

Prime Minister welcomes EUR 500m Greek business investment scheme



©Richard Willis/EIB

- New initiative to strengthen innovation, competitiveness and entrepreneurship
- Funding agreement signed in Athens by Hellenic Republic and European Investment Fund
- Scheme to support new business investment over the next 4 years

Small and medium sized businesses across Greece will benefit from a new EUR 500 million investment programme launched by Prime Minister Mitsotakis and EIB Vice President Andrew McDowell in Athens earlier today.

The new business financing initiative, supported by the European Investment Fund, will help Greek companies to better access finance and unlock investment to encourage innovation, enhance competitiveness and foster greater entrepreneurship. The scheme is designed to address the significant financing gap holding back investment and job creation by businesses across Greece.

“Improving access to finance is crucial to enable Greek companies to innovate and grow. The European Investment Bank Group’s close cooperation with Greek banks has backed key business investment over recent years and helped to create thousands of jobs. I welcome the new EUR 500 million European

Investment Fund scheme launched today that will help companies to accelerate investment in the coming months. This will also help to strengthen resilience to new challenges linked to the corona virus.” said Kyriakos Mitsotakis, Prime Minister of Greece.

“The European Investment Bank Group is committed to supporting private sector investment in Greece and unlocking investment to ensure that Greek companies can expand, create jobs and innovate. The new EUR 100 million agreement between the European Investment Fund and the Hellenic Ministry of Development and Investments confirmed today will support EUR 500 million of new business investment across Greece over the next four years. The economic and social impact of the new initiative will be strengthened by the combined financial expertise and technical experience of local banks, the Greek government, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank Group. Increasing economic uncertainty arising from the corona virus means that now more than ever it is important to ensure adequate credit availability for SMEs making investment plans for the medium-term.” said Andrew McDowell, European Investment Bank Vice President.

The funding agreement to enable the European Investment Fund to set up a EUR 100 million guarantee facility to support EUR 500 million of financing for small and medium sized enterprises across Greece was signed in the presence of Prime Minister Mitsotakis, by Deputy Minister Yiannis Tsakiris and Vice President Andrew McDowell at Maximos Mansion, the official resident seat of the Prime Minister of Greece.

The European Investment Fund will manage EU budget funds provided under the Operational Programme for Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship and Innovation.

Lending will be managed by banks active in Greece following selection of financial institutions in the coming months.

Over the last 4 years the European Investment Bank Group has provided more than EUR 4.7 billion of private sector investment across Greece.

Background information:

The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** is the long-term lending institution of the European Union owned by its Member States. It makes long-term finance available for sound investment in order to contribute towards EU policy goals.

New leaflet: Protecting New Plant Varieties in Europe 1995-2020

The Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2020! The Community Plant Variety Rights (CPVR) system, based on the 1991 Act of the UPOV Convention, is the largest and most efficient regional system for plant variety rights' protection in the world. Over the past 25 years, the CPVO processed nearly 70 000 applications and granted over 53 000 plant variety right's titles. Today, almost 30 000 new plant varieties are being protected in the European Union by the CPVO.

At the occasion of CPVO's 25th anniversary, we have compiled key information about the the CPVR system and, in particular, relevant explanations detailing:

- Why Intellectual Property rights for the protection of new plant varieties is relevant to address today's global demands and challenges
- What are the benefits of the CPVR system managed by the CPVO
- How to file applications for Community Plant Variety Rights (CPVR)
- How are applications processed by the CPVO
- What are the key statistics for the period 1995-2020, including the top species that have been granted CPVR protection over the past 25 years

You can download below a full PDF copy of the new CPVO leaflet: Protecting New Plant Varieties in Europe since 1995.

What is a Community Plant Variety Right ?

Protecting a new plant variety entails granting exclusive rights for the exploitation of the variety. The protection system is technically and legally complex, but the application procedure is simple.

What is protectable as a CPVR?

A CPVR is an IP right that grants an exclusive right in relation to a plant variety, provided that the latter complies with the legal requirements for protection provided by Council Regulation 2100/1994 (the "Basic Regulation"). A protectable plant variety must be distinct, uniform and stable (DUS requirements), as well as new. Furthermore, it should be identified with a suitable denomination and the registration fees must be paid.

