

Denmark: #InvestEU: European support for Bavarian Nordic's vaccine production

The European Union is supporting biotech company Bavarian Nordic with a EUR 30m loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB). The loan is guaranteed under the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), the heart of the Investment Plan for Europe, in which the EIB is the European Commission's strategic partner.

Bavarian Nordic will use the funding to build and furnish a fill-and-finish-facility on its existing production site in Kvistgård, Denmark, allowing the accelerated deployment of advanced biotechnological manufacturing processes and technologies for the production of vaccines. The new facility is designed to handle aseptic liquid, lyophilised and live biological products, and will add up to 1200m² to the total production area. The financing will cover part of the capital expenditure on the project, which runs from 2018 to 2020.

"This is one of those examples where European companies are truly innovative." said EIB Vice-President **Alexander Stubb**. "When we think of European security we often forget that biohazards and diseases pose a very real threat, making vaccines all the more important. The EIB's financing will allow Bavarian Nordic to expand, thus reinforcing European life science business as well as contributing to the European Security Initiative in defending against potential bioterrorism threats."

"Infectious diseases and bioterrorism remain top threats to public health in Europe and around the world," said **Paul Chaplin**, President & CEO of Bavarian Nordic. "The non-dilutive financing from the European Investment Bank provides us with the flexibility to enhance our manufacturing capabilities while continuing to focus on our first-class vaccine research and development."

European Commissioner **Vytenis Andriukaitis**, responsible for Health and Food Safety, said: "Global health security is a matter of universal concern and key priority for the European Commission. The Ebola crisis showed that very clearly and gave us an important lesson on the necessity to work together to prevent new types of threats. The EIB loan allocated today under the Juncker Plan shows once again a joint commitment to support the EU's capacity to deal with health threats by encouraging the research and development of innovative therapies against infectious diseases, cancer and other threats."

European Solidarity Corps: Commission opens new call for project proposals

This is the first of a series of calls that will allow at least 100,000 young people to take part in the Corps until the end of 2020.

Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, said: *“With the launch of this new call under the European Solidarity Corps, we are delivering on our commitment to create more opportunities for young people to engage in solidarity activities. Funded by the EU budget, the European Solidarity Corps is the best framework for young people to learn, share and use their energy for the common good.”*

Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said: *“Solidarity is one of the key values of the European Union. Time and again, young people across the EU have shown their willingness to help those in need. By creating a dedicated framework and making available the necessary funding for the period 2018-2020, we want to give them more opportunities to engage, including the possibility to form a group of volunteers and come up with their own ideas for solidarity projects.”*

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, added: *“The European Solidarity Corps helps young people in their professional development and their integration into the labour market. With its strong European dimension of solidarity, the Corps is an extraordinary opportunity for young people to develop interpersonal skills and acquire new knowledge, all of these bringing an added value to them and society in general.”*

Which projects are eligible?

The call launched today is open to a broader range of projects than ever before: in addition to longer-term individual volunteering, traineeships and jobs in solidarity fields, the following projects will be eligible:

- Organisations will be able to offer short-term projects (from 2 weeks to 2 months) for teams of volunteers. Organisations will first need to receive a quality label, for which they can apply at any time by submitting a request to the Erasmus+ national agency, or in certain cases, to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency.
- Not only public and private bodies established in EU Member States can apply for funding. Young people registered in the [European Solidarity Corps Portal](#) will also be able to form a group of at least 5 participants and set up youth-led solidarity activities themselves.
- Certain European Solidarity Corps projects in the field of volunteering

are also open to the participation of non EU-organisations from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and other partner countries.

Next steps

Projects under the call for proposals launched today will be selected once the European Parliament and Council formally adopt the Commission proposal, following [their political agreement in June 2018](#). The deadline to apply is 16 October 2018, except for projects of volunteering teams, who have time to apply until 18 February 2019.

Background

The detailed conditions of the call for proposals launched today, including the priorities and instructions for submission of applications for each project can be found in the [European Solidarity Corps Guide](#).

[The European Solidarity Corps was launched in December 2016](#). Since then, 72,000 young people have registered and about 7,000 of them are involved in solidarity activities.

