

France: France Hydrogène and EIB sign agreement to accelerate support for hydrogen projects



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The agreement signed between France Hydrogène and the European Investment Bank (EIB) aims to provide support focused on advising and supporting project promoters in the hydrogen sector.

Thanks to this agreement, promoters in this sector will benefit from the technical and financial expertise of the EU climate bank, the leading international lender in the field of energy transition.

France Hydrogène (AFHYAC), the French association for hydrogen and fuel cells, and the European Investment Bank (EIB) – the EU climate bank – today signed a collaboration agreement aimed at facilitating access to the EIB's financing solutions and expertise for hydrogen project promoters in France.

More specifically, this agreement comes under the EIB's InnovFin Advisory programme, which is supported by the European Commission. The resources made available by this programme are expected to help speed up the financing of hydrogen projects through the establishment of personalised advice and support in parallel with a thorough exploration of the funding possibilities.

The EIB and France Hydrogène share common objectives, in particular their strong commitment to climate issues. The EIB is the EU climate bank, and the financing of new technologies, such as innovative projects to combat climate change, is at the heart of its activity. Hydrogen technologies play a major role in accelerating the energy transition, but require scale-up and substantial investment. For this reason, it is necessary to support project promoters throughout the study and feasibility phase of their project as well as the funding research phase. The EIB will therefore work closely with France Hydrogène and its members on sharing knowledge and best practices to facilitate access to the most suitable financing for proposed hydrogen projects and thus identify those that could be eligible for EIB financing. This close cooperation will also make it possible to identify funding deficits in this emerging sector so that they can be addressed by the introduction of new financial instruments, among others.

*“This agreement with France Hydrogène marks a milestone in the development of hydrogen projects in France. Tackling the climate emergency represents a huge challenge and innovative solutions need to be developed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions”, said **EIB Vice-President Ambroise Fayolle**. “Thanks to our expertise as the EU climate bank, we hope that many project promoters will receive personalised advisory support and benefit from facilitated financing.”* He concluded: *“I also welcome the European Commission’s extensive support for this agreement. The development of the hydrogen market in France is expected to have a positive impact on climate and industrial development in France and the European Union. It is by pooling our strengths and skills that we will overcome the climate challenge.”*

*“To meet the targets of the 2030 Energy and Climate Act, public and private investment needs have been estimated at nearly €24 billion over the coming decade. Like the European Commission and other governments, the French government has announced a national strategy for the development of carbon-free hydrogen with financial support of €7.2 billion over 10 years. The partnership agreement signed today with the EIB gives a further positive signal for the deployment and scale-up of hydrogen technologies in France and Europe. The goal is for the players in our sector to hold all the cards and to receive support in deploying projects, supporting new innovations and finding industrial solutions in order to reduce costs and fast become more competitive in Europe and on the international market. France Hydrogène and the EIB intend to collaborate effectively to this end”, said **Philippe Boucly, Chairman of France Hydrogène**.*

This agreement is fully in line with the “National Strategy for the Development of Carbon-Free Hydrogen in France” announced on 8 September 2020: it prepares the ground for a new era for hydrogen as a future strategic industry in France and the European Union.

The agreement was signed today at a virtual event organised by France Hydrogène and the EIB, during which the Bank’s advisory and financing solutions were presented to the association’s members.

Background information

European Investment Bank

As the EU climate bank, the EIB decided to increase financing for projects supporting climate and environmental objectives, bringing them up to 50% of its activities by 2025. This means that the EIB Group will mobilise at least €1 trillion by 2030 to promote investments helping to meet these goals. In 2019, the EIB dedicated 47% of its financing in France – i.e. €3.28 billion – to combating climate change.

About the EIB's InnovFin Advisory services

The EIB's InnovFin Advisory service was set up with the support of the European Commission under the InnovFin and Horizon 2020 programme. InnovFin guides clients in structuring their projects in order to improve their access to finance. It helps them to capitalise on their strengths and to adjust certain aspects such as the economic model, governance, funding sources and structure with a view to facilitating their access to credit. In the long term, clients see their chances of success increase.

