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Space: EU attracts €300 million of investments to boost innovation in the sector

The Commission and the European Investment Fund (EIF) announce today a €300 million investment into the space sector, with €100 million stemming from the EU budget, supporting ground-breaking innovation in the industry. The EIF's participation is backed by the [European Fund for Strategic Investments \(EFSI\)](#), the main pillar of the [Investment Plan for Europe](#). This investment concerns two space tech focused funds, Orbital Ventures and Primo Space, under the first ever EU-backed equity pilot in the space sector, the InnovFin Space Equity Pilot. Orbital Ventures, a pan-European seed and early stage fund, focuses on space technologies including downstream (communications, cryptography, data storage and processing, geolocation, earth observation) and upstream (space hardware, materials, electronics, robotics, rockets, satellites) areas. [Primo Space](#), an Italian early-stage tech transfer investor, was the [first fund selected by the EIF](#) under this pilot. The EIF is now increasing its support. The fund is one of the first technology transfer funds only focused on space technologies in Europe, and the first one in Italy. It invests in proof-of-concept, seed and early stages projects or companies, and will foster the commercialisation of breakthrough innovations in the space industry in Europe. Commissioner for Internal Market, Thierry **Breton**, said: *"Bolstering competitiveness in the space industry is an essential element for the recovery of the sector. I strongly welcome this investment into space technology SMEs, which brings us closer to our digital transition goal. This supports the development of European space start-ups and shows that the European space business is booming."* Commissioner for Research, Innovation, Culture, Education and Youth, Mariya **Gabriel**, said: *"These transactions, benefiting from the InnovFin Space Equity Pilot, will help to bolster private equity for innovative SMEs and startups in the space sector. The investments in Orbital Ventures and Primo Space is a testimony to Europe's booming space sector and demonstrates our commitment to supporting companies with breakthrough ideas and technologies."* For more information, please read the [press release](#). (For more information: Sonya Gospodinova – Tel.: +32 229 66953; Célia Dejond – Tel.: +32 229 88199)

Le Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe soutient la plateforme « Bus propres » en France

La Banque européenne d'investissement (BEI) et la Banque des Territoires investissent 100 millions d'euros chacune dans une plateforme d'investissement destinée à financer la transition énergétique des flottes de bus des territoires français. La participation de la BEI est garantie par le [Fonds européen pour les investissements stratégiques](#) (FEIS), le pilier central du [Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe](#). Gérée par la Banque des Territoires, cette plateforme proposera un financement innovant aux collectivités territoriales et autorités organisatrices de la mobilité souhaitant verdir leur flotte de bus et ainsi réduire leur impact climatique. La plateforme « Bus propres » s'inscrit dans le cadre du plan de relance de la Caisse des Dépôts et de son action en faveur de la transition environnementale. Paolo **Gentiloni**, commissaire à l'économie, a déclaré : *« Cet accord est une bonne nouvelle pour le verdissement et la modernisation des systèmes de transports publics en France. Avec le soutien du Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe, 200 millions d'euros seront mis à disposition via une nouvelle plateforme qui offre des solutions de financement flexibles aux autorités locales et régionales pour rendre leur flotte de bus plus durable. Une attention particulière sera accordée aux véhicules fonctionnant à l'énergie électrique et à leurs stations de recharge, contribuant ainsi à la réalisation de notre objectif de neutralité climatique d'ici 2050. »* Jusqu'à présent, le Plan d'investissement pour l'Europe a mobilisé 535 milliards d'euros d'investissements dans l'ensemble de l'UE, dont 87 milliards en France. Le [communiqué de presse](#) est disponible en ligne. (Pour plus d'informations : Marta Wieczorek – Tél.: +32 229 58197; Flora Matthaes – Tél.: +32 229 83951)

State aid: Commission approves investment aid for Czech orchards and irrigations; opens in-depth investigations into Czech measures in favour of large agricultural companies

The European Commission has approved two Czech investment aid support schemes for the

restructuring of orchards and irrigation, while opening an in-depth investigation to assess whether investment aid granted to certain large enterprises active in the agricultural sector in the past was in line with EU rules on State aid in the agricultural sector. In parallel, the Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether past and planned aid to certain large enterprises to support crop and livestock insurance is in line with EU rules on State aid in the agricultural sector. Czechia notified to the Commission its plans to implement two aid schemes to support undertakings active in the agricultural sector irrespective of their size in investing in the restructuring of orchards and irrigation. The estimated budget of the schemes was €52.4 million and €21 million respectively. The Commission found that the aid that the Czech authorities plan to grant in the future under the two notified schemes is in line with the conditions set out in the 2014 Agricultural State aid Guidelines with respect to all types of beneficiaries. On this basis, the Commission approved the measures under EU State aid rules. As regards the past, during its assessment of the proposed measures, the Commission found that, in the previous years, some of the beneficiaries of those schemes had been erroneously qualified by the Czech granting authorities as small or medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), while they were in fact large undertakings. The Commission found that those large undertakings had received aid on the basis of existing Czech schemes, which are block exempted under the Agriculture Block Exemption Regulation and are accessible only to SMEs. At this stage, the Commission has doubts that the aid already granted by Czechia to the large enterprises complies with those conditions, in particular due to the absence of the submission of a counterfactual scenario to ensure that aid granted to large undertakings in the past was proportionate. Czechia also notified the Commission of its plans to grant €25.8 million of public support for crop and livestock insurance premium for large enterprises. The Commission's assessment revealed that such support had already been granted in the past to beneficiaries that had been erroneously qualified by the Czech granting authorities as SMEs, while they were in fact large enterprises. At this stage, the Commission has doubts that Czech aid for crop and livestock insurance premiums – both granted in the past and planned – complies with the requirements foreseen by the 2014 Agricultural State aid Guidelines for large enterprises. The Commission will now investigate further to determine whether its initial concerns are confirmed. The opening of an in-depth investigation provides all interested parties with an opportunity to comment on the measure. It does not prejudice in any way the outcome of the investigation. The full press release is available [online](#). (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344)