In May 2017, the Commission put forward a proposal to dedicate more than €340 million to the EU Solidarity Corps, and to strengthen its legal structure, so that 100,000 young people can participate by the end of 2020. In June 2018, the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on this proposal, which must now be formally adopted by both. In the meantime, preparatory steps can be taken, including the launch of the call for proposals today.

On 11 June 2018, the Commission put forward its [proposal for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020](#), allocating €1.26 billion to allow about 350,000 young people to take part in a solidarity activity.

For more information

[Strengthening the European Solidarity Corps: Joint statement by Commissioners Navracsics, Oettinger and Thyssen \(27 June 2018\)](#)

[Factsheet: The European Solidarity Corps in Action](#)

[Press release: European Solidarity Corps: Commission proposes more than €340 million to enable 100 000 placements by 2020](#)

[European Solidarity Corps call and guide](#)

[European Solidarity Corps portal](#)

European Solidarity Corps: First call for proposals under the new strengthened structure – Questions and Answers

What is the idea behind the European Solidarity Corps?

Solidarity is a shared value within the European Union – between its citizens, Member States, and in the Union's internal and external action.

As President Juncker said in his [2016 State of the Union address](#) announcing the creation of the European Solidarity Corps: *"We often show solidarity most readily when faced with emergencies. When the Portuguese hills were burning, Italian planes doused the flames. When floods cut off the power in Romania, Swedish generators turned the lights back on. When thousands of refugees arrived on Greek shores, Slovak tents provided shelter. In the same spirit, the Commission is proposing today to set up a European Solidarity Corps."*

The aim of the European Solidarity Corps is to give young people the chance to take part in a range of solidarity activities that address challenging situations across the EU. Taking part in solidarity activities not only benefits young people's personal development, active involvement in society and employability, but also assists non-governmental organisations, public bodies and companies in their efforts to cope with societal and other challenges.

Why did the European Solidarity Corps need a legal base?

Since its launch in December 2016, the European Solidarity Corps has so far been implemented under eight different programmes, each one with its own legal base, objectives and budget ([Erasmus+ programme](#), [EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation \(EaSI\)](#), [LIFE programme](#), [Asylum and Migration Fund](#), [Health programme](#), the [Europe for Citizens programme](#), [European Regional Development Fund](#), [Agricultural Fund for Rural Development](#)).

A self-standing legal base provides one comprehensive funding instrument with a clear set of objectives. This will help consolidate the European Solidarity Corps, by increasing its coherence, impact and cost-effectiveness, and create even more opportunities for young people.

On 30 May 2017, following targeted consultations with stakeholders, the Commission put forward a proposal to equip the European Solidarity Corps with a single legal base, its own financing mechanism and a broader set of solidarity activities.

When is the Regulation on the European Solidarity Corps expected to enter into force?

In June 2018 the European Parliament and the Council reached a political agreement on the Commission's proposal to provide the European Solidarity Corps with its own budget and legal framework until 2020. Subject to a positive vote of the European Parliament during its plenary session in September and the formal adoption in the Council, the draft Regulation can be expected to be published in the Official Journal of the European Union and enter into force in October 2018^[1].

What is the budget of the European Solidarity Corps until 2020?

The overall budget available for the implementation of the European Solidarity Corps for the period from the Regulation's entry into force until 31 December 2020 will be €375,600,000 in current prices. Enshrined in the legal base, this will guarantee a stable budget for this initiative for the rest of the current Multiannual Financial Framework.

Costs for individual solidarity activities vary depending on their type, duration and the country where they take place.

Will the European Solidarity Corps continue after 2020?

The European Commission proposed that the European Solidarity Corps continues within the next long-term budget. To this end, on 11 June 2018, the Commission put forward its proposal for the European Solidarity Corps beyond 2020, allocating €1.26 billion to allow an estimated 350,000 young people to go on a solidarity activity.

GOVERNANCE

What organisational structure will be in charge of the Corps?

In the first phase (since 2016), the European Solidarity Corps has been financed and managed by eight different EU programmes. Under its new legal base, the European Solidarity Corps will be implemented by the European Commission, the [Erasmus+ National Agencies](#) in the Member States and the [Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency \(EACEA\)](#).

