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Top News

Commission adopts new Digital Strategy for Europe

The European Commission this week adopted a new Digital Strategy for a European society powered by digital solutions that puts people first, opens up new opportunities for businesses, and boosts the development of trustworthy technology. The Commission also launched a public consultation on its proposals to ensure the human-centric development of Artificial Intelligence in Europe. President Ursula von der Leyen said: "The breadth of our strategy reflects the scale and nature of the transition ahead of us. It covers everything from cybersecurity to critical infrastructures, digital education to skills, democracy to media."

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EU funding for projects to restore Ireland's blanket bogs and protect water quality

The European Commission this week announced the launch of two major new EU-funded environmental projects aimed at restoring Ireland's blanket bogs and protecting and improving the status of the country's freshwater bodies. Head of the European Commission Representation in Ireland, Gerard Kiely, commented that "these projects will benefit from over €20 million in funding from the EU's funding instrument for the environment and climate action: the LIFE programme. Protecting the environment and increasing biodiversity is a major priority for the European Commission, particularly in the context of President Ursula von der Leyen's Green Deal."

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COVID-19 outbreak: Commission supports repatriation of EU citizens from cruise ship in Japan

The EU is co-financing the repatriation of EU citizens from the Diamond Princess cruise ship docked in Yokohama, Japan, thanks to flights from Italy mobilised through the EU Civil Protection Mechanism. Only passengers that have tested negative for the COVID-19 virus or do not present any symptoms of the illness will be allowed to board the flights. After arrival in Europe, they will start a new quarantine period organised and monitored by each Member State.

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Other news

EU and international donors pledge €1.15 billion for reconstruction in Albania

A total of €1.15 billion was pledged for the reconstruction of Albania at an International Donors' Conference that took place in Brussels earlier this week. This figure includes €400 million from the European Commission, its Member States and the European Investment Bank. Thousands of buildings including public and private infrastructure, homes, schools and health care facilities, were destroyed by the earthquake that hit Albania on 26 November last. Fifty-one people also lost their lives and hundreds more were injured.

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Ireland has greatest proportion of large families

According to a new Eurofound report, over 7% of Irish families have three or more children, highest share in the EU where the average is 3%. Portugal (1.4%) had the lowest share. Parents in large families were generally slightly less satisfied with their lives and their standard of living than parents with fewer children, although there were no differences in terms of happiness, satisfaction with family life, mental well-being and optimism about their children's future. The report on "Household composition and well-being" also shows that Ireland (12%) had one of the lowest shares of people living in single-person households.

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Latest post-programme surveillance report for Ireland published

The twelfth post-programme mission to Ireland took place from 19 to 21 November. The report of the visit, which was published by the European Commission, states that the short-term outlook for the Irish economy is for solid growth, albeit subject to substantial domestic and external risks. It goes on to say that significant uncertainty continues to surround the economic outlook, due to the implications of Brexit as well as changes in the international taxation and trade environment.

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NUI Galway to lead EU-funded robotic stem cell therapy project

A new Irish-led EU-funded research project has just kicked off. The AutoCRAT project is coordinated by Professor Mary Murphy of NUI Galway and has partners in four other EU countries as well as the UK. The project, which is due to be completed by the end of 2023, aims to develop new cell and cell-based therapies for osteoarthritis and joint repair. It has been allocated EU Horizon 2020 funding of €7.45 million.

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Afghan refugees: €21 million in humanitarian aid for host communities and vulnerable populations in Pakistan and Iran

The European Commission is releasing an additional €21 million in humanitarian aid for Afghan refugees in neighbouring Iran and Pakistan. This will bring EU humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran to €300 million for the period 2016-2020. Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič said: “The EU continues to stand by the people of Afghanistan, as well as the many who have fled to neighbouring countries. I commend Pakistan and Iran for hosting millions of refugees. Our funding will provide refugees and host communities with basic services, such as health, education, and water supply.”

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Council adopts new rules for exchange of VAT payment data

The Council has adopted a set of rules to facilitate detection of tax fraud in cross-border e-commerce transactions. The new measures will enable member states to collect, in a harmonised way, the records made electronically available by payment service providers, such as banks. In addition, a new central electronic system will be set up for the storage of the payment information and for the further processing of this information by national anti-fraud officials.

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Agenda

Thursday 20 February: Special European Council, Brussels

EU heads of state or government will discuss the EU’s long-term budget for 2021-2027 during a special meeting of the European Council on Thursday afternoon 20 February 2020.