CPVRs grant their owners a right to prevent third parties from the following acts in respect of variety constituents (propagating material):

- Production or reproduction (multiplication);
- Conditioning for the purpose of propagation;
- Offering for sale;
- Selling or other marketing;
- Exporting from the EU;
- Importing to the EU;
- Stocking for any of the purposes mentioned.

When should I file a CPVR application?

The application must be filed before the variety is put on the market or within the novelty grace periods indicated by the law. Indeed, a CPVR can be granted if the variety is novel, meaning that variety constituents or harvested material of the applied-for variety were not physically transferred for the purpose of commercial exploitation with the breeder's consent.

- *Within the EU for more than one year before the date of application;*
- *Outside the EU for more than four (4) years or, in the case of trees and vines six (6) years, prior to the date of application.*

The person who first files a valid application for a given CPVR can become the right holder (first-to-file principle). It is also possible to maintain the date of a national PVR application, provided that the application at EU level is done within 12 months from the date of first filing in relation to the same variety.

Who can file a CPVR application?

A CPVR application may be filed by any natural or legal person. For applicants not having a domicile, seat or establishment within the territory of the EU it is mandatory to appoint a procedural representative domiciled in the EU to file the CPVR application. The applicant should be the breeder, i.e. the person who bred, or discovered and developed the variety, or his successor in title. The breeder can transfer the entitlement to apply for and to hold CPVRs in the name of the applicant. If the breeder is not the applicant, a deed of assignment must be provided.

Where and how do I file an application for a CPVR?

Applications can be filed online on the CPVO website or through one of the national plant variety protection (PVP) offices. Applications to the CPVO and supporting documents must be filed in one of the official languages of the EU. The e-filing service provided by the CPVO is currently available in English, Dutch, French, Spanish, and German.

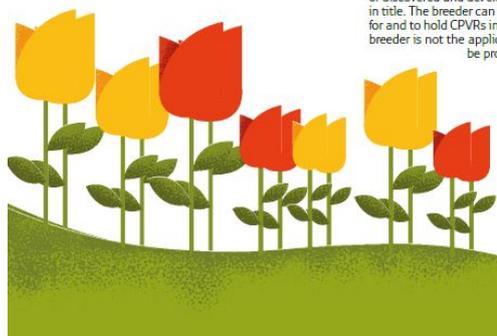
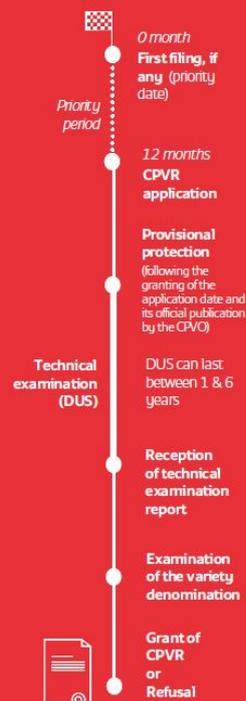
How do I check the availability of a variety denomination?

You can use **Variety Finder**, the CPVO online database which includes relevant data of national and CPVRs and commercial registers both in the EU and outside the EU.

What happens after filing a CPVR application?

- 1- Formal and substantive examinations by the CPVO** (e.g. completeness of the application, novelty, entitlement and credentials of procedural representatives). If successful, an application date is granted and the application is published on the CPVO Official Gazette, an official publication prepared and made available every second month on the CPVO website.
- 2- Technical examination (DUS):** The purpose of these examinations is to ensure that the criteria of distinctness, uniformity and stability are met. The duration varies from 1 year for most ornamental species to 6 years for certain fruit tree varieties. The applicant will be required to provide the plant material of the variety to be tested by an appointed national authority.
- 3- Examination of the suitability of the variety denomination by the CPVO** the candidate variety must be designated by a variety denomination which is also subject to testing by the CPVO.
- 4- Decision of the grant of the title and the CPVR certificate** by the CPVO, which is published in the Official Gazette.

What happens after filing a CPVR application ?



Benefits of the system



One single application to cover the territory of all the EU Member States.