The Erasmus+ National Agencies, already responsible for managing the youth strand of the Erasmus+ programme, will be in charge of implementing most of the actions of the European Solidarity Corps: assessing requests from most types of organisations applying for a European Solidarity Corps Quality Label, evaluating requests for funding from participating organisations, providing training and support, organising networking activities, or promoting the European Solidarity Corps at national level.

The European Commission, supported by the EACEA, will manage horizontal services to European Solidarity Corps participants, e.g. online training, online linguistic support and insurance. The Agency will also attribute the Quality Label to certain types of stakeholders (e.g. Europe-wide networks or platforms, national public authorities and services, organisations offering activities run with the support of EU programmes other than the European Solidarity Corps, providing volunteering, traineeship or job opportunities).

In addition, a newly created European Solidarity Corps Resource Centre will support the implementing bodies and the participating organisations, in particular as regards the certification and documentation of skills acquired by young people during their activities.

What will be the role of employment services?

Labour market actors, such as public and private employment services, but also Chambers of Commerce, will be able to contribute to the European Solidarity Corps by assisting the participants in obtaining a solidarity job or a traineeship. Their support will be built upon existing structures.

Public Employment Services in particular have ample labour market intelligence, i.e. access to job vacancies, both in-country (via their own database) and cross-border (via EURES). They could, in addition, help reach out to employers to promote the European Solidarity Corps as well as to young people to encourage them to register. They can also provide support to European Solidarity Corps participants after their activity, to ensure that their participation in a solidarity activity acts as a stepping stone into the labour market.

Labour market actors, including public and private employment services, will be able to apply individually or jointly for grants via the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

ACTIVITIES

Will the supported activities remain the same?

In the first phase of its implementation (2016-2018), the European Solidarity Corps offered young people opportunities for individual volunteering, traineeships or jobs.

With the new legal base, in addition to supporting young people in carrying out volunteering activities for up to 12 months, traineeships for 2–6 months, and jobs in compliance with relevant national legislation for 3–12 months, the European Solidarity Corps will also provide participants with the opportunity to set up their own solidarity projects or to volunteer as a group on a short-term basis.

Special attention is given to young people with fewer opportunities. Specific financial support and adapted formats of activities are proposed to facilitate their participation. A range of support measures (e.g. general and language training, insurance, support before and after solidarity activities, administrative assistance) will be available for all participants and participating organisations.

What are volunteering teams?

Activities by volunteering teams are a new feature of the European Solidarity Corps. These are solidarity activities allowing teams of European Solidarity

Corps participants from different participating countries to volunteer together for a period between two weeks and two months. Due to its shorter duration and collective character, this format is expected to facilitate the inclusion of young people with fewer opportunities in the European Solidarity Corps.

Furthermore, the format of volunteering teams will also be used for pursuing specific policy priorities, e.g. protection of European cultural heritage; integration of third-country nationals (including asylum seekers and refugees); response to environmental and climate challenges, including disaster prevention, preparedness and recovery (excluding immediate disaster response), through a centralised action “volunteering teams in high priority areas”.

What is a solidarity project?

Solidarity projects are youth-led initiatives, set up and carried out by groups of at least five European Solidarity Corps participants, lasting between two and twelve months. The young participants will play an active role in designing and implementing their own ideas for the benefit of their local communities, in any solidarity-related areas. A solidarity project should address a specific challenge within the participants’ community and show a clear European added value.

As solidarity projects typically happen in the country of residence of the European Solidarity Corps participants, this format is also adapted for the participation of young people with fewer opportunities, who may encounter difficulties engaging in activities abroad, but still want to contribute to society.

What are networking activities?

Networking activities aim at increasing the quality of overall implementation of the European Solidarity Corps, accompanying its implementation and enhancing its effectiveness, impact and visibility. They also aim at creating a sense of belonging to the Corps. These activities could be related e.g. to informing newcomers (both young persons and potential participating organisations) about the European Solidarity Corps, to consultation fora, the exchange of good practice or the establishment of alumni networks.

Who can apply?

