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Brussels News

COUNCIL ADOPTS INVEST-EU PROGRAMME

On 17 March, the Council adopted the EU's new investment programme 'InvestEU'. The programme brings together various financial instruments currently available to support investment in the EU. It aims at mobilising public and private investment in the EU through an EU budget guarantee of €26.2 billion that will back investment projects of financial partners, such as the European Investment Bank Group (EIB), national promotional banks and international financial institutions.

InvestEU is expected to mobilise more than €370 billion of additional investment over the next seven years, contributing to the economic recovery and the EU's medium- and long-term policy priorities, including the green and digital transitions. The EU budget guarantee will indicatively be divided between the four policy windows of InvestEU as follows:

- Sustainable infrastructure (for instance projects in sustainable energy, digital connectivity, transport and circular economy): 37.8%
- Research, innovation and digitalisation (for instance taking research results to the markets, projects in artificial intelligence): 25.1%
- SMEs (facilitating access to finance for SMEs): 26.4%
- Social investment and skills (for instance projects in education and training, social housing and healthcare): 10.6%

In order to support the EU's green transition, at least 30% of the investments under InvestEU will contribute to EU climate action. A Just Transition Scheme, which is established horizontally across all policy windows, will support territories most negatively affected by the transition process towards the EU's climate objectives.

The Regulation establishing InvestEU is expected to enter into force at the beginning of April, after which the Commission will finalise the necessary procedures with the implementing partners. Companies and project promoters should be able to start applying for funding by mid-2021.

Source: [Council of the EU](#)

Road

STRICTER ENFORCEMENT OF CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENT OF 44T TRUCKS IN FRANCE

Following an order of the European Commission to fully transpose the Directive (EU) 2015/719, modifying the Directive 96/53/EC on weights and dimensions of certain road vehicles, the French government is mulling a modification in French law to strictly forbid the border-crossing by trucks weighing over 40 tonnes. This project is currently under consultation and could enter into force soon.

The intended amendment would a) bring French regulations in line with Directive (EU) 2015/719, including clarification on 44-tonne transport, b) authorise the possibility to exceed the maximum permissible weight from 1 to 2 tonnes for gas or electric vehicles, and c) limit the transport of 44-tonne to vehicles complying with Euro VI from 1 October 2025.

Concerning 44-tonne transport, it would be exclusively limited to French territory, while modal transport and container transport would still be allowed to cross borders.

UK-EU SHORT-STRAITS VOLUMES DOWN BY 20%

Britain's road freight vehicle movements to the European Union via the key 'short-straits' Dover-Calais and Eurotunnel crossings remain almost a quarter below their levels last year, according to early to mid-March figures from Transporeon, one of Europe's largest road logistics platforms, as companies continue to adjust to the new post-Brexit trade arrangements and changes related to the pandemic. Figures from Transporeon and its truck telematics and transport management technology partner Sixfold – in which a significant portion of the monitored traffic crosses the Dover Strait – indicate that outbound road freight vehicle movements from the UK to the EU in the first two weeks of March stood at around 60% of their daily peak volume levels last year, compared with around 78% of daily peak volumes in the same two weeks of 2020.

According to the Transporeon-Sixfold Brexit Market Monitor (BMM), those figures for 2021 have been broadly stable since the start of February. Analysis by Lloyd's Loading List of those figures indicate that outbound road freight movements from the UK to the EU this year are down by almost one quarter (23%) compared with the same period last year – or at least on the key 'short-straits' crossing where most of the Sixfold-monitored traffic crosses.



Meanwhile, inbound volumes from the EU to the UK in the first two weeks of March appear to have stabilised at around 62% of their daily peak volume levels last year, compared with around 75% of daily peak volumes in the same two weeks of 2020 – equivalent to a drop of around 17% compared with the same period last year.

UK government figures indicated that UK-EU and EU-UK total road freight vehicle movements had recovered to around 96% by early February, but was still at only 82% on the Dover Strait – pointing towards a possible diversion of traffic that was formerly on the Dover Strait to other routes – for example, to unaccompanied EU-UK services on longer ferry routes. A source at Sixfold acknowledged that these are all appeared to be plausible explanations, also adding one additional possibility – that Brexit had also led to changes in its data sources, for example if some companies had moved their focus to other markets.

However, the Sixfold-Transporeon data, like the UK government figures, are based on total road freight vehicle movements, including both loaded and empty trucks, and therefore fail to capture the reported increase in levels of empty trucks returning from the UK to the EU because of lower export volumes from the UK to EU markets since the UK's withdrawal from the EU single market and customs union.