Less time and money spent in comparison to individual application filing in each EU Member State.



Easier management of the application and post-application processes thanks to a unique contact point.

How much does it cost ?

Application fees

450€

for online applications

Annual fees

330€

per variety and per year of protection

Appeal fees

1 500€

Examination fees

1 900€

up to **3 900€**

Fees for taking over* reports

320€

Other fees :

i.e. administrative fees such as for issuing certified documents of the recordal of new entries in the Register

Please note that these fees apply as of 1st April 2020.

* When a technical examination has already been carried out, or is in the process of being carried out, on a variety already benefiting from national protection in a EU Member State, the CPVO may consider the examination reports of the responsible authorities to be a sufficient basis for a decision on a CPVR application.



How long does the protection last ?

The CPVR protection runs until the end of the 25th calendar year following the year of grant, and until the end of the 30th calendar year for potatoes, vine and tree species, provided that the annual fees are paid.

Example :



CPVO 1995-2020 in numbers*



68 593
Applications received
1995 to 2020



53 583
Titles granted
1996 to 2020

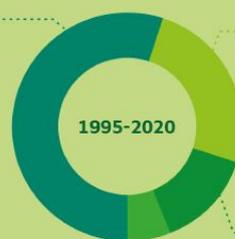


28 228
Titles in force
on 01/01/2020



54 %
of applications for the ornamental sector
37 173 titles granted

Shares of the crop sectors in relation to the number of applications in the period 1995-2020



25 %
of applications for the agricultural sector
17 116 titles granted

14 %
of applications for the vegetable sector
9 779 titles granted



23 136
Online applications since 2010

The CPVO online application system exists since March 2010 and the CPVO is gradually phasing out paper applications. More info on the CPVO website : www.cpvo.europa.eu

7 %
of applications for the fruit sector
4 525 titles granted

* Please note that these figures reflect CPVO's numbers on 31st December 2019.

[CPVO 25th Anniversary: portraits and testimonials of staff](#)

The Community Plant Variety Office (CPVO) celebrates its 25th anniversary in 2020.

This is an excellent opportunity to turn the spotlight on some of the CPVO people who work on a daily basis to serve our stakeholders and make the Community Plant Variety Rights system work in the most professional and efficient way possible.

The CPVO employs [circa 50 people](#), of different background and expertise, and is organised in various units and sectors. The [CPVO organisation chart](#) provides a clear view on how we are structured.

The CPVO team is gender-balanced and composed of over 12 different nationalities. Every member of staff has a valuable profile and level of expertise in a relevant function which is instrumental to the well-functioning of the organisation. CPVO' staff are valued for their high level of professional ethics and commitment.

In an effort to exhibit the human dimension of the CPVO and the specific competences of our staff, [33 colleagues](#) have accepted to show who they are and explain the value of their daily contribution to the system through portrait pictures and testimonials.



Each one of these colleagues will be put under the spotlight on the [CPVO twitter account](#) during March and April 2020, but you can already consult all portraits and read the testimonials at once on this [public photo gallery](#).

All CPVO sectors and job profiles are represented in these portraits. We've collected testimonials from managers, experts and assistants from the legal, technical, registry, denomination, IT, human resources, accounting, and procurement sectors.

As you can see, CPVO's people profiles and roles are truly diverse. We are

all united in one big team and we are gathered to achieve a noble mission: *Delivering and promoting an efficient Intellectual Property Rights system that supports the creation of new plant varieties for the benefit of Society.*

We look forward to keeping delivering on these missions in the months and years to come, and in maintaining our constructive collaboration with CPVO's institutional partners and stakeholders!

European Investment Bank plans €200 million immediate support for migration response in Greece

- Financing details discussed with Prime Minister Mitsotakis and Migration Minister Mitarachi
- €200 million initial EIB support to support housing, health, water and sanitation
- Long-term education, skills and training investment for both refugees and host communities
- Greece to be key focus of expanded EIB Economic Resilience Initiative

During a visit to Athens today Andrew McDowell, European Investment Bank Vice President, discussed strengthened EIB support to help Greece cope with migrants and refugees with Prime Minister Mitsotakis and Migration Minister Mitarachi.