Public and private bodies established in EU Member States may apply for the Quality Label and funding. Moreover, groups of young people registered in the European Solidarity Corps Portal may apply for solidarity project funding. Organisations from Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and other partner countries may participate as partners in volunteering projects. More information is available in the European Solidarity Corps Guide.

Where and when can one apply to this call?

Applications for funding for volunteering teams in high priority areas should

be addressed to the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency. Applications regarding other actions should be submitted to the National Agency of the country in which the applicant organisation is established.

Eligible organisations and groups of young people should submit their applications by the following deadlines [before 12.00 (noon), Brussels time]:

Volunteering Partnerships	16 October 2018
Volunteering Projects	16 October 2018
Traineeships and Jobs	16 October 2018
Solidarity Projects	16 October 2018
Volunteering Teams in high priority areas	18 February 2019

Applications for the Quality Label can be submitted on a continuous basis.

Who can register for the European Solidarity Corps?

Anyone who is between 17 and 30 years old, and who is a national of, or legally residing in, a participating or partner country can register for the European Solidarity Corps. The minimum age to participate in a solidarity project is 18. All activities of the European Solidarity Corps are open to young persons and organisations from the participating countries (Member States of the EU), while some of the activities are also open to Partner Countries (European Free Trade Association, EU candidate countries, Western Balkans countries, Eastern Partnership countries, South-Mediterranean countries, Russian Federation).

Young people who register for the European Solidarity Corps will need to subscribe to the European Solidarity Corps [Mission Statement and its Principles](#). Registration is easy and can be done on a dedicated webpage via the [European Youth Portal](#).

Will the registration on the European Solidarity Corps Portal guarantee that the young person will be offered a solidarity activity?

All registered young persons can take part in a general online training and in the community-building activities that may be taking place in their local communities. Registering does not guarantee that the young person will be offered a volunteering, traineeship or job opportunity. This depends on the budget, the availability of projects and the specific interest of each candidate.

The draft Regulation also foresees solidarity projects, allowing young people who have registered to take action themselves and implement their ideas for solidarity at local level, instead of waiting for a volunteering, traineeship or job opportunity to be offered to them by a participating organisation.

What are the requirements for organisations?

A Quality Label will be put in place to ensure compliance of the

participating organisations with the principles and requirements of the European Solidarity Corps. In general, obtaining a Quality Label will be a prerequisite for an organisation's participation in any activities supported by the European Solidarity Corps (except solidarity projects) but shall not automatically lead to funding.

The scope of the Quality Label awarded will depend on the type of activities the applicant organisation wishes to be involved in. Specific mechanisms for the application for the Quality Label, evaluation of applications and award (or refusal) of the Quality Label are put in place. Simplified procedures will be provided for organisations already participating in other EU programmes and for public authorities. Transition measures will be applied to organisations accredited under the European Volunteering Service. The application process, depending on the type of organisation, will be evaluated by the National Agencies or the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA).

How does the matching process work?

When young people register for the European Solidarity Corps via the European Solidarity Corps Portal, beyond providing information about their education and employment experience and personal interests, they can also indicate which type of projects they would like to be involved in, in which countries they would like to carry out a solidarity activity, and when they are available to participate. They can choose between the types of activities (volunteering, jobs, traineeships) and can express their interest to be involved in specific solidarity areas.

When registering, young people can also highlight the specific experience and knowledge they would bring to the European Solidarity Corps, e.g. in working with refugees, children, elderly or disabled people, teaching, first aid, media, music, arts, building/construction, engineering, project management or other fields. Alternatively, young people can apply directly for one of the vacancies published on the European Solidarity Corps Portal by the participating organisations.

Participating organisations will have the possibility to choose from candidates whose motivation, interests and skills correspond most closely to their needs. Young people are free to accept or decline any offer made by an organisation.

What are the financial conditions of participating in a Solidarity Corps activity?

Each young person participating in a solidarity activity shall receive a contribution to his/her travel costs and insurance.

Volunteers also receive free food and accommodation, as well as pocket money throughout the duration of their activity.

Jobs will be based on an employment contract and remuneration will be set in accordance with national laws, regulations and collective agreements in force

in the country where the job is carried out. This remuneration will be paid by the organisation employing the young person. Furthermore, jobholders will receive a relocation allowance to help them with the cost of their installation in the host country.