Source: [Lloyds' Loading List](#), Will Water, 19 March (extract)

Brexit

UK SME SUPPORT FUND OPENS FOR APPLICATIONS

The UK Government has opened the applications for the SME Brexit Support Fund, which will help small and medium-sized businesses that import or export from/to the EU. Businesses can use the grant for training on how to complete customs declarations; how to manage customs processes and use customs software and systems; and specific import and export related aspects including VAT, excise and rules of origin. It can be used to help you get professional advice so your business can meet its customs, excise, import VAT or safety and security declaration requirements.

To be able to apply for the grant, businesses must be established in the UK; have been established in the UK for at least 12 months before submitting the application, or currently hold Authorised Economic Operator status; not have previously failed to meet its tax or customs obligations; have no more than 500 employees; have no more than £100 million turnover; and import or export goods between Great Britain and the EU or move goods between Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Interested businesses can apply for the SME Brexit Support Fund [here](#).

NEW UK RULES TO DEFER PAYMENT OF CUSTOMS CHARGES

Earlier this week, the UK Government amended national legislation allowing traders that are not established in the UK to apply for a duty deferment account and delay paying most customs or tax charges when they import goods into Great Britain or release goods from an excise warehouse. It has to be noted, that traders that are not UK-established are not eligible to apply for a guarantee waiver and will need to provide a financial guarantee from a financial institution that is established in the UK and set up a direct debit.



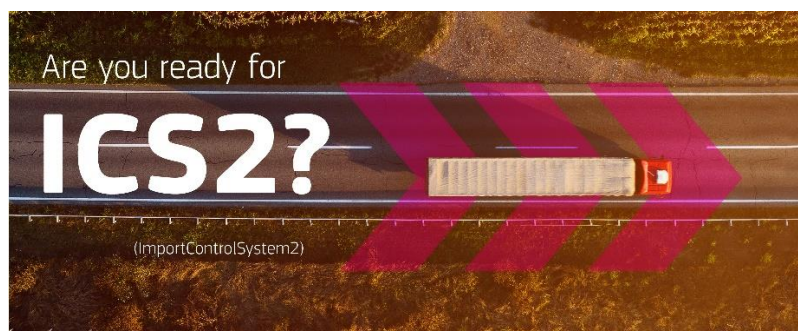
More details on how to apply for a duty deferment account can be found in the following guidance documents, published by the UK Government:

- [Check which type of account to apply for to defer duty payments when you import goods or release goods from an excise warehouse;](#)
- [Apply for an account to defer duty payments when you import or release goods into Great Britain;](#)
- [Check if you can get a guarantee waiver for a duty deferment account in Great Britain.](#)

Customs and Trade

NEW EU IMPORT CONTROL SYSTEM GOES LIVE

On 15 March, the European Commission launched its new Import Control System (ICS-2), the new advance cargo risk management platform at the heart of the reform of the EU's Customs Pre-arrival Safety and Security programme. ICS-2 will gradually replace the existing import control system in three releases between 15 March 2021 and 1 March 2024.



In the first release of ICS-2, express carriers and designated postal operators established in the EU will begin providing a subset of their Entry Summary Declaration data before goods are loaded on aircraft bound for the EU. This pre-loading advance cargo information - also known as "PLACI" data -

will be analysed by customs with a view to detecting immediate threats to aviation security. Release 2, which is scheduled to extend these new capabilities to general air cargo, will come into force in March 2023, and Release 3 will include maritime, rail and road modes of transport from 2024.

CLECAT was closely involved in the preparations for ICS-2, focusing particularly on the release for air cargo in 2023, as well as the first steps towards the release for the maritime, road and rail sectors in 2024. CLECAT will continue to actively cooperate with the Commission and other stakeholders on the development, communication and implementation of ICS-2 and make sure that the freight forwarding, logistics and customs service industry is well-prepared for the upcoming changes.

More detailed information on the releases of ICS2, frequently asked questions and factsheets in different languages can be found on the newly launched [dedicated ICS2 website of the Commission](#).

Source: [European Commission](#)

CUSTOMS AGREEMENTS WITH SWITZERLAND AND NORWAY

Last week, the EU agreed important amendments with [Switzerland](#) and [Norway](#) with regards to customs security measures. The original agreements of 2009 have been updated to maintain a high



level of security and safety at the external borders and to keep the equivalence of the customs security measures in trade with third countries. The amended agreements reflect key developments of the EU legislation relevant to the risk management and security, mainly as regards the deployment of the new Import Control System 2 (ICS-2) of the EU. Both amended agreements are applicable from 15 March, and create a basis for Switzerland and Norway to join the [ICS-2](#), alongside EU Member States.

