



EU-UKRAINE BUSINESS SUMMIT: SAVE THE DATE! Don't miss the [EU-Ukraine Business Summit](#), happening on **10 & 11 April** at **Autoworld in Brussels**.

The Summit, co-organised with the European Commission, the Italian Permanent Representation to the EU, the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU and the Ukraine Mission to the EU, will explore opportunities to strengthen economic cooperation, foster investment, and support Ukraine's path towards closer integration with Europe.

Stay tuned: registration opening soon!



This week's highlights

- European Commission not considering tax measures to encourage healthier eating
- Court of Justice criticises Italian legislation governing unfair commercial practices
- **EuroHealthNet** calls for EU measures to reduce consumption of ultra-processed food
- In parliamentary committee, MEPs and experts call for a collective awakening to impact of social networks on young girls
- Medicine shortages persisted in EU in 2024, according to **PGEU**
- Adam Jarubas elected Chair of European Parliament's new Committee on Public Health

The European Commission is not considering tax measures to encourage healthier eating, according to a response from Wopke Hoekstra, Commissioner for Climate, Net Zero and Clean Growth, on Friday 24 January.

In a written question in November, a dozen MEPs from the ECR and EPP groups asked the European Commission what new steps the Commission was considering “**taking in order to coordinate efforts to boost fresh fruit and vegetable consumption throughout the EU**” in order to combat certain diseases.

“**When adopting the 2022 reform of the Value Added Tax (VAT) rates, Member States unanimously agreed on allowing for the maximum**

flexibility for food”, emphasised Mr Hoekstra. Member States can choose to apply reduced VAT rates (below 5%) or a zero rate to the supply of foodstuffs. Member States “**must respect the principle of fiscal neutrality inherent in the VAT system, which prohibits treating**

similar, and therefore competing, products differently”, he added.

Furthermore, “**experience shows that when VAT rates are reduced, the pass-on rate is relatively low**” in respect of final consumer prices.

COURT OF JUSTICE OF THE EU: Court of Justice criticises Italian legislation governing unfair commercial practices

Read the answer: <https://aeur.eu/f/191> (Original version in French by Anne Damiani)

In Italy, **Trenitalia** is contesting a €5 million fine imposed on it by the Italian Competition Authority (AGCM) for unfair commercial practices.

The Italian rail transport management company offered travel solutions online that mainly involved the use of high-speed trains, without mentioning the possibility of using regional trains, which are much cheaper.

The Court of Justice of the European Union interprets the directive (2005/29) on unfair commercial practices, in particular with regard to conducting the infringement proceedings that led to the AGCM’s decision to impose a fine.

According to the Court, in proceedings for establishing an unfair commercial practice conducted by a national authority responsible for consumer protection, EU law precludes national legislation which (1) requires that authority to open the adversarial phase of the proceedings by notifying the undertaking concerned of its objections within 90 days from the time it becomes aware of the alleged infringement; and (2) penalises failure to observe that time limit by annulling the authority’s final decision.

See the judgment of the Court of Justice: <https://aeur.eu/f/fal> (Original version in French by Mathieu Bion)

SECTORAL POLICIES: EuroHealthNet calls for EU measures to reduce consumption of ultra-processed food

With the European Commission due to adopt its vision for the future of agriculture and food in mid-February, **EuroHealthNet** called, on Thursday 30 January, for measures to be taken to “**reduce the consumption and omnipresent availability of ultra-processed foods**” in order to improve health across Europe.

The consumption of ultra-processed foods (containing preservatives, emulsifiers, modified starches, artificial sweeteners and flavour enhancers) is growing and is increasingly damaging people’s health, argues **EuroHealthNet**.

Today, Europeans get an average of 27% of their daily calorie intake from these ultra-processed foods, with some countries even reaching 44%, according to the organisation, which is calling for the following actions: provide for mandatory and uniform nutritional labelling on the front of packaging throughout the EU, require producers to improve the nutritional profile of their products, restrict the marketing and advertising of these harmful foods to children, support high-quality food in public procurement, especially in schools, and reduce VAT on fruit and vegetables.

For further details: <https://aeur.eu/f/fa9> (Original version in French by Lionel Changeur)

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS - SOCIETAL ISSUES: In parliamentary committee, MEPs and experts call for a collective awakening to impact of social networks on young girls

On Tuesday 28 January, members of the European Parliament’s Committee on Women’s Rights and Gender Equality held a hearing on the impact of social networks on the mental health of young girls. The aim was to identify the problems posed by digital platforms for young generations of women, and to find solutions to the pressures they face.