Traineeships will be based on a written agreement and remunerated by the host organisation. Traineeships offered under the Corps must take into account the principles outlined in the [Quality Framework for Traineeships](#). Trainees will also receive a relocation allowance.

Can organisations charge participants money for taking them on?

No. No individual or entity may request any financial contribution or fee from a participant, related to being selected for participation in a European Solidarity Corps project.

What about insurance and social security coverage?

Participants in cross-border activities will be enrolled in the insurance scheme of the European Solidarity Corps. This will provide complementary coverage for the holders of a European Health Insurance Card and full insurance coverage to those participants who are not eligible for the European Health Insurance Card free of charge.

With regard to jobs and traineeships and the related social security, certain specificities apply in accordance with the national laws, regulations and collective agreements of the country where the solidarity activities will be carried out.

Will there be language support?

Yes. European Solidarity Corps participants who accept an offer for a cross-border solidarity activity will be given access to an online language course allowing them to assess and improve their competences in the foreign language they will use to carry out their activity abroad.

What kind of certificate will participants receive?

Every young person taking part in a European Solidarity Corps activity will receive a certificate of participation once they have completed their solidarity activity. At the end of their volunteering, traineeship or job, the young persons are also entitled to receive a Youthpass certificate documenting the knowledge, skills and competences acquired during the solidarity activities.

[\[1\]](#) The call is published subject to the final adoption of the European Solidarity Corps Regulation by the legislative authority without significant modifications, and to adoption of the relevant financing decisions.

European Solidarity Corps: Commission opens new call for project proposals

The European Commission is calling on interested parties to put forward ideas for projects under the European Solidarity Corps. A total of €44 million has been set aside from the EU budget for selected projects that will be open to all young people across Europe and beyond. This is the first of a series of calls that will allow at least 100,000 young people to take part in the Corps until the end of 2020. Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources, Günther H. **Oettinger**, said: *“With the launch of this new call under the European Solidarity Corps, we are delivering on our commitment to create more opportunities for young people to engage in solidarity activities. Funded by the EU budget, the European Solidarity Corps is the best framework for young people to learn, share and use their energy for the common good.”* Tibor **Navracsics**, Commissioner for Education, Culture, Youth and Sport said: *“Solidarity is one of the key values of the European Union. Time and again, young people across the EU have shown their willingness to help those in need. By creating a dedicated framework and making available the necessary funding for the period 2018-2020, we want to give them more opportunities to engage, including the possibility to form a group of volunteers and come up with their own ideas for solidarity projects.”* Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne **Thyssen**, added: *“The European Solidarity Corps helps young people in their professional development and their integration into the labour market. With its strong European dimension of solidarity, the Corps is an extraordinary opportunity for young people to develop interpersonal skills and acquire new knowledge, all of these bringing an added value to them and society in general.”* More information is available in this [press release](#) and [memo](#). A factsheet with the latest figures is available [here](#). (For more information: Nathalie Vandystadt – Tel.: +32 229 67083; Sara Soumillion – Tel.: + 32 229 67094)

Juncker Plan supports Bavarian Nordic’s vaccine production with €30 million EIB loan

The European Union is supporting biotech company Bavarian Nordic with a €30 million loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB) which is guaranteed under the Juncker Plan’s European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). Bavarian Nordic will use the funding to build and furnish a production facility on its existing site in Kvistgård, Denmark, where it uses advanced biotechnological manufacturing processes and technologies for the production of vaccines. Bavarian Nordic has played a pivotal role in the fight against communicable diseases – notably Ebola – and by developing defence mechanisms against potential bioterrorism threats, such as smallpox, the biotech firm is a key contributor to the European Security Initiative. Commissioner Vytenis **Andriukaitis**, responsible for Health and Food Safety, said: *“Global health security is a matter of universal concern and key priority for the European Commission. The Ebola crisis showed that very clearly and gave us an important lesson on the necessity to work together to prevent new types of threats. The EIB loan allocated today under the Juncker Plan shows once again*

a joint commitment to support the EU's capacity to deal with health threats by encouraging the research and development of innovative therapies against infectious diseases, cancer and other threats." (Full press release can be found [here](#). For more information: Christian Spahr – Tel.: +32 229 50055; Siobhán Millbright – Tel.: +32 229 57361)