Switzerland and Norway have agreed to apply the same security and safety measures in force in the EU, including being part of ICS-2, and therefore, trade between these countries and the EU will be exempt from the requirement to lodge entry and exit summary declarations. Switzerland and Norway will also apply equivalent standards for the Authorised Economic Operators, including security and safety standards and facilitation measures in respect of security-related customs controls.

Source: [European Commission](#)

EU AGREES ON CUSTOMS CONTROL EQUIPMENT INSTRUMENT

On 16 March, the European Parliament and EU Member States reached a provisional political agreement on the new [Customs Control Equipment Instrument for 2021-2027](#). The new instrument makes €1 billion available for EU countries to buy, upgrade and maintain state-of-the-art customs control equipment such as x-ray scanners, automated number plate detection systems and other non-intrusive detectors for border crossing points as well as a variety of laboratory equipment for goods analysis. The agreement is subject to formal confirmation by the European Parliament and the Council.

Proposed by the Commission in 2018 as part of the [Integrated Border Management Fund](#), the initiative addresses calls from Member States for support in financing detection equipment that help control goods crossing the EU's external borders. The proposal aims to improve customs performance, in particular by contributing to adequate and equivalent results of customs controls throughout the EU, while helping EU customs authorities to act as one single entity. It will contribute to the implementation of the [Customs Action Plan](#) adopted in September last year.

Source: [European Commission](#)

NEW TRANS-EUROPEAN SYSTEMS FOR EXPORT AND TRANSIT

On 15 March, the European Commission and Member State customs authorities launched an important transition for the trans-European customs systems for export and transit, starting with the deployment of the new UCC AES and UCC NCTS-Phase 5 IT systems in Germany. This opens the path to the next generation of interconnected trans-European systems for the trade community and the national customs authorities. The new systems will be deployed in a gradual manner from now on until December 2023.

The new export and transit systems offer significant benefits and enable simplifications - services such as Centralised Clearance and pre-lodgement facilities, AEO benefits and real-time trade notifications, as well as seamless cross-border on-line real time interactions across Member States and Common Transit Convention countries. Furthermore, the new systems are built on the new EU Customs Data Model. This enables alignment to International Standards such as the WCO Data Model, data harmonisation across EU Customs and Taxation and reinforcing EU Customs Compliance and Controls.

Source: [European Commission](#)



EU PARLIAMENT SUPPORTS CARBON PRICE ON EU IMPORTS

Last week, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on a WTO-compatible EU carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM). The resolution underlines that the EU's increased ambition on climate change must not lead to 'carbon leakage' as global climate efforts will not benefit if EU production is just moved to non-EU countries that have less ambitious emissions rules. MEPs therefore support to put a carbon price on certain goods imported from outside the EU, if these countries are not ambitious enough about climate change. This would create a global level playing field as well as an incentive for both EU and non-EU industries to decarbonise in line with the [Paris Agreement](#) objectives.

MEPs further stress that it should be WTO-compatible and not be misused as a tool to enhance protectionism. It must be designed specifically to meet climate objectives. Revenues generated should be used as part of a basket of own revenues to boost support for the objectives of the Green Deal under the EU budget, they add. The new mechanism should be part of a broader EU industrial strategy and cover all imports of products and commodities covered by the EU ETS. MEPs add that already by 2023, and following an impact assessment, it should cover the power sector and energy-intensive industrial sectors like cement, steel, aluminium, oil refinery, paper, glass, chemicals and fertilisers, which continue to receive substantial free allocations, and represent 94 % of EU industrial emissions.

Source: [European Parliament](#)

NEW VAT GUIDELINES

The [latest list of guidelines](#) agreed by the VAT Committee was published on 12 March. The guidelines address specific matters concerning the application of EU VAT provisions raised by the Commission or a Member State. The latest updates include guidelines agreed within the VAT Committee during its latest meeting of November 2020 and concern certain aspects of the implementation of the VAT Quick Fixes in the context of Brexit. An [index of guidelines](#) is also made available. It links the guidelines agreed with the relevant provisions of the VAT Directive and comments upon them.

The VAT Committee was set up under the VAT Directive to promote the uniform application of the provisions of the VAT Directive. Because it is an advisory committee only and has not been attributed any legislative powers, the VAT Committee cannot take legally binding decisions. It can however give some guidance on the application of the Directive.

