

Top News

Commission proposes to purchase up to 300 million additional doses of BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine

The European Commission has proposed to the EU Member States to purchase an additional 200 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine produced by BioNTech and Pfizer, with the option to acquire another 100 million doses. This would enable the EU to purchase up to 600 million doses of this vaccine, which is already being used across the EU. The additional doses will be delivered starting in the second quarter of 2021. President von der Leyen said: "With the new agreement, we could purchase a total of up to an additional 300 million doses of the BioNTech-Pfizer vaccine – in other words, this will allow us to double the amount of doses of BioNTech-Pfizer."

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EMA receives application for conditional marketing authorisation of AstraZeneca vaccine

The European Medicines Agency (EMA) has received an application for conditional marketing authorisation for a COVID-19 vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University. The assessment of the vaccine will proceed under an accelerated timeline. An opinion on the marketing authorisation could be issued by 29 January provided the data submitted on the quality, safety and efficacy of the vaccine are sufficiently robust and complete and that any additional information required to complete the assessment is promptly submitted.

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Covid19: Questions & Answers on vaccine negotiations

For months, the European Commission has been building a portfolio of several vaccines, based on different technologies, at a fair price. Choosing several suppliers increases the chances of having faster access to one or several successful vaccines. In addition, when negotiating together, the purchasing power is greater and conditions such as price and delivery times can be more advantageous. So far, the EU's portfolio of vaccines totals 2.3 billion doses from 6 different companies: BioNTech-Pfizer, AstraZeneca, Sanofi-GSK, Johnson and Johnson, CureVac and Moderna.

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Commission concludes exploratory talks with Valneva to secure a new potential vaccine

The European Commission this week concluded exploratory talks with pharmaceutical company Valneva with a view to purchasing its potential vaccine against COVID-19. The envisaged contract with Valneva would provide for the possibility for all EU Member States to purchase up to 60 million doses. Valneva's vaccine uses an inactivated virus vaccine, a traditional technology used in

most influenza vaccines and many childhood vaccines. It is the only inactivated vaccine candidate currently in clinical trials against COVID-19 in Europe.

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Other news

Ireland set to receive over €1 billion from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve

Ireland is set to receive €1.05 billion from the Brexit Adjustment Reserve. The €5 billion Reserve is being set up to help counter the adverse economic and social consequences in the Member States and sectors worst affected by the UK's departure from the EU. The Commission has proposed that over €4 billion from the Reserve be paid out in 2021 with the remainder being available in 2024. The Regulation establishing the Brexit Adjustment Reserve must now be adopted by the Parliament and the Council.

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7 in 10 Irish people live in under-occupied homes

New Eurostat figures show that just under 70% of Irish people lived in under-occupied dwellings in 2019, the third highest share in the EU after Malta (72.6%) and Cyprus (70.5%). On average 32.7% of the EU population lived in dwellings that were deemed too large with the lowest shares recorded in Romania (7.7%) and Latvia (9.6%). The figures also show that Ireland had the second lowest share of people living in over-crowded households at only 3.2% in 2019. On average, 17.2% of people across the EU were living in overcrowded households meaning they did not have enough rooms for the size of the household.

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SME vouchers: €20 million grant fund to help SMEs maximise their intellectual property assets

From this week, small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) can apply for financing under a €20 million grant scheme to help EU companies to make better use of intellectual property rights. The Ideas Powered for Business SME Fund aims to help firms develop their intellectual property (IP) strategies and protect their IP rights, at national and EU level. The scheme offers financial support in the form of reimbursements for IP scan services (IP pre-diagnostic) and trademark and design application, up to a maximum amount of €1,500 per business.

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Commission supports blood services to increase COVID-19 convalescent plasma collection

The European Commission has selected 24 projects that will build new programmes, or expand existing ones, for the collection of plasma from donors recovered from COVID-19. The plasma donations will be used for the treatment of patients with the disease. The projects will take place in 14 Member States, including Ireland (Irish Blood Transfusion Service). Total funding of €36 million is being made available to the projects.

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Agriculture: Commission publishes list of potential eco-schemes

The Commission has published a list of potential agricultural practices that eco-schemes could support in the future Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Eco-schemes are a new instrument designed to reward farmers who choose to go further in terms of environmental care and climate action and are part of the CAP reform currently under negotiation between the European Parliament and the Council. The list includes practices such as organic farming, integrated pest management, agroecology practices, agroforestry, high nature value farming and precision farming.