La Commission aide cinq régions à utiliser des procédures de passation des marchés publics plus innovantes et responsables avec les fonds européens

La Commission, en partenariat avec l'Organisation de coopération et de développement économiques ([OCDE](#)), va fournir un soutien personnalisé au comité de coordination et de développement de la région portugaise du Centre, à l'autorité athénienne pour le transport urbain, à la région italienne des Pouilles et aux régions grecques de Grèce Centrale et de Macédoine-Orientale-et-Thrace, afin de les aider à utiliser des procédures de passation de marchés publics plus innovantes pour des projets cofinancés par l'UE. Ce soutien vise à promouvoir des critères de durabilité environnementale, d'impact social et d'innovation, au-delà du simple critère du coût. *"La Commission va aider les autorités gérant les fonds européens à en avoir plus pour leur argent,"* a commenté la Commissaire à la politique régionale Corina **Crețu**, *"Des procédures de marchés publics plus innovantes et responsables pour un meilleur rapport qualité-prix, voilà un exemple concret d'un budget de l'UE résolument axé sur les résultats."* Elżbieta **Bieńkowska**, commissaire en charge du marché intérieur, de l'industrie, de l'entrepreneuriat et des PME, a ajouté: *"La Commission veut aider les autorités publiques à maximiser l'impact des achats publics, en termes d'objectifs sociaux, d'innovation et de durabilité, notamment via la recommandation de l'UE sur la professionnalisation des acheteurs publics"*. Les autorités locales et régionales sélectionnées vont bénéficier du soutien de la Commission pour les projets suivants: Centre, Portugal: projets de recherche et innovation en lien avec [la stratégie régionale de spécialisation intelligente](#); Athènes, Grèce: achat de véhicules plus respectueux de l'environnement pour le transport urbain; dans les Pouilles italiennes: nouvelles technologies et services administratifs innovants dans le domaine de la gestion de l'eau; Grèce Centrale: un système moderne et respectueux de l'environnement pour l'épuration des eaux près de la rivière Asopos; Macédoine-Orientale-et-Thrace: projets liés à la stratégie de développement territoriale des zones montagneuses de Rodopi et Nestos. Ce soutien s'inscrit dans le cadre du [Plan d'Action](#) de la Commission pour les marchés publics et correspond aux orientations politiques du [Paquet Marchés Publics](#) de 2017. *(Pour plus d'informations: Johannes Bahrke – Tel.: +32 229 58615; Sophie Dupin de Saint-Cyr – Tel.: +32 229 56169)*

EU supports Bosnia and Herzegovina in managing the migration flows with additional €6 million

Today the European Commission adopted a special measure for an amount of €6 million to support [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) in managing the migration flows. The EU funds will improve the capacity of Bosnia and Herzegovina for identification, registration and referral of third-country nationals crossing the border, provide accommodation and basic services for refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and strengthen the capacity for border control and

surveillance, hence also contributing to the prevention of and fight against the trafficking of human beings. These funds complement the [€1.5 million already made available](#) to Bosnia and Herzegovina in June to address the immediate humanitarian needs of refugees and migrants. In addition to humanitarian assistance, since 2007 the European Commission has been providing assistance to Bosnia and Herzegovina in the area of migration and border management for an amount of € 24.6 million. Since January 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina also benefits from the regional programme 'Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management' worth €8 million. *(For more information: Carlos Martin Ruiz de Gordejuela – Tel.: +32 229 65322; Alceo Smerilli – Tel.:+32 229 64887)*

State aid: Commission approves new Slovenian commitment package for Nova Ljubljanska Banka

