

**1. Volkswagen adopts Astypalaia.** After several months of joint preparation with the Greek government, Volkswagen has selected Astypalaia for the implementation of its Green & Sustainable Island project. This will be broken down into stages that include the replacement of all public transport with electric vehicles, the provision of generous incentives – besides those already offered by the government – for the replacement of the islanders' vehicles with electric ones, and the development of an electricity production unit that will be carbon neutral, covering the entire set of the island's power requirements. This will be followed by a pilot program for the autonomous use of electric vehicles on the island.

**2. Huge rise in the use of data.** The swing toward teleworking and the soaring utilization of apps on smartphones during the spring lockdown, as well as mobile phone companies offering a far greater volume of data, led to an increase in the amount of data used over the first half of the year, a survey by the Association of Mobile Telephony Companies (EEKT) has shown. In the year's first six months there was a 66% rise in the amount of data used compared to the same period in 2019, while the pre-tax cost of data use declined by 31.8%. The data use rate increased particularly in the second quarter of the year, to reach 2.58 gigabytes per active subscriber per month, against 1.6 GB a year earlier, for an annual expansion of 61%. Data use has clearly come a long way from the rate of 0.83 GB/month per subscriber in the first quarter of 2018.

**3. Athens realty still a goldmine.** The prospects of the Greek commercial property market remain strong, at least as far as the projected course of sale prices and rental rates is concerned. This upbeat outlook was provided by foreign and Greek institutional investors who participated in this year's survey on the prospects of the European property market next year by PwC for the Urban Land Institute. The survey placed Athens ninth among 31 cities in Europe based on the estimated course of prices and rent for investment properties (e.g. office buildings, logistics centers, etc.). This is regarded as an important development amid the pandemic, with institutional investors agreeing that the Athens realty market offers significant opportunities for future capital gains and rental revenues.

**4. Courier firms bracing for new rush.** Courier company officials have been in a flurry of meetings and preparations in recent days as the new lockdown is expected to put significant pressure on the sector, as it did in the spring. In the period from late March to early May, demand for courier services matched that of the periods before Christmas and around the Black Friday sales window, prompting the industry to tackle surges in demand more efficiently.



**5. Food service domain fears the day after.** It isn't just small enterprises that are feeling this fear, but also the bigger ones in the industry: "We need a government plan for the entire period until April, when outdoor spaces can operate again," says Giorgos Melissaris, owner of 12 food catering companies, including the Nikkei restaurants in Kolonaki and on Mykonos. He says that even when the vaccine comes, the sector will not revert to full operation. These enterprises are particularly sensitive to sudden announcements of lockdown measures, as they typically stock up on supplies for weeks and months ahead, and in March a lot had to be thrown away.

**6. Turning Elliniko into a Greek Monaco.** Greece aspires to turn the new development at Elliniko into a Monaco-like magnet for wealthy entrepreneurs and businesses from abroad, not just for pensioners permanent relocating to Greece. That is the target of the government's recent moves through laws already voted on or soon to be tabled in Parliament concerning incentives for enterprises and their owners to relocate from places such as the City of London. Perhaps more important is the change in the law regarding moving foreign enterprises to Greece: The government's objective is to win over businesses wishing to leave London after Brexit from countries such as the Netherlands. In fact the Dutch have acted swiftly and already managed to attract many of those companies.

**1. Berlin's BER airport opens with little fanfare and plenty of protests.** An EasyJet airliner and a plane from Germany's flagship carrier Lufthansa were the first to land at Berlin's new airport. The day wasn't without turbulence, though, as environmental activists stole the show. EasyJet beat German flagship airline Lufthansa in arriving first at the multibillion-euro complex but it was the activists who landed the earliest blow. Nearly 10 years late and three times beyond the original budget, the terminal known by its BER code has been plagued with controversy throughout its construction. Activists sought to disrupt proceedings, marching on the building to show their opposition to the new facility.

**2. How India's women entrepreneurs are beating the odds.** In India, a nationwide coronavirus shutdown brought many businesses to near dissolution. But some Indian women have found novel ways to keep their businesses afloat. Pastry chef Pooja Dhingra (main picture) runs a successful chain of cafes in Mumbai. She had many plans for this year, but the coronavirus pandemic has pushed her to the brink of losing everything she had worked for over the last decade. Srishti Tehri, a 25-year-old fashion media graduate, was shocked to find the once bustling market deserted when she stopped by one day hoping to purchase a mirror, only to realize she was their first customer of the day. Tehri immediately felt compelled to take action. She returned home with photos of the market's ceramics, designed a logo, and posted the photos on Instagram in the hopes of catching people's interest.

**3. Turkey: Erdogan's son-in-law resigns as finance minister.** The resignation of Turkish Finance Minister Berat Albayrak comes as the lira has dropped to record lows. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan recently sacked the head of the country's central bank. Berat Albayrak, the son-in-law of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, stepped down as Turkey's finance minister citing health reasons.

**4. Czechs set sail on ancient Danube-Oder-Elbe Canal.** Czech President Milos Zeman is glad the government has given the go-ahead for the initial phase of a canal project that is meant to link three rivers — the Danube, the Oder and the Elbe. Emperor Charles IV is revered as the greatest of Czech leaders who built Prague into one of Europe's finest cities. Perhaps that's why the current president has decided

one of the erstwhile monarch's uncompleted projects is just what the country needs in the 21st century. Having pushed the plan for years, President Milos Zeman was delighted in October when the Czech government gave the green light on the first phase of a 585 billion Czech crown (€21.7 billion, \$25.8 billion) project to build canals linking the Danube, Oder, and Elbe rivers, each of which flows into a different sea.



**5. Germany to pump additional €3 billion in ailing automotive industry.** The investment will extend a subsidy for electric vehicles and attempt to secure jobs that are in jeopardy due to the coronavirus pandemic. The announcement follows talks between Chancellor Merkel and industry heads. The German government announced on Tuesday that it would support the country's ailing automotive industry with an additional of €3 billion (\$3.56 billion) — bringing Berlin's total financial support for the industry to €5 billion. The latest financial boost is expected to bolster sales for the industry, which recorded a sharp drop in revenue in the first half of 2020 owing largely to the coronavirus pandemic.

**6. Deutsche Bahn, Siemens launch hydrogen trains trial.** As part of efforts to tackle the climate crisis and achieve carbon neutrality, Germany's state-owned rail company Deutsche Bahn (DB) announced it will begin testing a new hydrogen train set. Developed in partnership with Siemens, instead of burning conventional diesel fuel, the unit is powered from a reaction of hydrogen and oxygen to create electricity. Water is the only byproduct.

**7. UK to ban installation of new Huawei 5G kit from September.** The UK government in July reversed its policy to allow Huawei to provide infrastructure for its 5G network under pressure from the United States, which said the Chinese firm posed a security risk. It ordered a ban on buying new Huawei equipment after the end of this year and the complete removal of the Chinese firm's equipment from its 5G networks by the end of 2027.