InnovFin Advisory also provides recommendations for improving investment conditions through cross-cutting activities. This may include assessing the relevance of new financing mechanisms and conducting studies on enhancing the effectiveness of financial instruments to improve conditions for access to finance in certain sectors.

France Hydrogène

With more than 210 members, France Hydrogène (AFHYPAC) brings together the operators of the French hydrogen sector across the entire value chain: major industrial groups developing large-scale projects, innovative SMEs and start-ups supported by laboratories and research centres of excellence, associations, competitiveness clusters and local authorities committed to the deployment of hydrogen solutions.

Its goal is to accelerate the development of hydrogen solutions to succeed in the energy transition, boost the economy and create value locally to improve the quality of life for all.

[European Year of Rail 2021 – informal agreement with the European Parliament](#)



Rail travel is green, comfortable and safe – and it will play a key role in the EU's efforts to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. Negotiators from the Council and the European Parliament today reached a **provisional agreement on designating 2021 as the European Year of Rail**. Throughout the year there will

be a range of events and other initiatives designed to increase the proportion of people and goods travelling by rail, in line with the objectives of the European Green Deal.

Rail is the answer to many critical issues in the area of mobility, such as climate neutrality, energy efficiency, crisis resilience and safety. The Year of Rail aims to give a boost to the sector and to encourage more tourists, business people and manufacturers to choose the train.

Andreas Scheuer, German Federal Minister for Transport and Digital Infrastructure, President of the Council

The Year of Rail will promote railways as a sustainable, innovative and safe mode of transport, which is capable of guaranteeing essential services even during unexpected crises. This has been shown by the strategic role played by rail in maintaining crucial connections during the COVID-19 pandemic, for the transport both of people and of essential goods.

Other objectives for the year will include raising awareness of the cross-border European dimension of rail transport and increasing its contribution to the EU's economy, industry and society.

The Commission will be asked to consider launching two feasibility studies. One will be on the creation of a European label to promote goods transported by rail, and the other will explore the idea of a rail connectivity index, similar to the one that already exists for air transport. The Commission is required to inform the Council and the European Parliament of its plans by the end of March 2021.

The provisional agreement reached today is **subject to approval by the Council**. The presidency intends to submit the agreement for endorsement by the Council's Permanent Representatives Committee (Coreper) next week.

Background

Transport accounts for a quarter of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions, and emissions from transport are still growing. To achieve the goal of climate neutrality by 2050 – as set out in the European Green Deal and endorsed by the European Council – transport emissions must go down by 90%.

Rail emits far less CO₂ than equivalent travel by road or air, and it is the only mode of transport that has consistently reduced its greenhouse gas emissions since 1990.

At present, 75% of inland freight is carried by road.

Regarding EU rail transport policy, 2021 will be the first full year when the rules agreed under the Fourth Railway Package will be implemented throughout the EU. These rules are designed to open up the domestic passenger services

market and reduce costs and the administrative burden for railway undertakings operating across the EU.

[Press release – MEPs approve the renewal of the fisheries partnership with Seychelles](#)



The text was approved Wednesday with 504 votes in favour, 70 against and 112 abstentions.

The new [Sustainable Fisheries Partnership agreement](#) and its six-year protocol have applied provisionally since they were signed on 24 February 2020, following the Commission proposal of 7 January 2020.

The protocol provides tuna [fishing opportunities](#) for up to 40 purse seiners from Spain, France and Italy, and eight surface longliners from France, Spain and Portugal (for a total of 50.000 tonnes of tuna per year).

The EU's financial contribution is €5.3 million per year. Of this amount, €2.5 million is payment for the right to access Seychelles waters, corresponding to a reference tonnage of 50 000 tonnes of tuna per year. The remaining €2.8 million provides sectoral support for the development of the Seychelles' fisheries policy.