Following an in-depth State aid investigation opened on [26 January 2018](#), the European Commission has concluded that Slovenia's aid for Nova Ljubljanska Banka (NLB) remains compatible with EU State aid rules on the basis of a new commitment package submitted by the Slovenian authorities on 13 July 2018. Slovenia has firmly committed to an ambitious time schedule for NLB's sale – a first sale tranche of at least 50% plus one share will be sold by the end of 2018 and the Slovenian government will reduce its stake in NLB to 25% plus one share by the end of 2019. Furthermore, Slovenia prolonged key commitments and also offered new commitments to compensate for the delayed sale and restructuring process of NLB. Commissioner Margrethe **Vestager**, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The sale of NLB was an important remaining milestone of NLB's restructuring plan, which allowed us to approve over €2 billion of State aid to the bank in 2013. Therefore, I welcome Slovenia's commitment to a clear time path to achieve this sale. Thanks to this, the Commission can today approve Slovenia's new commitment package for NLB, ensuring that the bank will be a viable long-term player in the Slovenian banking market."* A full press release is available in [EN](#), [SL](#), [FR](#) and [DE](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel: +32 229 55344).*

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of the Polish resolution scheme for cooperative and small commercial banks

The European Commission has approved, under EU State aid rules, the prolongation of the Polish resolution scheme for twelve months. The scheme was initially [approved in December 2016](#). The measure will continue to be available for cooperative banks and small commercial banks with total assets below €3 billion, only if they are found to be in distress by the competent national authorities. The objective of the scheme is to facilitate the work of the Polish resolution authorities, should a concrete case and need arise for it. The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme to be in line with EU State aid rules, in particular the [2013 Banking Communication](#) and EU banking rules. More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website in the [case register](#) under the case number SA.51403 once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. *(For more*

information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel: +32 229 55344).

Mergers: Commission clears acquisition of Pibinew by SL04 and Ambienta

The European Commission has approved, under the EU Merger Regulation, the acquisition of Pibinew S.r.l. of Italy by S.L.04 S.à. r. (“SL04”) of Luxembourg and Ambienta Sgr S.p.A. of Italy. Pibinew designs, manufactures, decorates and sells plastic packaging for the cosmetic industry. SL04 is a private equity firm indirectly controlled by L Catterton Partners of the US whose portfolio includes companies active in the production and sale of cosmetics and fragrance products. Ambienta is a private equity firm whose portfolio companies are not active in the cosmetic sector. Pibinew and L Catterton’s portfolio companies are active in vertically related markets, namely the production and sale of cosmetic packaging, and the supply of cosmetic and fragrance products, respectively. However, the companies’ individual market shares in these vertically related markets are modest and a number of strong players would remain post-transaction in both markets. Therefore, the Commission concluded that the proposed acquisition would raise no competition concerns. 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.9004](#). *(For more information: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – Tel: +32 229 55344).*

Concentrations: la Commission autorise l’acquisition de XL Group par le groupe AXA

La Commission européenne a approuvé, en vertu du règlement européen sur les concentrations, l’acquisition de XL Group Ltd, basé en Bermuda, par le groupe AXA, basé en France. XL Group est actif dans la fourniture d’assurances et de réassurance à des entreprises industrielles, commerciales et professionnelles et aux sociétés d’assurance. AXA est actif dans l’assurance et la gestion d’actifs dans le monde entier. La Commission a conclu que l’opération envisagée ne soulèverait pas de problème de concurrence, compte tenu de son impact très limité sur la structure du marché. La transaction a été examinée dans le cadre de la procédure simplifiée de contrôle des concentrations. De plus amples informations sont disponibles sur le site internet [concurrence](#) de la Commission dans le registre public des affaires sous le numéro [M.8908](#). *(Pour plus d’informations: Ricardo Cardoso – Tel.: +32 229 80100; Giulia Astuti – +32 229 55344)*

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State aid: Commission approves new Slovenian commitment package for Nova Ljubljanska Banka

Slovenia has firmly committed to an ambitious time schedule for NLB's sale with a first sale tranche of at least 50% plus one share by the end of 2018. Slovenia prolonged key commitments and also offered new commitments to compensate for the delayed sale and restructuring process of NLB.

