

EUR 8.9 billion new financing approved by EIB board to support climate, water, transport, enterprise and education investment

The December board meeting of the European Investment Bank yesterday approved a total of EUR 8.9 billion of new financing for 55 projects across Europe and in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East.

This included support for the first ever EIB financing in Belarus, more than EUR 3.2 billion for investment by private sector firms around the world and EUR 2.2 billion for new transport investment.

Building on the proven success of the European Fund for Strategic Investments

Earlier today the European Parliament voted to extend and enhance the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the central pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe.

The EFSI 2.0 Regulation is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2018. As well as extending the timeline from mid-2018 to the end of 2020, it will increase the investment target from €315 billion to at least €500 billion.

Twelve projects backed by the EFSI guarantee, expected to mobilize EUR 4.3 billion of new investment, were approved by today's board meeting. These include support for corporate innovation, strategic transport and SME financing.

Working with financial partners for help local business expand

New EIB financing totalling EUR 3.2 billion approved by the EIB board will strengthen credit lines and lending by banks and financial institutions essential to enable private enterprise to expand and harness new opportunities. New SME and midcap financing programmes include partnerships with banks in Greece, Italy, France and the Czech Republic, as well as the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

In Spain a dedicated financing programme will support investment by self-employed entrepreneurs and Italy and Ireland agricultural investment will benefit from dedicated financing.

Enabling industry to upgrade, adapt and expand

New EIB financing for corporate investment will support development of LED technology and recycling in France, fertiliser manufacturing in Poland as well as hearing aid innovation in Denmark and aluminium production in Greece.

The board also approved support for financing to develop new industrial zones

in Lebanon.

Strengthening transport connections

The EIB board backed EUR 2.2 billion of new transport financing. This will support new intercity rolling stock in the Netherlands, upgrade regional rail services in Slovenia and acquisition of new trains in the Italian regions of Emilia Romagna and Lombardy. New support for urban rail transport includes backing for modernisation of tram networks in Silesia, financing for 730 metro and tram vehicles in Berlin, construction on 8 new stations on the Sofia metro network and building a rail bypass around Serbia's third city Niš.

The EIB's first long-term loan for a project in Belarus will support upgrading motorway links between Minsk and the Polish and Lithuanian borders. Schemes to enhance road connections in Tunisia and Kosovo, and improve road safety in Ukraine were also approved, alongside support for expansion of the main airport on the Indian Ocean island of Reunion.

Improving education and healthcare

Schools across the Finnish city of Tampere and universities across Hungary, as well as the VU University Amsterdam will benefit from new education investment to be supported by the EIB.

The board also confirmed the EIB's largest ever loan in Ireland, to support construction of the country's new National Children's Hospital.

Support for global climate investment

New support for climate related investment included backing for smart energy start-up companies across Europe, a new dedicated credit line to support climate action by companies in the Czech Republic, new financing for solar power and wind farms in India and a joint investment programme with the Development Bank of Latin America to support sustainable transport, renewable energy and water investment in the region.

New schemes to enable climate investment by agricultural SMEs in South Africa and to combat desertification were also approved.

Ensuring essential water investment

Reflecting the EIB's role as the world's largest financier of water investment new projects approved today include modernisation of irrigation covering 60,000 hectares of farmland in Portugal and new investment in water treatment innovation in Spain, as well as the proposed rehabilitation and expansion of water distribution in nine cities across Angola.

Projects to upgrade waste water treatment in the western Paris suburbs and improving irrigation networks essential for the livelihoods of smallholders in Swaziland were also approved.

Improving the quality of life in cities

New financing approved today will support local investment to improve key infrastructure and services in Athens, Bialystok and greater Dublin, as well as financing construction of 30,000 new affordable and social housing units across Austria.

Support for public-private finance

No public-private partnership projects were approved by the December meeting.

Transparency Register: Second political meeting opens way for negotiations in the New Year

Following the Council's approval of its negotiating mandate on 6 December, the three institutions reiterated their full commitment to increasing the transparency of the activities of interest representatives at EU level. At this second political meeting, which closed the pre-negotiation phase, they also stressed the importance of conducting the upcoming interinstitutional talks in an open and inclusive manner.

European Commission First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"I am pleased that the European Parliament and the Council have agreed to start formal negotiations in the New Year on our proposal for a mandatory Transparency Register. People have a right to know who is seeking to influence EU decisions. The Commission has been applying the 'not on the Register, no meetings' rule for some time and it works. A commitment is now needed from all three Institutions to make interactions with lobbyists conditional on being in the Register."*

The meeting was organised at the initiative of the Estonian Presidency of the Council, which highlighted the main aspects of Council's negotiating mandate. The Commission and Parliament welcomed the Council's readiness to enter negotiations, and the three institutions agreed to start negotiations as soon as possible.