All documents (agendas, working papers and reports of meetings) relating to the activities of the VAT Committee can be found [here](#).

Source: [European Commission](#)

Supply Chain Security

JOINT WCO-ICAO GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PLACI PUBLISHED

Recently, the World Customs Organization (WCO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) released their Joint WCO-ICAO Guiding Principles for Pre-Loading Advance Cargo Information



(PLACI) and Joint WCO-ICAO Guidelines on Alignment of the Customs Authorized Economic Operator (AEO) and Aviation Security Regulated Agent/Known Consignor (RA/KC) Programmes. These Guiding Principles and Guidelines are a result of continuous joint efforts over the last 10 years.

With the new [Joint WCO-ICAO Guiding Principles for Pre-Loading Advance Cargo Information \(PLACI\)](#), another layer is being added to the multi-layered approach to Aviation Security, in order to detect Improvised Explosive Devices/Improvised Incendiary Devices (IED/IID) in air cargo. These PLACI principles should not be used as a standalone method of Aviation Security (AVSEC) screening or air cargo security control, but rather to perform an additional assessment of the potential Aviation Security risks represented by a consignment. Combined with intelligence and other information, PLACI consignment data enables regulators to perform an initial assessment of the potential risks posed by a consignment. The results of the initial assessment may also indicate the need for additional action. On EU-level, PLACI also represents an integral part of the new Import Control System (ICS-2), whose first release affecting air postal- and express pre-loading information started on 15 March. The general air cargo industry, including freight forwarders, will be covered as of Release 2, starting on 1 March 2023.

In addition, the new [Joint WCO-ICAO Guidelines on Alignment of the Customs Authorized Economic Operator \(AEO\) and AVSEC Regulated Agent/Known Consignor \(RA/KC\) Programmes](#) seek harmonization and alignment between the WCO AEO and the AVSEC RA/KC Programmes, capitalizing on synergies and thus increasing efficiency, while also reducing duplication of efforts by regulators and burdens on trade.

Source: [World Customs Organization](#)

Air

ICAO COUNCIL APPROVES NEW PANDEMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY MEASURES

On 12 March, the ICAO Council approved six new COVID-19 recommendations and amended two others. The new and amended recommendations and updated guidelines are contained in the High-Level Cover Document and 'Take-off' Guidelines issued by the [Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force \(CART\)](#), established shortly after the pandemic was identified by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Key outputs include a recommendation to Member States to consider the temporary lifting of restrictions to air cargo operations, including but not limited to granting extra-bilateral rights, in particular for all-cargo services, to foreign airlines to facilitate the transportation of essential goods, supplies and COVID-19 vaccines.

Specific areas relating to the transport of vaccines on commercial aircraft have been newly addressed by the CART, requiring attention and action on behalf of pharmaceutical manufacturers, airline and airport operators, and national aviation regulators. These include addenda to the [ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air](#) to help better ensure that vaccines are safely handled, transported, and accepted to promote their rapid and effective global distribution.



Air crew were also the focus of new recommendations pertaining to regulatory alleviations and the continuous need of service providers and air transport essential personnel to maintain the validity of their certificates, licenses, and other professional accreditations and approvals. The [ICAO Manual on Testing and Cross-Border Risk Management Measures](#) has also been updated to provide more detailed guidance on risk management and Public Health Corridors.

Source: [ICAO](#)

Rail

BELGIUM REDUCES TRACK ACCESS CHARGES

On 12 March, the Belgian government announced the introduction of lower track access charges in support of the freight industry. More specifically, a linear reduction of 0.75 euro per train/km applies to the track access charges for actually performed commercial rail freight traffic. The reduced tariff will apply retroactively from 1 January 2021 until 30 June 2021. Additionally, cancellation and reservation costs are waived for the same period.

Thereby, the Belgian government supports rail freight operators for a total amount of €6.8 million, in order to cope with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. According to the Belgian Deputy Prime Minister and Mobility Minister Georges Gilkinet, a new estimate will be made for a possible extension of the measures beyond June 30, 2021, if the crisis persists.

Source: [Belgium Minister for Mobility](#)

EU YEAR OF RAIL KICKOFF EVENT

On 29 March, the European Commission and the [Portuguese Presidency of the Council of the European Union](#) will hold a joint conference to officially kick-off the [European Year of Rail](#). The virtual conference will be livestreamed from Lisbon on 29 March from 14.00 to 17.00 (CET), on the eve of the ministerial informal Council meeting dedicated to rail transport.