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Space: EU attracts €300 million of investments to boost innovation in the sector

The European Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) have announced a €300 million investment in the space sector, with €100 million stemming from the EU budget. This investment concerns two space tech focused funds, Orbital Ventures and Primo Space. The new agreements were announced at this week's European Space Conference in Brussels.

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Young Irish actor among the European Shooting Stars 2021

Young Irish actor Fionn O'Shea is among the ten European Shooting Stars of 2021 announced this week by European Film Promotion (EFP), an international network of film promotion institutes from 37 European countries. The ten emerging talents will be presented to the film industry, public and international press by the EFP at a digital event from 23 to 25 February 2021. Fionn O'Shea is the youngest of this year's stars. His recent credits include Dating Amber by David Freyne and Normal People, directed by Lenny Abrahamson.

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Industrial production up by over 50% in Ireland in November 2020

Ireland recorded a monthly increase of 52.8% in industrial production in November 2020 according to new figures released this week by Eurostat. This was the largest increase in the EU where on average industrial production was up by 2.3%, mainly due to a 6.1% increase in capital goods. The next highest increases were recorded in Greece (+6.3%) and Denmark (+5.3%) while the largest decrease was recorded in Portugal (-5.1%).

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EIC-EIT: working closer together for Europe's innovators

A Memorandum of Understanding has been signed between the European Innovation Council (EIC) and the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) to reinforce their cooperation to support the best European entrepreneurs. This will enable innovators, innovative SMEs and start-ups, higher education institutions and research organisations to receive quality support services to deploy and scale up innovations faster and with greater impact.

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Share of electricity from renewable sources above EU average in Ireland in 2019

The share of electricity from renewable sources was a little above the EU average in Ireland in 2019 according to new Eurostat figures. About 38% of Ireland's electricity came from renewables compared to an EU average of 34%. Austria (75%) and Sweden (71%) had the highest shares while Malta (8%) had the lowest. The figures also show that wind and hydropower accounted for over two-thirds of the total electricity generated from renewable sources (35% each). The remainder came from solar power, solid biofuels and other renewable sources.

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Ireland fourth lowest for recycling of plastic packaging waste

New figures from Eurostat show that only 31% of plastic packaging waste was recycled in Ireland in 2018, the 4th lowest share in the EU where the average was 41.5%. Lithuania recorded the highest rate while Malta (19.2%), France (26.9%), Hungary (30.0%) recorded the lowest.

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Agenda

Friday 15 January: IIEA webinar: The EMA's Regulatory Role in the Global Response to COVID-19

On Friday morning 15 January (9-10am), the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) will host a webinar on the European Medicines Agency's regulatory role in the global response to COVID-19. The webinar will be addressed by Emer Cooke, Executive Director of the European Medicines Agency. In her address, she will present the policy implications related to the development and approval of safe and effective treatments and vaccines and discuss the potential of real-world data for health policy decisions and supply chain vulnerabilities.

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Friday 15 January: IIEA webinar - 2021: Ambitions and Challenges for Ireland in a Changing World

An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD will address an IIEA webinar on Friday lunchtime 15 January where he will set out his ambitions for Ireland as a global actor in 2021 and beyond. As Brexit becomes a practical reality, a change of administration takes office in the US, and Ireland takes up its seat on the UN Security Council, the Taoiseach will reflect on how Ireland can shape and respond positively to these and other global shifts and challenges. The Taoiseach will also highlight Ireland's continued commitment to its place at the heart of the EU as well as the need to reset and strengthen relations with the UK.

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Friday 15 January: Music Moves Europe awards ceremony

On Friday evening, 15 January, the winners of the 2021 Music Moves Europe Talent Awards will be announced at a virtual ceremony hosted by Melanie C. Dublin band Inhaler is among the 16 outstanding artists nominated for this year's EU prize for popular and contemporary music. The show starts at 7pm and can be followed live from the link below.

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Monday 18 January: IIEA webinar - Reconfiguring Security and Defence post-Trump and post-Brexit

On Monday 18 January, the Institute of International and European Affairs (IIEA) will host a lunchtime webinar with MEP Nathalie Loiseau, Chair of the Security and Defence Sub-Committee, on "Reconfiguring Security and Defence post-Trump and post-Brexit". In her address, Ms Loiseau will discuss the prospects for a constructive transatlantic agenda, taking account of President-elect Biden's multilateralist stance and threat outlook. She will also evaluate the scope of the UK's influence post-Brexit on the EU Common Security and Defence Policy and consider the future relationship in a new framework.