Background

Since 2011, the Commission and Parliament have jointly operated a public register for interest representatives, aiming to increase the transparency and accountability of the EU decision-making process. The Council has been an observer to the current scheme since 2014.

The European Commission presented its proposal for a new inter-institutional agreement on a mandatory Transparency Register for lobbyists covering the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European

Commission on 28 September 2016. The proposal aims to strengthen the framework for a transparent and ethical interaction between interest representatives and the three institutions participating in the new scheme.

On 15 June 2017, the Conference of Presidents of the European Parliament, bringing together the Parliament's President and political group leaders, approved the Parliament's negotiating mandate, following endorsement by a Parliament contact group made up of representatives of all the political groups. The Parliament's mandate underlines the need for a strong transparency message from the three institutions and a meaningful outcome of the negotiations.

The Council adopted its negotiating mandate on 6 December 2017 and also decided to make it public.

For more information

[Commission proposal for a Joint Transparency Register](#)

Ms Hilde Vandevoorde appointed National Member for Belgium

The Hague, 12 December 2017

Ms Hilde Vandevoorde was appointed National Member for Belgium at Eurojust for a five-year period. In accordance with Article 2(1) of the Eurojust Decision, the appointment was approved by the Secretary General of the Council of the European Union. Ms Vandevoorde officially took up her duties on 7 December 2017.

Prior to her appointment, Ms Vandevoorde was a member of the Federal Prosecutor's Office, where she served as Head of the Special Missions Unit in charge of special investigation techniques, such as surveillance, undercover investigations and Covered Human Intelligence Sources (CHIS) (informants). She was also responsible for the witness protection programme and review of the federal judicial police.

After her law studies at Brussels University, Ms Vandevoorde was admitted to the Brussels Bar in 1986, and worked as a defence lawyer for almost six years. In 1992, she became a prosecutor specialised in organised crime and terrorism cases and special investigation techniques at the local prosecutor's office in Brussels.

Ms Vandevoorde, a national magistrate in Belgium since 2000, joined the Federal Prosecutor's Office in 2002, coordinating organised crime and terrorism cases on national level and handling international requests for

mutual legal assistance. Since its establishment in 2001, Ms Vandevoorde brought cases to Eurojust.

Ms Vandevoorde commented on her appointment : *'Fighting organised crime and terrorism at European level is a logical continuation of my work on national level. I am looking forward to handling Belgian cases at Eurojust and coordinating with the other EU countries and beyond.'*

Ms Vandevoorde is replacing Michèle Coninx, who was National Member for Belgium since its beginnings as Pro-Eurojust in 2001.

Photo: © Eurojust

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Photo: © Eurojust

Press Release: Afghanistan in Focus

EASO publishes two Country of Origin Information (COI) reports on the targeting of individuals in Afghanistan.

Today, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) published two Country of Origin Information (COI) Reports entitled '[Afghanistan – Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict](#)' and '[Afghanistan – Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms](#)'. In 2016, Afghanistan ranked second in the top countries of origin in EU+ countries ^[1], with more than 175,000 applicants. In the first ten months of 2017, more than 40,000 applications have been lodged in the EU+ by Afghans, ranking third (in the overall applications to date). In addition, Afghan applications constitute the largest backlog of all countries of origin. At the end of October 2017, there were more than 64,000 asylum applications from Afghan nationals in the EU+ pending at first instance.

The reports were drafted by COI researchers from EASO in accordance with the [EASO COI Report Methodology](#). The report was reviewed by COI researchers from Sweden and UNHCR. In addition, a review of the report was carried out by Afghanistan expert Neamat Nojumi and the Human Rights Service of the United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The terms of reference of these reports were defined based on information needs identified by asylum policy experts in EU+ countries and UNHCR.

Both reports discuss the situation and treatment of individuals by different actors in the conflict and in society. The report 'Individuals targeted by armed actors in the conflict' deals with the modus operandi, methods and targeting strategies used by armed actors, both on the side of the insurgents as on the side of the government, in the context of the conflict and the possibilities for individuals to escape such targeting. The report 'Individuals targeted under societal and legal norms' is focused on socio-legal structures and actors in society and how such elements treat issues such as crime, gender-based violence, harmful traditional practices, disputes, transgressions of social norms, and the possibility for individuals to avoid targeting. Special attention is paid to the situation of women throughout both reports, and a separate chapter covers certain issues affecting children.

Earlier this year, EASO already published a COI Report, titled [Afghanistan – Key socio-economic indicators, state protection, and mobility in Kabul City, Mazar-e Sharif, and Herat City \(August 2017\)](#). An update of the EASO [COI Report Afghanistan – Security Situation \(November 2016\)](#) is expected shortly.

It is EASO's intention to continue to produce such reports on important countries of origin and to update them regularly in order to raise and harmonise COI standards in the EU and to further support the practical implementation of the Common European Asylum System.

Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: press@easo.europa.eu

[1] EU Member States plus Norway and Switzerland