

State aid: Commission concludes Dutch guarantee scheme to support fast growing medium and large-companies involves no aid

Under the GO scheme, the Dutch State guarantees 50% of new loans to companies, for up to 8 years. The GO scheme will run until the end of 2023, with the maximum annual amount of loan guarantees fixed at €400 million.

Loans guaranteed under the scheme can range from €1.5 million to €150 million, for which a guarantee fee is paid to the Dutch State by the banks issuing the loans. The Dutch authorities expect that this scheme will encourage banks to issue these loans on a larger scale than currently.

The Commission found that the guarantees give the Dutch State an appropriate remuneration level, ensuring that the scheme is self-financing, including administrative costs and the remuneration of virtual capital. This is the capital that a company operating on market terms would set aside as a precaution if it issued such a guarantee.

Therefore, the Commission concluded that the Dutch State guarantee scheme does not constitute State aid to the banks, nor to the borrowing companies.

Background

State aid rules are designed to accommodate the specific financing needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). In particular:

- SMEs are not considered to be in difficulty if they are less than three years old. They can receive all forms of State aid during that period.
- Small firms can receive start-up aid during their first five years of existence. SMEs can also receive risk finance investments up to seven years after having made their first commercial sale.
- SMEs, like all other companies, can also receive state funding if it is granted on market terms – as is the case for the Dutch GO scheme.

The non-confidential version of this decision will be available under the case number SA.48350 in the public [case register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website, once any confidentiality issues have been reso

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust fined after deaths of two patients

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust has been fined £2m after a series of management failings led to the deaths of two vulnerable patients at different facilities owned by the Trust.

The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) prosecution follows the deaths of 45-year-old Teresa Colvin at a Southampton Mental Health Hospital and the death of 18-year-old Connor Sparrowhawk at a specialist unit in Oxford. Both centres were under the management of Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust.

Oxford Crown Court heard both HSE investigations found a series of management failings leading up to both deaths including a failure to control risks, and failures in planning.

Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust, pleaded guilty to two breaches of Section 3(1) of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974. For the breach relating to Teresa Colvin, the sentence was a £950,000 fine. For the breach relating to Connor Sparrowhawk's death, the sentence was a fine of £1,050.000.

HSE's deputy director of field operations Tim Galloway said: "These tragic incidents could have wholly been avoided with better supervision and planning. Instead two families are left utterly devastated and let down by those who had a duty of care for their loved ones.

"The Trust was responsible for caring for those suffering with mental health issues and caring for those with learning difficulties. On these two occasions it failed these two patients and their families.

"Our thoughts remain with Connor Sparrowhawk and Teresa Colvin's families as they continue to come to terms with these avoidable tragedies.

"In particular, we would like to pay tribute to Dr Sara Ryan, Connor's mother, for her continued campaigning on these tragic issues."

BACKGROUND OF CASE

Death of Connor Sparrowhawk

On 4 July 2013, 18-year-old Connor Sparrowhawk died after suffering an epileptic seizure in the bath at the Trust's specialist unit, Slade House in Oxford.

An investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) found that despite Mr Sparrowhawk's vulnerability and previous suspected seizures, he was allowed to use the bath alone with checks from staff taking place every 15 minutes.

Tim Galloway added: "Southern Health was aware of the patient's condition and there had been a number of warning signs prior to the incident taking place. Allowing Connor to use the bath unsupervised was an obvious risk and a serious management failing."

Death of Teresa Colvin

Following Connor's death, NHS England published the independent Mazars report in December 2015 into the deaths of people with a learning disability or mental health problem at Southern Health NHS Foundation Trust

In response to the report, and following an assessment of all the deaths that occurred on Southern Health premises from April 2011, HSE concluded that one death met the criteria for a full HSE investigation.

On 26 April 2012, Teresa Colvin was found slumped and unconscious at a telephone kiosk at Woodhaven Adult Mental Health Hospital in Southampton. She died a short time later following treatment.

It became clear during HSE's investigation that the Trust failed to act on the findings of assessments that it could better control the risks associated with the use of phones with cords. There had been a history of patients across the Trust, including those at Woodhaven, using phone cords as a ligature.

Tim Galloway added: "The known risk of patients across the Trust using phone cords as ligature was never sufficiently addressed. This ultimately led to the death of this vulnerable patient."

Notes to Editors:

1. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) is Britain's national regulator for workplace health and safety. We prevent work-related death, injury and ill health through regulatory actions that range from influencing behaviours across whole industry sectors through to targeted interventions on individual businesses. These activities are supported by globally recognised scientific expertise. www.hse.gov.uk
2. After 1 April 2015, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) took responsibility in England for patient and service user health and safety for providers registered with them. Prior to this date, HSE had enforcement responsibility, hence its investigation and subsequent prosecution on this occasion.
3. More about the legislation referred to in this case can be found at: www.legislation.gov.uk/
4. HSE news releases are available at <http://press.hse.gov.uk>

Journalists should approach HSE press office with any queries on regional press releases.

Greece: New EUR 100 million EIB and Piraeus Bank initiative to cut energy bills

Energy bills for companies across Greece will be reduced by new energy efficiency investment backed by a new EUR 100 million initiative by the European Investment Bank and Piraeus Bank. Under the scheme dedicated financing for new investment to reduce energy consumption by small-scale energy users will be provided across the country. Technical and financial expertise gained from energy efficiency investment programmes elsewhere will be used to strengthen new projects in Greece.