Commissioner Margrethe Vestager, in charge of competition policy, said: *"The sale of NLB was an important remaining milestone of NLB's restructuring plan, which allowed us to approve over €2 billion of State aid to the bank in 2013. Therefore, I welcome Slovenia's commitment to a clear time path to achieve this sale. Thanks to this, the Commission can today approve Slovenia's new commitment package for NLB, ensuring that the bank will be a viable long-term player in the Slovenian banking market."*

The Commission opened an in-depth State aid investigation on [26 January 2018](#), to assess whether new measures proposed by the Slovenian authorities regarding the restructuring of NLB sufficiently compensated for delaying the bank's sale. In particular, the Commission was concerned that Slovenia had not sold a first tranche of NLB before the end of 2017, in line with the commitments originally proposed by Slovenia to ensure NLB's long-term viability.

The sale of NLB was a crucial element of the Commission's viability assessment in the NLB State aid decision of [December 2013](#), allowing the Commission to approve the granting of significant State aid of up to €2.32 billion to NLB. Slovenia committed in 2013 and again [in 2017](#) to this sale to ensure that it would no longer unduly influence NLB's daily business operations. A change in ownership will allow the bank – at all its levels – to operate solely for commercial objectives.

The Commission can exceptionally accept modifications to existing State aid commitments if the new commitments are equivalent to the original ones. In the case at hand, the new commitments should ensure NLB's viability to the same extent as the original commitments and address any additional competition distortions resulting from the delayed sale.

Slovenia first notified amended commitments to the Commission in December 2017. In its opening Decision of [26 January 2018](#), the Commission doubted whether these amended commitments were equivalent to the original ones. On 13 July 2018, Slovenia submitted another amendment commitment package, now with an ambitious schedule to sell NLB.

The new proposed commitments

The new commitment package proposed by Slovenia includes **strict deadlines to**

complete the sale of 75% minus one share of NLB. A first significant sale tranche of at least 50% plus one share will be sold by the end of 2018 and the Slovenian government will reduce its stake in NLB to 25% plus one share by the end of 2019.

If Slovenia does not respect the deadlines foreseen, a divestiture trustee will be appointed to take over the sales process. This commitment is important, as the Commission in the January 2018 decision already suggested that a fully empowered divestiture trustee could further improve NLB's viability.

Furthermore, the **key existing commitments are prolonged.** An important commitment in this regard is the return on equity commitment, which ensures that NLB can only grant new loans if the bank receives a minimum return on equity on those loans. This commitment will help ensure the long term profitability of the bank and limit undue distortions of competition.

NLB will also **not re-enter the businesses it sold** as part of the restructuring plan (such as the leasing business) and will also strictly **comply with an acquisition ban.**

Finally, the new commitment package also includes **additional compensatory measures**, which will improve the viability of NLB and help to avoid undue distortions of competition in the Slovenian banking market:

- NLB will close additional bank branches in its home market and – unless a full sale is completed by the end of 2018 – also sell its stake in its insurance subsidiary NLB Vita.
- to further remove any viability doubts, NLB will also issue a so-called “Tier 2 bond” (subordinated debt).

The Commission's investigation concluded that the new Slovenian commitment package is sufficient to remove the Commission's doubts concerning the long-term viability of NLB and distortions of competition to the Slovenian banking market. On this basis, the Commission has approved Slovenia's new commitment package for NLB under EU State aid rules.

Background

NLB is the largest banking group in Slovenia with a balance sheet of €13 billion (end 2017 figure). It has received three State recapitalisations, one of €250 million in March 2011, one of €383 million in July 2012 and in December 2013 a third recapitalisation of €1558 million together with a transfer of impaired assets to a State-owned bad bank with an implied aid element of €130 million

[The Commission approved](#) in December 2013 under EU State aid rules the €2.32 billion in State aid from these three recapitalisations – equivalent to 20% of the bank's risk weighted assets as of December 2012 – on the basis of the bank's restructuring plan and associated commitments. As a crucial part of this restructuring plan, Slovenia committed to sell 75%-1 share of NLB by end 2017. In May 2017, the Commission [accepted](#) a request from Slovenia for a more

gradual sale of NLB. Slovenia still committed to sell (at least) 50% of NLB by end 2017 and the remainder of the shares by the end of 2018.

More information will be available on the Commission's [competition](#) website, in the [public case register](#) under the case number [SA.33229](#).