

# Belgium: EIB grants financing to Media Square, an iconic project for Brussels



## JOINT PRESS RELEASE

**The EIB is providing €60 million in financing to RTBF for the Media Square development set to host the public-service broadcaster for the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. The EU bank is signing this operation under its innovation and climate action priorities.**

For the European Investment Bank (EIB), the financing of RTBF's Media Square real estate project falls under its **priority objective to support innovation**, technological development and a knowledge-driven economy in Europe. This investment will provide RTBF with cutting-edge audio-visual production infrastructure in a highly modular and sustainable building that meets the future development requirements of the audio-visual market. The loan is taken from the EIB's own resources and has a maturity of 25 years, with the Media Square works set to last until 2022.

From the EIB's perspective, the Media Square operation is the logical continuation of the support it provided for RTBF's digital transformation 10 years ago in the form of a €60 million loan for the digitisation of the public-service broadcaster's production, broadcasting and audio-visual service distribution activities.

Media Square is also covered by the **EIB's climate action** priority. This is because RTBF's new building will not only be on the cutting edge of technology, but will also be highly energy efficient, using less than half the energy of the current building thanks to innovative construction techniques and the installation of geothermal wells and solar panels. This is a major operation for the EIB, which has support for a low-carbon economy at the very top of its list of priorities. For the last decade, the EU climate bank has been strongly promoting the energy transition and the fight against climate change in all its forms, and supporting the promoters of projects contributing to this. To this end, the EIB will be making a huge contribution to the European Commission's European Green Deal.

**EIB Director General Jean-Christophe Laloux** said: *"This financial partnership with RTBF once again shows the EIB's extensive presence in Belgium, whether it be with innovative companies or public sector project promoters. This building is exemplary from an energy standpoint, will strengthen RTBF's technical capacity for audio-visual production and is also a key component of the vast Reyers urban regeneration project. It fits perfectly with the Bank's operational strategy."*

**RTBF Administrator General Jean-Paul Philippot** added: *"Media Square will be an iconic building in Media Park, one of the Brussels Region's most important urban regeneration projects and a future innovation hub. It will provide RTBF with an ideal environment to mix with other audio-visual sector players and media partners, as well as to innovate and exchange with research and educational institutes and start-ups. These surroundings are vital for a modern broadcaster."*

**Agnès Monfret, acting director at the European Commission, DG REGIO** commented: *"We are pleased with the Media Square energy efficient building initiative. The project is perfectly in line with the ambitions of the European Green Deal, the European Commission's number one priority. We need everyone for this challenge – individuals, national, regional and local authorities, civil society and businesses."*

**For Budget Minister Frédéric Daerden:** *"The Wallonia-Brussels Federation needs a pioneering public-service broadcaster ensuring access to high-quality information for all. RTBF's infrastructure must enable it to meet the technology challenges of the future, to reach audiences and to keep up with changing media production methods. This is the logic behind the Government's actions and the guarantee provided by the Wallonia-Brussels Federation – continuing to develop a strong and independent public-service broadcaster."*

### **Note to editors**

The **European Investment Bank (EIB)** is the long-term lending institution of the European Union (EU) owned by its Member States. It provides long-term finance in support of quality projects to contribute to the achievement of the EU's key objectives. Its priorities are climate action and the environment, innovation, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and infrastructure. In 2019, the Bank dedicated [€1.8 billion](#) to supporting projects in Belgium across a number of sectors, including projects related to

energy (renewable energies and energy efficiency), the environment (water and waste management), research, development and innovation (RDI), hospital and university infrastructure, smart and sustainable cities, SMEs, and mid-caps.

**RTBF** is a publicly owned cultural enterprise. Active in television, radio and on the web and social media, it positions itself as the universal public-service broadcaster of the Wallonia-Brussels Federation. Its aim is to guarantee the provision of pluralist and independent information, to spread culture, heritage and talent promotion, and to ensure collective memory is passed on. It endeavours to entertain, educate and contribute to social cohesion and the development of local economies. To embody public-service values in an increasingly digital society, the company is based around two main focuses – “Media” and “Content” – supported by Technology and other departments. Audiences are at the very heart of its production and creations, and it aspires to create social connections for all.

The **European Commission** is a key EU institution. It alone has the right to draw up proposals for new EU legislation, which it then sends to the Council and Parliament for discussion and adoption.

Its members are appointed for a 5-year term by agreement between the Member States, subject to approval by the European Parliament. The Commission is answerable to the Parliament, and the entire Commission has to resign if the Parliament passes a motion of censure against it. The Commission helps to shape the EU’s overall strategy, proposes new EU laws and policies, monitors their implementation and manages the EU budget. It also plays a significant role in supporting international development and delivering aid.