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Monday 18 January: Eurogroup

The Eurogroup will hold a thematic discussion on macroeconomic imbalances in the Eurozone on the basis of a technical note prepared by the European Commission. Ministers will discuss the extent to which the COVID-19 crisis has exacerbated existing macroeconomic imbalances at euro area level and the policy strategies needed to respond. Ministers will also exchange views on the preparation of the national Recovery and Resilience Plans against the background of the priorities agreed in the euro area recommendation (EAR).

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Tuesday 19 January: Economic and Financial Affairs Council

The Portuguese presidency will present, in public session, its work programme on economic and financial matters. The European Commission will present its communication of 16 December 2020 on tackling non-performing loans in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ministers will hold a policy debate on the action plan. Also on the agenda the European Semester 2021.

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Thursday 21 January: Video conference of the members of the European Council

On 21 January 2021, President Charles Michel will chair a video conference of the members of the European Council. The EU leaders will discuss coordination on the response to the COVID-19 pandemic, including the large-scale roll-out of vaccines and the deployment of all available instruments to limit the spread of the virus.

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Thursday 21 January: EMI European of the Year Award Ceremony for Michel Barnier

On Thursday morning 21 January, the European Movement Ireland (EMI) will host the online European of the Year Award Ceremony for the Head of the EU Task Force for Relations with the UK, Michel Barnier. The online event will feature a keynote address from Michel Barnier. It will also include contributions from: An Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD; Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence; and, Thomas Byrne TD, Minister of State for European Affairs. Further information and registration at the link below. The EMI European of the Year Award recognises and pays tribute to individuals and organisations that have made outstanding contributions to developing the connections and relationship between Ireland and Europe.

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Monday 25 January: Foreign Affairs Council

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

[Read more...](#)

Monday 25 January: Agriculture and Fisheries Council

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

[Read more...](#)

Tuesday 26 January: General Affairs Council

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

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Wednesday 27 January to Thursday 11 February: Becoming a translator or an interpreter – virtual sessions for third level students

Are you a third level student? Do you want to know more about what a translator or an interpreter does? Are you interested in working in a multilingual and multicultural environment? Do you want to know how to become an EU translator or interpreter? Hear from staff translators and interpreters working for the European Commission about their career paths and what their jobs entail. The European Commission's translation and interpreting Directorates General (DGT and DG SCIC) have teamed up for a virtual tour of Irish universities during January and February 2021.

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Thursday 28 January: Partnership Building for EU Projects (online workshop organised by The Wheel)

On Thursday morning 28 January, The Wheel will hold an online workshop to help organisations interested in applying for EU funds. Participants will learn to: find project partners; create an EU Development Plan for their organisation; and implement a step-by-step project development process. This event is free to attend but advance registration is required.

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Thursday 28 January: Online event – Ireland and the European Climate Pact

The European Commission Representation in Ireland, in co-operation with European Movement Ireland, is hosting an online event on the theme: ‘Ireland and the European Climate Pact’. The event will explore the implications for Ireland of the European Climate Pact – with presentations from the European Commission and Irish stakeholders. It will be followed by a public debate.

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Friday 12 February: Online workshop for translators – translation tools and machine translation

On Friday 12 February, the European Commission, Dublin City University (DCU) and the ADAPT Centre for Digital Media Technology will hold a special online workshop for Irish language translators. Representatives from DCU and from ADAPT will speak about the courses available at the university and the projects currently underway. A European Commission translator will run the practical part of the event through Irish and will speak about the ways in which European Commission translators use translation tools and machine translation. Full programme for this free event available on the link below.

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Public consultations

Commission consults on EU targets to restore Europe's biodiversity

The European Commission this week launched an online public consultation on the development of legally binding EU nature restoration targets. The purpose of this consultation is to gather information and feedback from stakeholders and the wider public on the implementation of the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 and on the application of the EU Regulation on Invasive Alien Species, as well as to inform the Impact Assessment that will underpin the Commission’s proposal for binding EU nature restoration targets. The consultation is open until 5 April 2021.

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