

1. One in four consumers buy grocery online. While their great success may have been dictated largely by the pandemic, it seems that online supermarkets are here to stay. It is no coincidence the investments of supermarkets in 2021, too, mostly concern improving their e-stores and the creation of the necessary infrastructure. The three main reasons consumers opt to buy their groceries online are to protect themselves against the coronavirus (71%), the ease of shopping (63%) and speed (41%), with the latter boosted by the faster deliveries the chains have achieved after the first shock of the spring lockdown, when delays would stretch for weeks in some cases. Some 52% of consumers tend to choose the platform of the supermarket chain they usually shop from, while only 11% currently make purchases from online stores without a physical point of sale. This is another peculiarity of the food retail market that is hard to find in other markets. Twenty-one percent of consumers opt for platforms that cooperate with many food stores, a trend that only emerged last spring and has gained considerable ground.

2. Greece to repay €3.1 bln to the IMF early. The Public Debt Management Agency (PDMA) is awaiting the nod from the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) this or next month to proceed with the early repayment of another part of Greece's debt to the International Monetary Fund, thereby considerably reducing the remainder of the country's dues to the IMF. The government's intention, according to a statement by Finance Minister Christos Staikouras in late December, had been for the country to pay off 3.6 billion euros that corresponded to the tranches due in 2021 and 2022. However, since then the state has covered other obligations due in January, so the government only had €3.2 billion available for the 2021-22 repayment period at end-January, and by end-March this will have diminished to €3.1 billion. It is to that amount that the early repayment to the IMF is expected to come, once the expected approval comes from the ESM.

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4. Document submission online. Aspiring entrepreneurs are now able to launch their business activity by taking care of all the necessary paperwork work online. The Independent Authority for Public Revenue is offering taxpayers the option of submitting all the documents required for obtaining a tax registration number (AFM), for changing their registration data, or for starting, changing or ending their business activity by sending emails, franked mail or making video calls. At the same time taxpayers are able to obtain access to the Taxisnet platform of the tax authority without having to pay a visit to their local tax office: They can simply log on to kleidarithmos.gov.gr and receive electronically a username and a password after having the cellphone number certified by their bank or their cell service provider – this concerns the first time taxpayers use Taxisnet.

5. Plan to turn Skorprios into a Davos-like conference venue. Dmitry Rybolovlev's plan for the transformation of Skorprios island, near Lefkada in the Ionian Sea, into a super-luxurious tourism complex has entered the final stretch. The Russian tycoon's ambitions for the island formerly owned by the Onassis family, however, go much further than that. Besides the tourism infrastructure of luxury accommodation and sports facilities being planned, Rybolovlev aspires to develop facilities of Davos-like standards, allowing the island to host high-level closed conference events. The cost of staying at the 'new' Skorprios will reach up to 1 million euros per week.

1. Cyprus unemployment drops despite pandemic.

Eurozone unemployment was stable at 8.3% of the workforce in December, the European Union's statistics office Eurostat said on Monday, despite continued coronavirus lockdowns in most eurozone countries. Still, Eurostat said 13.67 million people were out of work in the 19 countries sharing the euro in December, up from 13.62 million in November. In Belgium, Ireland, Cyprus, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Portugal and Slovakia the number of people unemployed actually fell in December, but it rose slightly in other countries, such as Germany, France and Italy.

2. Denmark to construct artificial island as a wind energy hub.

The construction project, believed to be the biggest in Danish history, will link hundreds of wind turbines to deliver enough electricity for millions of households. Denmark approved plans on Thursday to construct an artificial island in the North Sea and use it as clean energy hub. When built, the island will supply both clean power to homes and green hydrogen for use in shipping, aviation, industry and heavy transport. The decision came as the EU unveiled plans to transform the bloc's electricity supply. The bloc aims to rely mostly on renewable energy within a decade while increasing offshore wind energy capacity roughly 25-fold by mid-century.

3. BioNTech founders receive one of Germany's highest honors.

Germany's President Frank-Walter Steinmeier will award COVID vaccine developers Özlem Türeci and Ugur Sahin with the Order of Merit for contributing to the "containment of the coronavirus pandemic." The founders of BioNTech, Özlem Türeci and Ugur Sahin, will receive the Knight Commander's Cross of the Federal Order of Merit for developing a coronavirus vaccine, Germany's presidential office announced on Friday. It will be the first Order of Merit German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier awards in person this year.

4. Berlin Airport closes new terminal amid passenger plunge.

Berlin's old Schönefeld Airport was converted into Terminal 5 of the new BER airport. However, the coronavirus pandemic has meant far fewer travelers. Berlin's newly-opened BER airport will close one of its terminals on Monday due to a sharp fall in passenger numbers caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The closure is another blow to the airport, the construction of which took nine years longer than planned and which went three times over budget.

5. Coronavirus conundrum: Containers still in short supply.

Demand for freight container transport has been soaring for about six months — despite or because of the pandemic. The same can be said of cargo rates and the profits made by shipowners. "Since the third quarter, we've seen an unparalleled rise in demand for container transport," Nils Haupt of container shipping company Hapag Lloyd told DW. It's an unexpected but gratifying development following 12 years of a business slump and the onset of the pandemic. Haupt said shipping was hit hard in January and February 2020 as Chinese production ground to a halt, and so did exports to Asia. "But then things took a turn, and demand took a dive in the US, Europe and South America," he recalled. "Chinese production was restarted, but there wasn't a lot of transport activities — our industry thought it would stay this way for weeks or even months."



6. When jet engines fall apart, aircraft must stay intact.

Two jet engine explosions in one day point to potential dangers underneath the wings of aircraft. The long fan blades are made of titanium, the hardest metal available. The funnel-like blades let as much air as possible into the turbine, where it gets heated up, creating propulsion. In some engine types, the fan blades are hollow inside with a view to saving weight. The tips of the fan blades, usually between 22 and 38 per engine depending on the class of aircraft, rotate with supersonic speeds inside the inlets. Especially on takeoff, such huge high-tech propulsion devices for wide-body aircraft run at full throttle to lift off aircraft weights of 250 tons or more.

7. Allsun hotel chain to require proof of vaccination.

Germany's Allsun hotel chain will in future require guests to be vaccinated against the coronavirus, seeking to drum up business from holidaymakers concerned about the risk of contracting the virus. The new policy for the 35 Allsun hotels — located on the Spanish island of Mallorca, on the Canary Islands and in Greece — is likely to kick in from October 31, depending on the progress of Germany's vaccination campaign.