State aid: Commission approves modified €1.1 billion Italian scheme to support internationally active companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak

The European Commission has found the modification of the existing Italian direct grants scheme to support internationally active companies affected by the coronavirus outbreak to be in line with the [Temporary Framework](#). The original scheme was approved by the Commission on [31 July 2020](#) under case number [SA.57891](#). On 10 December 2020 the Commission approved the prolongation of the scheme until 30 June 2021 ([SA.59655](#)). Italy notified an increase in the estimated total budget of the scheme by €828 million, which means an increase in total budget from €300 million to €1.128 million. Similar to the original scheme, the modified scheme will continue to support eligible companies by facilitating their access to liquidity, and will not take the form of export aid contingent on export activities as it is not tied to concrete export contracts. The Commission concluded that the scheme, as modified, remains necessary, appropriate and proportionate to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of a Member State, in line with Article 107(3)(b) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. In particular, the support will continue not to exceed €800,000 per company, and the scheme is limited in time until 30 June 2021. On this basis, the Commission approved the measure under EU State aid rules. More information on the Temporary Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decision will be made available under the case numbers SA.60402 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's [competition](#) website. (For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)

State aid: Commission approves €23 million Belgian measures to support production of coronavirus-relevant products

The European Commission has approved two Belgian measures, for a total of €23 million, to support the production of products relevant to the coronavirus outbreak in the Walloon region. Both measures were approved under the State Aid [Temporary Framework](#). The first scheme, (SA.60414), with an estimated budget of €20 million, will be open to enterprises that produce coronavirus-relevant products and are active in all sectors, except the agriculture, fishery and aquaculture, and financial

sectors. Under the scheme, the public support will take the form of direct grants covering up to 50% of the investments costs. The second measure (SA.60198) consists of a €3.5 million investment aid, in the form of a direct grant, to the University of Liège, which aims at supporting the production by the institution of coronavirus related diagnostic tools and the necessary raw materials. The direct grant will cover 80 % of the investment costs. The Commission found that the measures are in line with the conditions of the Temporary Framework. In particular, (i) the aid will cover only up to 80% of the eligible investment costs necessary to create production capacities to manufacture coronavirus relevant products; (ii) only investment projects that started as of 1 February 2020 will be eligible and (iii) eligible investment projects must be completed within six months after the grant of the investment aid. The Commission concluded that the two measures are necessary, appropriate and proportionate to fight the public health crisis, in line with Article 107(3)(c) TFEU and the conditions set out in the Temporary Framework. On this basis, the Commission approved the measures under EU State aid rules. More information on the Temporary Framework and other actions taken by the Commission to address the economic impact of the coronavirus pandemic can be found [here](#). The non-confidential version of the decisions will be made available under the case numbers SA.60198 and SA.60414 in the [State aid register](#) on the Commission's competition website. *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Giulia Astuti – Tel.: +32 229 55344; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of TeraSteel-Wetterbest by Kingspan

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of several subsidiaries of TeraPlast SA of Romania (TeraSteel SA of Romania, TeraSteel d.o.o. Leskovac of Serbia, TeraSteel Slovakia s.r.o. of Slovakia, and Wetterbest SA of Romania) by Kingspan Holding Netherlands B.V. of the Netherlands, a company ultimately controlled by Kingspan Group plc ('Kingspan') of Ireland. The companies involved supply building materials, in particular insulated panels with a foam core. TeraSteel-Wetterbest is a regional player in the CEE region while Kingspan operates worldwide. While the Commission's investigation indicated that Kingspan has very large market shares in countries not affected by the proposed acquisition, the Commission concluded that, the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the moderate market positions of the combined entity in the countries in which the target is active, the existence of a number of alternative suppliers, and ample spare and new capacity in the CEE region. The operation was examined under the normal merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [M.9934](#). *(For more information: Arianna Podesta – Tel. +32 229 87024; Maria Tsoni – Tel.: +32 229 90526)*

[Eurostat](#): communiqués de presse

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