EUROPEAN YEAR OF RAIL 2021

2021PORTUGAL.EU

HOP ON!

SAVE THE DATE!

Kick-off of the European Year of Rail

MAR 29

14:00 - 17:00 (CET)

Streaming live from Lisbon

#EUYearofRail

The conference will be opened by Adina Vălean, European Commissioner for Transport, and Pedro Nuno Santos, Portugal's Minister for Infrastructure and Housing. The [programme](#) includes contributions from Anna Deparnay-Grunenberg, MEP and rapporteur on the European Year of Rail, Karima Delli, Chair of the Parliament's TRAN Committee, Elisa Ferreira, European Commissioner for Cohesion and

Reforms, and Stientje van Veldhoven, the Netherlands' State Secretary for Infrastructure and Water Management.



High-level representatives from the European rail sector will also join panel discussions on key topics for the future of rail transport. The livestream link will be communicated [here](#) ahead of the conference, and more information on the European Year of Rail is available on its official [website](#).

Source: [European Commission](#)

Sustainable Logistics

EP TRAN WORKSHOP ON THE USE OF HYDROGEN IN TRANSPORT

On 16 March, the Transport Committee of the European Parliament (TRAN) held a workshop on the use of hydrogen in the transport sector. The Members of TRAN discussed with experts the prospects of the use of hydrogen fuel in shipping, aviation, rail and road transport. They agreed that there was a need for institutional support in all sectors and that in both shipping and aviation the development was at a very early stage.

Mr Bart Biebuyck, Executive Director of the Fuel Cells and Hydrogen Joint Undertaking (FCH JU), was invited to speak about hydrogen in the road transport sector. He informed the participants that FCH JU, together with the European Commission, provides funding for hydrogen in road transport and that they will display hydrogen-fuelled 30 trucks in 7 countries in 13 demonstration sites. He expressed the view that both blue (low-carbon) and green hydrogen will be needed in order to achieve the EU decarbonisation targets for 2030, albeit blue hydrogen will be a transitional option.

More information, as well as speakers' presentations, is available on the EP [website](#).

General

COUNCIL ADOPTS FIRST READING POSITION ON HORIZON EUROPE

On 16 March, the Council of the European Union adopted its first reading position on Horizon Europe, the EU's multiannual framework programme for research and innovation for the years 2021 to 2027. This follows up on a deal reached last December with the European Parliament that paves the way for the swift adoption of the proposed regulation establishing Horizon Europe at second reading.

The regulation lays down the structure and the objectives of the programme, the budget, the forms of EU funding and the rules for providing such funding. It provides that 35 % of the expenditure for actions funded under the programme will have to contribute to climate objectives.

In line with the political agreement reached last December between the co-legislators, the European Parliament is expected to approve the Council's position at first reading in April 2021. The regulation will then be deemed to have been formally adopted. It will apply retroactively from 1 January 2021.

Source: [Council of the EU](#)



EVALUATION URBAN MOBILITY PACKAGE

On 26 February, the European Commission published its [Staff Working Document](#) on the Evaluation of the 2013 Urban Mobility Package. The evaluation found that the Urban Mobility Package's (UMP) objectives were appropriate for meeting the identified needs, but the analysis highlighted that numerous technological, social, political, environmental and health-related developments have affected urban mobility, in some cases to a considerable extent since 2013 (e.g. digitalisation).

Moreover, even though the problems in the area of urban mobility remain similar in 2020 as in 2013, some of their consequences are of rising severity and gravity for society, the economy and the environment. In addition to challenges with regard to the resilience of urban transport networks, which has been severely tested during the COVID pandemic, as well as the persisting challenges linked to tackling congestion and road casualties, this concerns in particular the accelerating tempo of climate change.

Source: DG MOVE

Forthcoming Events

CLECAT MEETINGS

CLECAT Customs and Indirect Taxation Institute

29 March 2021, Online

CLECAT Road Logistics Institute

13 April 2021, Online

CLECAT Board Meeting

15 April 2021, Online

CLECAT Air Logistics Institute

8 June 2021, Online

CLECAT Security Institute

8 June 2021, Online

CLECAT Rail Logistics Institute

23 June 2021, Online

EU MEETINGS

Council of the European Union

Transport Council

3 June 2021, Luxembourg



Environment Council
21 June 2021, Luxembourg

European Parliament

European Parliament Transport Committee
14-15 April 2021, Brussels

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