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Monday, 24 February: European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly to address the IIEA, Dublin

On Monday lunchtime, 24 February, the European Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly will address the Institute of European and International Affairs (IIEA) on "Strengthening Public Trust in the EU". In her address, Emily O'Reilly will offer her perspective on the role of the European Ombudsman in strengthening public trust in the European Union at a time when citizens are concerned with the pace of technological disruption, the need to tackle climate change and rising populism.

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Tuesday 25 February: General Affairs Council, Brussels

Information on this meeting will be available in due course at the link below.

[Read more...](#)

Thursday 27 February: Model Council of the European Union debate, Dublin Castle

Schools from all over Ireland are taking part in this year's Model Council debate on the topic of the European Green Deal, and, more specifically, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment, Richard Bruton TD will give the opening speech while Barry Andrews MEP will chair. The event will also be attended by EU Member State ambassadors and Irish MEPs. The Model Council is an annual debate for secondary schools organised by the European Commission Representation in Ireland in conjunction with the European Parliament Liaison Office in Ireland. The debate is a simulation of a meeting of the Council of the European Union.

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Thursday 27 and Friday 28 February: Competitiveness Council, Brussels

On the agenda: European Green Deal: impact on EU industry; better regulation; Single Market performance report; the Strategic Innovation Agenda of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT); and, international cooperation in research and innovation.

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Wednesday 4 March: Europe and the Future, IIEA, Dublin

As part of a weeklong commemoration marking the 250th anniversary of the College Historical Society (the Hist), Trinity College Dublin, one of Ireland's leading student societies, the IIEA is jointly hosting a half-day seminar on Europe and the Future. Comprising two panel discussions, this seminar brings together former presidents and senior officials from across the EU's institutions and experts, commentators and politicians to share their perspectives on the development of the EU and its future.

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Thursday 5 March: Environment Council, Brussels

Information on this meeting will be available in due course at the link below.

[Read more...](#)

Thursday 12 March: Foreign Affairs Council (Trade), Brussels

Information on this meeting will be available in due course at the link below.

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Calls for Tender/Proposals

Invitation to tender No NP/DUB/2020/1 concerning a negotiated procedure for the supply of daily newspapers and milk to our premises located in 12-14 Lower Mount Street, Dublin 2

The European Commission Representation in Ireland will issue on 12th March 2020 a call for tenders for the supply of daily newspapers and milk. The annual estimated maximum budget attributed to this tender is €13,000. (excl. VAT). If you are interested in this tender, please send an email to COMM-IE-TENDERS@ec.europa.eu before 12th March 2020 and we will send you the tender specifications.

Job opportunities

Traineeships at the Joint Research Centre

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) has 3 traineeship positions (with different starting dates) within its press team that may be of interest to students of media and communication. The traineeships are based in the JRC's site in Ispra, Italy, and are paid (around 1000€/month). Inexpensive accommodation is offered by the JRC close to the work place (around 150€/month). Anyone interested in applying should do so before 27 February. The code for this traineeship is: Code: 2020-IPR-A-000-013670 - ISPra, Strategic communications (media monitoring). Apply via the link below.

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Public consultations

Europe's Beating Cancer Plan

Commission President von der Leyen has committed to a European plan to fight cancer. The Commission intends to design the plan to cover the entire cycle of the disease starting from prevention and early diagnosis to treatment and quality of life of patients and survivors. With this public consultation, the European Commission invites all interested individuals or organisations to share their views and experiences to feed into a European cancer plan that puts European citizens at the centre. The consultation is open until 7 May 2020.

[Read more...](#)

Review of the regulatory framework for investment firms and market operators

MiFID II and MiFIR started to apply in January 2018, bringing significant improvements to the functioning and transparency of EU financial markets. This consultation seeks to gather evidence from stakeholders, and more generally from EU citizens, on areas that would merit targeted adjustments. The consultation is open until 20 April 2020.

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Tax fraud and evasion

This public consultation is the first step to prepare a potential initiative which the Commission is considering in the context of further improving cooperation between tax authorities of the Member States. In addition to addressing some identified shortcomings to existing elements of the Directive on Administrative Cooperation in Direct Taxation, this initiative should provide tax administrations with information on taxpayers who generate income (revenues) through digital platforms. The consultation is open until 6 April 2020.

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Competitions

EU Datathon competition 2020 now launched

The EU Datathon competition 2020 has now been launched. To take part, you should propose the development of an application that links and uses open datasets, of which at least one from the thousands made available by the EU institutions, agencies and bodies. The deadline to submit entries is 3 May 2020. The total prize fund for the competition amounts to €100,000.

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