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## **[Press release – Budgetary Control Committee asks for stronger measures](#)**

## to protect EU spending



The Budgetary Control Committee recommends granting discharge of the Commission's accounts for 2018 (corresponding to 97% of the whole EU budget) by 20 votes in favour and four against. In the accompanying resolution, adopted by 22 to 3 and 3 abstentions, MEPs ask for stronger protection of EU spending against fraud, corruption, conflict of interest, intentional misuse and organised crime, as well as for EU money to be distributed more fairly.

### **Subsidy ceilings to protect EU funds from oligarchs**

To avoid fraud and an unfair distribution of EU subsidies, the Commission should propose a maximum amount of direct payment per natural person, making it impossible to receive subsidies of hundreds of millions of Euros in one MFF-period. The Commission should also come up with rules to disclose who benefits from agricultural funds.

### **Mechanism to help farmers fight organised crime**

Quoting recent cases in Italy and Slovakia, the committee wants an EU complaint mechanism enabling farmers to inform the Commission when land-grabbing malpractices, misconduct of national authorities, pressure from organised crime and forced labour occur.

### **Conflict of interest**

MEPs ask the Commission to table guidelines to fight conflicts of interest of high-profile politicians and ask the Council to adopt common ethical standards in this regard.

### **Enable the EU Prosecutor to do their job**

The committee stresses that the newly created EU Public Prosecutor's Office (EPP0) needs at least 76 additional posts and EUR 8 Million in order to deal

with an estimated 3000 cases per year.

### **No EU money if rule of law is violated**

The committee insists that adopting the regulation enabling EU funds for EU countries to be restricted when the rule of law is violated should be prioritised – this regulation is [currently blocked in the Council](#).

### **Concerns for Czechia**

MEPs are especially concerned about the situation in Czechia and ask the Commission to supervise payments to companies directly and indirectly owned by the Czech Prime Minister or other members of the Czech Government.

### **Quote**

“One of the most worrying issues observed in some Member States is land grabbing or the misuse of EU funds by organised crime. The discharge report we voted on today includes a call to establish a mechanism whereby farmers can issue complaints directly. Furthermore, we ask for a fairer distribution of EU subsidies. It is unacceptable that individual beneficiaries can receive up to three-digit million sums. We also call for EU-wide rules to avoid conflicts of interests of high-level politicians and emphasise the need for common ethical standards”, said the rapporteur for the Commission discharge Monika Hohlmeier (EPP, DE).

### **Next steps**

The Commission discharge, along with the other EU bodies, has to be backed by the full Parliament, with a vote scheduled during the March II session.

### **Background**

The Committee on Budgetary Control (CONT) prepares the [EP discharge decision](#) for each budgetary year and scrutinises how the Commission and other EU bodies are managing the EU budget. With the assistance of the Court of Auditors, CONT checks the regularity as well as the cost-effectiveness of how taxpayers' money is used to achieve the EU's objectives.

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## **[Data show proportions of young people still living at home](#)**



These graphs show the proportions of young people age 18-24 and 25-29 still living with at least one parent.

The highest proportions of young adults living with their parents in 2017

were in southern and eastern EU Member States, as well as in Ireland.

These data are presented as part of Eurofound's research on Household composition and well-being, which shows how demographic change, social progress and economic cycles have impacted on household composition in Europe.

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## [EIB partners with leading road safety NGOs to halve road deaths by 2030](#)



The European Investment Bank (EIB) today entered a partnership with the three NGOs leading Road Assessment Programmes (RAP) as part of the global drive to halve the 1.35 million annual global road deaths by 2030. The Memorandum of Understanding was signed at the 3rd Global meeting of Road Safety Ministers in Stockholm.

The EIB and the European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP), the International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP), and the Road Safety Foundation (RSF) joined forces to specifically support investment in national and regional “safer road” projects and to develop the analysis and skill sets needed to make investment in safer road infrastructure successful.

“We aim to finance road projects that will help to save lives and prevent serious injuries. The reward both in humanitarian and in economic terms is huge,” said **EIB Group Vice-President Lilyana Pavlova**, responsible for the bank's transport operations. “We, therefore, need to provide not only finance but also access to the required advice, training and skills to develop large scale safer road investment programmes. We all need to work closely together

to improve safety on our roads. That is why we are delighted to enter this partnership with the RAP organisations.”