“**Social media has become a mirror in which everyone compares themselves. Young people aged 10 or 12 are living in an atmosphere of**

anxiety”, warned Joanne Sweeney, CEO of the digital marketing agency **Digital Training Institute Ireland**.

While 96% of young people in the European Union use the Internet every day, making it their primary source of information and validation, as the expert pointed out, this quest for validation, fuelled by algorithms, has a harmful influence on young girls’ self-perceptions.

The founder of the ‘**Shona Project**’, an Irish charity dedicated to the education and empowerment of young girls, Tammy Darcy,

corroborated these statements, indicating, on the basis of her research, that “**70% of young girls feel that social networks have a negative impact on their mental health, exacerbating body image and self-esteem issues**”.

And with good reason, as content creator and self-acceptance advocate Martyna Kaczmarek explains, unrealistic standards of beauty are set as role models on social networks and young girls continue to compare themselves to retouched images, despite warnings about their modification.

According to Tammy Darcy, more education about masculinity, the source of many of these pressures, and greater regulation of advertising targeting young girls’ insecurities would form the basis of a solid response.

promote a solid educational structure to support their well-being'.

Marko Vešligaj (S&D, Croatian), for his part, criticised the major platforms and their owners and asked how to take action ***“to guarantee the safety of young girls and women”*** when faced with people who encourage harassment, referring to the problematic stances taken by Donald Trump’s supporters in recent weeks.

Emma Rafowicz (Greens/EFA) highlighted the destructive impact of filters and hyper-sexualised content.

The French MEP also called for collective responsibility to pursue investigations into ***TikTok, Meta and X***, saying that since ***“14 million young Europeans suffer from mental disorders”***, ***“now is not the time for calm, but for a collective awakening”***.

All the speakers agreed that policy-makers, educators, parents, technology companies and civil society must work together to offer young girls a healthier digital future.

Indeed, as Joanne Sweeney has said, social networks are not going to disappear, but their impact and design must become a collective responsibility. ***(Original version in French by Nithya Paquiry)***

SECTORAL POLICIES: Medicine shortages persisted in EU in 2024, according to PGEU

The latest ***PGEU*** (Pharmaceutical Group of the European Union) report on medicine shortages, published on Wednesday 29 January, shows the continuing impact of this problem across Europe in 2024.

Over the last 12 months, pharmacies have been faced with high levels of shortages. According to the report, 61% of EU countries said that the situation had not improved significantly compared to last year’s survey, which saw an exceptionally high level of shortages ***(see EUROPE 13551/5)***.

The survey highlights a worrying trend: the amount of time pharmacists spend managing medicine shortages continues to rise (around 11 hours a week dealing with this problem).

Pharmacists’ efforts to mitigate the impact of shortages include advising patients on alternative medicines available, obtaining these medicines and negotiating reimbursement for alternative treatments with payment organisations.

The medicines most frequently in short supply in 2024, as in 2023, were cardiovascular medicines, anti-infectives for systemic use and medicines for the nervous system.

See the report: <https://aeur.eu/f/faa> ***(Original version in French by Lionel Changeur)***

SECTORAL POLICIES: Adam Jarubas elected Chair of European Parliament’s new Committee on Public Health

At its inaugural meeting on Wednesday 29 January, the European Parliament’s new Standing Committee on Public Health elected Adam Jarubas MEP (EPP, Polish) as its new Chair.

The four vice-chairs were also elected. The first vice-chair is Tilly Metz (Greens/EFA, Luxembourg), elected by secret ballot. The second vice-chair is Stine Bosse (***Renew Europe***, Danish), thanks to a vote by acclamation; the third is Romana Jerković (S&D, Croatian), by acclamation; and the fourth vice-chair is Emmanouil Fragkos (ECR, Greek), also by acclamation.

This new committee will deal with public health issues relating to pharmaceutical products and medical devices, specific programmes and actions, preparedness and response to health crises, mental health and patients’ rights, health aspects of bioterrorism, the European Medicines Agency (EMA) and the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, as well as relations with the World Health Organization.

To see the members of this committee: <https://aeur.eu/f/f9u> ***(Original version in French by Lionel Changeur)***

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