Two EIB initiatives were discussed with the Prime Minister. They include immediate use of €200 million of EIB financing, already approved for infrastructure investment in combination with EU structural funds, to support priority investment in public services in districts hosting migrants and refugees and expansion of the EIB's Economic Resilience Initiative to Greece and other EU member states most impacted by hosting large numbers of migrants and refugees.

"New financing for small business in areas impacted by the migration crisis is essential for host communities on islands most impacted by migration crisis. The EIB's firm support for new private sector investment, as well as water sanitation, health and housing investments, will help Greece to accelerate assistance for migrants, refugees and host communities in regions most impacted by the current crisis. This demonstrates the EIB's solidarity with Greece in this unprecedented time. The fruitful discussions today between Vice President McDowell, the Prime Minister and my team have identified how the EU Bank can support both short and long term investment that will strengthen response to migration in Greece. Detailed plans will be finalised in the coming weeks." said Notis Mitarachi, Greek Minister for Migration and Asylum.

“As the EU Bank, the European Investment Bank is standing by Greece at a time of need. In recent years Greece has taken impressive measures to host hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees and host communities have welcomed desperate families into their communities. Recent developments call for accelerated engagement by Greece’s European partners and I am pleased to confirm to Prime Minister Mitsotakis and Migration Minister Mitarakis that the EIB stands ready to do more. Ensuring increased provision of basic services and long-term investment is essential. The new initiatives outlined today build on the EIB’s strong track record of engagement in Greece and the Economic Resilience Initiative outside the EU in recent years. My colleagues and I look forward to redoubling our efforts over the coming weeks and months to enable Europe to contribute to priority investment here in Greece.” said Andrew McDowell, European Investment Bank Vice President.

New investment to support public services for migrants, refugees and host communities

The European Investment Bank has been working with Greek authorities in recent months to develop a dedicated public sector investment package intended to improve housing, health, water and sanitation infrastructure in districts where public services are under considerable strain due to the recent influx of migrants and refugees.

The EIB is expected to provide €200 million of dedicated financing to support short-term priority infrastructure for both refugees and host communities. Longer-term investment will support economic resilience through education, vocational training and skills programs.

Expansion of the Economic Resilience Initiative to frontline EU member states

The EIB is currently examining how to expand the Economic Resilience Initiative to support priority investment in Greece and other EU countries that host migrants and refugees.

This would enable the EIB to significantly increase financing and technical assistance for public sector infrastructure and private sector activity in Greece over the next two years.

The European Investment Bank launched the €6 billion Economic Resilience Initiative in 2016 in response to the refugee crisis to support public services, social cohesion and economic investment in the Southern Neighbourhood and Western Balkans.

Since then 93% of the financing and technical assistance under the programme has been approved.

The Economic Resilience Initiative enables financing to exceed the usual 50% of maximum project cost that reflects the specific need for urgent investment.

The EIB financing is expected to be used alongside European Union budget funds to maximise the scale and scope of new investment and would complement recently announced efforts by the European Commission.

[Drug trafficking ring taken down in Norway and Germany](#)



The Hague, 6 March 2020

German and Norwegian authorities have taken down an organised criminal group (OCG), involved in the trafficking of illicit drugs between the two countries. Eurojust actively supported this coordinated operation, in which five suspects were arrested, three in Germany and two in Norway. During the investigations, 27 kilos of heroin and one kilo of cocaine were found in a car on the way to Norway. Several places have been searched and more drugs have been seized during following actions in Germany.

Investigations into the OCG started summer last year and indicated an Albanian criminal network was trafficking drugs from Germany to Norway. In close cooperation between the authorities and with support from the German and Norwegian Liaison Bureaus at Europol, a covert operation was started, which led to the arrests and showed the involvement of the OCG.

Eurojust coordinated investigations and actions between the two countries, with involvement of the German desk and Norwegian Liaison Prosecutor at the Agency. Eurojust organised a coordination meeting at its premises and assisted in overcoming legal obstacles, providing judicial advice, including on the agreements of where to prosecute.



Photos © Norwegian Police