MEPs also adopted Thursday an accompanying resolution (597 votes in favour, 37 against and 55 abstentions), which calls for the Seychelles fisheries sector to be more involved in implementing the agreement, and for the overfished yellowfin tuna stocks to be restored through regional measures.

The EU's fleet should do all it can to prevent overfishing. In addition, the resolution criticises the persistent practice of provisionally applying international agreements before Parliament gives its consent.

Background

The [EU-Seychelles fisheries agreement](#), first concluded in 1984 and updated in 1987 and 2006, has been implemented by successive protocols defining the EU's fishing opportunities and financial contribution. It is one of only two active agreements in the western Indian Ocean region (along with that of Mauritius).

[Press release – EU budget 2021: supporting a sustainable recovery from the pandemic](#)



Next year's budget – the first of the 2021-2027 financing period – should “promote fair, inclusive and sustainable growth, high-quality job-creation and its long-term goal of socioeconomic convergence”, MEPs state in their [draft resolution](#) following the vote on Thursday.

Parliament has set the overall level of the 2021 EU budget at just under €182 billion in commitment appropriations, representing an increase of €15 billion compared to the [Commission's proposal](#). Out of this additional money, more than €14 billion should benefit the EU's [15 flagship programmes](#), boosting many programmes and projects that will support young people, researchers, health workers, entrepreneurs, and many other citizens.

Other major additions to next year's budget were voted on in areas such as climate change, energy, digital and transport interconnectivity, SMEs, tourism, security, migration, fundamental rights, and external action. MEPs also aim to achieve a biodiversity spending level of 10% and a climate mainstreaming spending level of 30% for 2021.

The resolution accompanying and reflecting the vote on the figures, prepared by the General Rapporteur for the Commission's budget, [Pierre Larrouturou](#) (S&D, FR), and the rapporteur for the other institutions' administrative budget, Mr [Olivier Chastel](#) (RENEW, BE), was adopted with 471 votes to 102 and 116 abstentions.

Next steps

Once the plenary vote has taken place, 21 days of "conciliation" talks with the Council can begin, with the aim of reaching a deal between the two institutions in time for next year's budget, to be voted on by Parliament and signed by its President in December.

The first conciliation meeting between the Council and the Parliament is scheduled for 19 November.

[The calendar for this year's annual budgetary procedure is here.](#)

Background

The preparations and negotiations of the European Union's 2021 budget are taking place under unusual circumstances, as there was no political agreement on the MFF, which serves as the basis for annual budgets, [until Tuesday of this week](#). The recent deal could therefore not be taken into account in time for Thursday's vote.

It is expected that the Commission will publish an Amending Letter on 13 November, which will reflect the political agreement on the MFF and adjust its proposal for next year's budget ahead of the conciliation starting on 17 November.

About 93% of the EU budget funds real activities in EU countries and beyond. It goes to citizens, regions, cities, farmers, researchers, students, NGOs, and businesses.

The EU budget is unique. Unlike national budgets, which are largely used to provide public services and fund social security systems, the EU budget is primarily an investment budget.

Additional EU support funding from the "Next Generation EU" recovery plan will be available in 2021 as soon as the corresponding legal bases are adopted and the member states' recovery and resilience plans agreed. Parliament already paved the way for [approval in a plenary vote](#) in September.

UPDATE – Media advisory – Press briefing ahead of the video conference of agriculture and fisheries ministers of 16 November 2020



Arrangements for the press

The **press briefing** ahead of the video conference will take place on **Friday, 13 November at 12.00**. The virtual “off the record” briefing will be given by Susanne Szech-Koundouros, Deputy Permanent Representative of Germany.

Please note that this press briefing will take place remotely.

In order to participate and ask questions, EU accredited journalists should register using [this link](#).

Those who already registered for the previous video conferences of Agriculture and Fisheries Council do not need to do it again.

Deadline for the registration: Friday, 13 November at 11.00.

Further instructions will be sent to all registered participants shortly after the deadline.

[Visit the meeting page](#)