Daily News 13 / 02 / 2018

New Commission guidance helps Member States organise sound tender procedures for EU-funded projects

Today the Commission published new guidance to help national, regional and local public officials dealing with EU funds ensure efficient and transparent public procurement procedures for EU-funded projects. *"Helping Member States organise sound tender procedures for EU investments is key to safeguard the EU budget from errors and ensure the maximum impact of each euro the EU spends, for the direct benefit of citizens,"* said Commissioner for Regional policy Corina **Creţu**. The guidance, soon available in all languages, covers the process from A to Z, from the preparation and publication of the calls to the selection and evaluation of bids and the contract implementation. As such, it can also be useful outside the scope of EU funds. At each step, the guidance includes tips to avoid mistakes, good practices and useful links and templates. It also explains how to make the most out of the opportunities offered by the revised public procurement directives of 2014, i.e. less red tape and more online procedures to make it easier for small businesses to participate in public tenders and the possibility of introducing new criteria in award decision to choose socially responsible companies and innovative, environment-friendly products. The European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds channel over €450 billion into the EU real economy over the 2014-2020 funding period, half of which is invested through public procurement. An infographic on the guidance and more information on what the Commission does to help Member States improve the way they manage and invest EU funds are available online. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

University of Cyprus joins the Erasmus+ Master Loan Guarantee Scheme

The European Investment Fund and the University of Cyprus have today signed an agreement, which will allow students from other countries to defer tuition fees and student accommodation rent payments. This new pilot scheme worth EUR 4 million and backed by the Erasmus+ Master Loan Guarantee Scheme is expected to benefit more than 240 Master students. Other favourable conditions include another two-year grace period to defer their tuition fees after the end of the studies and a minimum four-year repayment plan after that period. The University of Cyprus is the second university in Europe to launch this kind of initiative following the University of Luxembourg in 2017. The new agreement is the seventh to be signed under the guarantee scheme (the other five agreements were signed with financial institutions). Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport, said: *"This shows that the Erasmus+ guarantee facility is an interesting development opportunity for universities seeking to internationalise their educational offer. It is all the more welcome that the university can take advantage of a comprehensive funding offer of loans and guarantees, thanks to the combined efforts of the European Investment Bank and European Investment Fund. Incoming students will not only be able to benefit from affordable Master studies in Cyprus, but also from a brand new university library, to be built with the Bank's* *support.*" The Erasmus+ Master Degree Loan Scheme has been running since June 2015, with seven institutions in six countries participating. EUR 160 million in student loans are currently available with Erasmus+ backed guarantees of EUR 26 million. Further information is available in the press release by the European Investment Fund and the University of Cyprus. More information on the Erasmus+ programme can be found here. *(For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Joseph Waldstein – Tel.: +32 229 56184*)

Mergers: Commission clears creation of a wind farm company by Votorantim and Canada Pension Plan Investment Board

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the proposed creation of a company jointly controlled by Votorantim of Brazil and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board of Canada. The newly created joint venture, VTRM Energia Participações, will operate wind farms in Brazil. As part of the proposed concentration, Votorantim and the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board will also jointly acquire Ventos do Araripe III, which operates wind farms in Brazil, and will transfer its assets to the joint venture. Votorantim is active in a variety of business sectors including, among others, cement and concrete, mining and metallurgy, pulp and paper, chemical and electricity. The Canada Pension Plan Investment Board is an investment management organisation that invests in public equities, private equities, real estate, infrastructure and fixed income instruments. The Commission concluded that the proposed transaction would raise no competition concerns as the joint venture has no actual or foreseen activities within the European Economic Area. The transaction was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information is available on the Commission's competition website, in the public case register under the case number M.8777. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Alloheim by Nordic Capital

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Alloheim Senioren-Residenzen Holding SE ("Alloheim"), of Germany by Nordic Capital Fund VIII Limited, which acts as general partner of Nordic Capital VIII Alpha, L.P. and Nordic Capital VIII Beta, L.P. (together "Nordic Capital"), of Jersey. Alloheim is a nursing home operator which provides stationary care in the form of elderly care, specialised care and assisted living, as well as ambulatory care. Nordic Capital is a private equity fund primarily investing in large and medium-sized companies operating in Europe. The Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns given the limited impact brought about by the transaction on the market structure. There is no horizontal overlap between the companies' activities, while for the only existing vertical relationship the individual market shares of the companies remain below 30%. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure. More information will be available on the Commission's competition website, in the case register under the case number M.8757. *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Yizhou Ren – Tel.: +32 229 94889)*

Upcoming events of the European Commission (ex-Top News)

Media accreditation for the European Council on 22 and 23 March 2018

Your request will be handled by the Press Office of the General Secretariat of the Council in accordance with the provisions of Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data.

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Vacancy notice – Policy Officer – Markets profile (deadline 13/03/2018)

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Indicative programme – Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council (Education issues), 15/02/2018

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