**EuroRAP’s Chairman Ferry Smith**, who signed the agreement on behalf of the three RAP organisations, said: “This is a welcome initiative from the EIB. The challenge of the next decade is in managing infrastructure safety in a new way, which needs a changed approach and new skills. On behalf of the Road Safety Foundation, EuroRAP and iRAP, I am delighted that we can support EIB in this lifesaving initiative with massive potential throughout Europe and worldwide. We hope, in the future, to extend RAP protocols into urban areas with a focus on pedestrian and cyclist safety as well as assessing the fitness of roads to support connected and increasingly automated vehicles.”

Systematically preventing deaths and serious injuries linked to road crashes is a priority of the EIB, the EU’s bank, which provides finance and expertise for investment projects worldwide. The Memorandum of Understanding is aligned with the new EU Strategic Plan for Road Safety, which aims to cut deaths in Europe by half by 2030 and introduces major changes to the way infrastructure safety is measured and managed. The European Union (EU) Road Infrastructure Safety Management Directive (RISM) now extends to a new ‘primary’ inter-urban road network on which more than a third of European deaths are concentrated. RISM requires all EU countries to inspect the in-built safety of their primary network by end-2024 – and target action to make these busy and often high-risk roads safe.

The protocols of the International Road Assessment Programme, which measure in-built infrastructure safety in a consistent and systematic, way have now been applied in more than 100 countries worldwide as part of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. Many busy roads do not yet achieve the 3-Star or better RAP benchmark, which is contained in the World Health Organisation’s global performance tracking framework.

The Road Safety Foundation has carried out analysis across Europe to identify practical investment strategies and budgets that will bring both high economic returns and save lives. EuroRAP’s Members come from civil society, road authorities and research institutions, and are currently overseeing applications in more than 20 European countries across Europe to identify practical investment strategies and budgets that will bring both high economic returns and save lives.

### **Background information:**

#### **About the European Investment Bank:**

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.

#### **About the International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP)**

The International Road Assessment Programme (iRAP) is a registered charity dedicated to saving lives through safer roads, established to support the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020. iRAP works in partnership with

government and non-government organisations to: inspect high-risk roads and develop Star Ratings and Safer Roads Investment Plans; provide training, technology and support that will build and sustain national, regional and local capability and to track road safety performance so that funding agencies can assess the benefits of their investments.

#### **About The European Road Assessment Association (EuroRAP AISBL)**

The European Road Assessment Programme (EuroRAP) is an international not for profit association set up in 1999 and registered in Belgium that is dedicated to saving lives through safer roads. The programme aims to reduce death and serious injury through a programme of systematic assessment of risk, identifying the major shortcomings that can be addressed by practical road improvement measures. It forges partnerships between those responsible for a safe road system – civil society, motoring organisations, vehicle manufacturers and road authorities – and aims to ensure that assessment of risk lies at the heart of strategic decisions on route improvements, crash protection and standards of route management.

#### **About The Road Safety Foundation (RSF)**

The Road Safety Foundation is a UK based charity founded as a permanent legacy of European Road Safety Year 1986. The charity develops road casualty reduction through simultaneous action on all three components of the safe road system: roads, vehicles and behaviour. The charity has enabled work across each of these components and its reports and analysis have provided the basis of new legislation or policy.

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## **[Press release – President Michel’s MFF proposal not acceptable for Parliament](#)**



“Despite welcoming the contact we have had with the President of the European Council Charles Michel over the past few weeks, his proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 falls well below the European Parliament’s expectations and those of the citizens.

President Michel is treating as a blueprint the harmful proposal prepared at technical level by the Finnish presidency of the Council back in December 2019. Where we would expect significant investment to deliver the Green Deal, the digital transition and a stronger Europe, President Michel confirms or deepens the cuts to funding for agriculture, cohesion, research, infrastructure investments, digitalisation, SMEs, Erasmus, youth employment, migration, defence and many other areas.

On the revenue side, the EP notes that there is an opening in the proposal but still identifies two great shortcomings: first, we must avoid a correction mechanism on the plastics contribution that would jeopardise its incentive effect. Second, a clear and binding commitment to introduce new additional own resources in the course of the 2021-2027 MFF must be included in the final agreement.

The negotiating team therefore opposes this proposal and expects the European Council not to adopt conclusions on this basis.”

The negotiating team’s analysis is elaborated in the following document published today:

**The European Parliament’s MFF/Own Resources negotiating team:**

[Johan Van Overtveldt](#) (ECR, BE), Chair of the Committee on Budgets

[Jan Olbrycht](#) (EPP, PL), MFF co-rapporteur

[Margarida Marques](#) (S&D, PT), MFF co-rapporteur

[José Manuel Fernandes](#) (EPP, PT), Own Resources co-rapporteur

[Valérie Hayer](#) (RENEW, FR), Own Resources co-rapporteur

[Rasmus Andresen](#) (Greens/EFA, DE)