This operation is the first initiative in Greece under Private Finance for Energy Efficiency programme and represents the largest engagement in any European country so far.

“New investment to improve energy efficiency reduces energy bills, cuts carbon emissions and creates jobs. The European Investment Bank is committed to supporting transformational investment in Greece and pleased to launch the largest energy efficiency financing initiative to date in any European country under the Private Finance for Energy Efficiency programme. The scale of this new scheme clearly demonstrates the impressive potential for cutting energy bills in the country. This initiative will be strengthened by the local knowledge and professional expertise of colleagues at Piraeus Bank.” said Jonathan Taylor, European Investment Bank Vice President.

“This agreement underlines the longstanding commitment of Piraeus Bank, the largest bank in Greece, to the financing of investments with a positive environmental and social impact, and a focus on sustainable development and financial viability. Expanding our long-standing cooperation with the European Investment Bank Group, we have signed a new EUR 100 million agreement to finance energy efficiency projects in Greece, through the dedicated energy efficiency lending scheme, Private Finance for Energy Efficiency (PF4EE). This agreement, the only one in Greece and the largest provided by European Investment Bank under PF4EE in Europe, re-enforces our support for green entrepreneurship and expands our considerable know-how. Piraeus Bank is ideally positioned in the Greek market to take advantage of this particular innovative financing instrument.” said Mr. Christos Megalou, Chief Executive Officer of Piraeus Bank.

The European Investment Bank and Piraeus Bank have signed an agreement worth EUR 100 million under the Private Finance for Energy Efficiency initiative. This is a pilot scheme currently being rolled out across Europe intended to increase the availability of debt financing to eligible energy efficiency investment.

The EUR 100 million EIB loan will be used by Piraeus Bank for the financing of new investment improving the energy efficiency in existing buildings,

outdoor lighting and water pumping stations across Greece.

The PF4EE instrument combines three elements. The first consists of an EIB loan to improve the funding conditions of the energy efficiency investments financed by Piraeus Bank. The second element provides partial risk protection on Piraeus Bank's loans. The third element will strengthen Piraeus Bank's lending capacity specifically targeted at energy efficiency investments, by passing on technical and financial expertise gained from similar schemes elsewhere in the European Union.

"The Private Finance for Energy Efficiency financial instrument, deployed under the LIFE programme, will deliver new finance for Greek companies willing to invest in their sustainability." said Miguel Arias Cañete, European Commissioner responsible for Climate Action and Energy.

The risk protection will cover 80% of Piraeus Bank's potential losses under these loans up to a maximum agreed amount. Piraeus Bank will also benefit from the technical and financial expertise of the EIB during the start of the operation for assistance in the identification and appraisal of energy efficiency investments and capacity building support.

The new cooperation with Piraeus Bank in Greece represents the eighth partnership with a European bank to support energy efficiency investments under the Private Finance for Energy Efficiency financial instrument. The European Investment Bank engagement is supported by the European Commission, under the LIFE programme.

In 2017, the European Investment Bank provided more than EUR 4.1 billion for new energy efficiency investment worldwide.

'Diversity training' is not enough to combat racial hatred

From the events of the past few weeks, you would be forgiven for thinking that Scottish Labour's solution to any problem is "diversity training".

[Go to Source](#)

Author:

Press release: Relatives of Argentine soldiers killed during the Falklands War visit the Argentine cemetery at Darwin

More than 200 relatives of 90 recently identified Argentine soldiers who lost their lives in the 1982 Falkland war visited the Falkland Islands today (Monday 26 March) to visit their newly marked graves.

As part of a joint project between the UK, Falkland Islands and Argentine Governments and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), a forensic team exhumed, analysed and documented the remains in each of the unidentified graves in the Argentine cemetery at Darwin in the Falkland Islands.

Argentina's Secretary for Human Rights, Claudio Avruj, will accompany the families. Retired British Army Colonel Geoffrey Cardozo, who was responsible for burying the Argentine dead with sensitivity and respect immediately after the conflict, will also accompany the group.

Minister of State for Europe and the Americas, Sir Alan Duncan MP said:

I welcome this visit to the Argentine cemetery at Darwin by family members of the recently identified Argentine soldiers. This important humanitarian project, facilitated by the International Committee of the Red Cross, will provide some comfort to the families of the deceased. When visiting the cemetery the families will find their loved ones properly identified and in a place of great dignity.

I am grateful to the Falkland Islands Government who coordinated the visit, in cooperation with the Argentine Families Commission, and with support by the UK and Argentine Governments. It marks an important development in the UK-Argentina relationship and demonstrates what can be achieved with a positive and constructive relationship.

Notes for Editors:

- The visit will include a religious ceremony jointly conducted by Auxiliary Bishop of Buenos Aires, Bishop Eguia Segui, and the Right Reverend Abbott Hugh Allan from the United Kingdom.
- Brigadier Baz Bennett, Commander of the British Forces South Atlantic Islands, will deliver military honours for the ceremony. A Scottish Piper and a British military guard will be present.

- The DNA identification project was funded by the UK and Argentine Governments. This is a humanitarian initiative that we support in line with our wider obligations under international law.
- In the UK-Argentina Joint Communique of 13 September 2016, both countries expressed their full support for a DNA identification process in respect of unknown Argentine soldiers buried in the Falkland Islands.
- Over a seven week period (7 June – 20 August 2017), an ICRC forensic team exhumed, analysed and documented the remains of each of the unidentified soldiers. 90 Argentine soldiers were positively identified.

Further information

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