitation of the Rural Pact done in close coordination with the Directorate-General for Regional and urban policy (DG REGIO). The Rural Pact support office will interact with the Rural Pact community, evaluate their needs and support the work of the community as a whole.

It will also need to build synergies with networks and governing bodies, such as the future EU CAP Network governing bodies, the Broadband Competence Office support facility, and bodies running the Territorial agenda for the EU and the future network activities of the Commission's Communication on 'Attracting and retaining talents in EU regions—from brain drain to brain gain'. It will also interact with stakeholder networks such as the European Rural Parliament. Deadline date: 21 September 2022. More: [here](#).



"... AND MORE"

INTERREG IN THE OUTERMOST REGIONS

The nine European Outermost Regions are often associated with periphery and remoteness, but they are getaways for engagement with surrounding regions. INTERREG programmes enable beneficiaries to share knowledge, structure economic sectors, strengthen trade and develop access to targeted markets, and encourage the emergence of a network of partners.

This first publication by Interact aims to raise awareness on the achievements of the European Union far from its continental area. More: [here](#).



COORDINATOR'S MESSAGE

The Commission's President Ursula von der Leyen presented on 11 December 2019 the European Green Deal, a plan to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050. The European Green Deal would operate as a new growth strategy to generate a new breed of emerging services, products and public interest goods that could absorb excessive Eurozone liquidity and at same time realigning EU's economy with sustainability goals, allegedly without leaving anyone behind. The successful implementation of this economic model requires the emergence of a generation of investments projects focused on better protecting Nature – on all its dimensions, from Biodiversity to Climate – and better taking care of communities regardless backgrounds, baselines our preexisting conditions. In addition to the need of generating new goods that absorb liquidity, focusing on the climate action and the European Green Deal develops itself in the critical period of digital transition.



The founding principle of H2020-AURORAL is to provide Communities with a functional digital environment for that new breed of digitally-based or related goods, services and products. This digital environment features a multi-interoperable, data transparent, collectively secure middleware that makes possible smart communities to become smart prosumers, favouring the co-development of new solutions aimed at serving communities and Nature protection. H2020-AURORAL is therefore fully in line with European Green Deal objectives and the Digital Decade goals, on top of its macroeconomic relevance in a period with high risks of inflation acceleration and on a context of priority to inclusion and fairness across European regions. This what makes H2020-AURORAL a vital piece of European strategic priorities for this decade. That's also why the commitment of partners to the project results and expected impact is kept at its highest levels since the early stages of the proposal preparation.

MARCOS ANTÓNIO NOGUEIRA.



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