

# [Press release – COVID-19 crisis: MEPs discuss plans to safely resume travel and reboot tourism](#)



The European Commission will [present the package of guidelines and recommendations](#) adopted on 13 May to help gradually lift travel restrictions across Europe and allow tourism businesses to reopen after months of lockdown.

**When:** Thursday, 28 May 2020, 10.00 – 12.00 CEST

**Where:** European Parliament, Antall building, room 4Q1, Brussels

**The meeting will be livestreamed [here](#) (Parliament's Multimedia Centre).**

Members of the Committee on Transport and Tourism will be able to participate remotely. Committee Chair [Karima Delli](#) (Greens/EFA, FR), as well as a few other MEPs, will be present in the meeting room.

## Background

### Timeline:

- **24 March 2020:** Members of the Tourism Task Force of the Transport and Tourism Committee [call on the Commission to present a tourism rescue action plan](#), which ensures timely national and European assistance for the travel and tourism sector, including via national compensation schemes and financial aid instruments, and establishes a crisis-management mechanism for the sector.
- **21 April 2020:** The Parliament's Transport and Tourism Committee

reiterates, in a [debate with Commissioner Thierry Breton](#), that the tourism sector needs more support in the ongoing COVID-19 crisis through specific measures, funding, increased EU-level coordination and a targeted roadmap.

**The Commission's package includes:**

## **Information to the media**

Journalists are advised not to attend in person unless absolutely necessary. If you do, you are requested to respect the recommended guidelines on social distancing and hygiene.

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**[EIB and Unión de Créditos Inmobiliarios join forces to boost energy efficiency projects in Spain and Portugal](#)**



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- **EIB and Unión de Créditos Inmobiliarios to finance the construction of new highly energy-efficient multi-apartment buildings and the refurbishment of existing residential properties in Iberia**
- **Project will create 1,230 jobs during implementation and contribute to energy savings of around 44 GWh per year**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and Unión de Créditos Inmobiliarios (UCI) are set to finance green investments in Iberia ranging from the refurbishment of existing buildings to the construction of Nearly Zero-Energy properties. These investments will be possible thanks to the provision of energy efficiency mortgages and consumer loans to the market by UCI.

The agreement will enable UCI to generate a new portfolio of green financing of at least EUR 100 million in Spain and Portugal, which includes mortgages, loans to individuals and loans to associations. To this end, the EIB will participate in the senior tranche of a residential mortgage-backed security ("RMBS") for a total amount of approximately EUR100million. The securitised portfolio has been originated by UCI and is made up of existing Portuguese mortgage loans. This de-linked operation will reinvigorate UCI's funding capabilities to launch and actively market new green energy product lines, thus expanding UCI's financing capacity to provide energy efficiency loans in the region. This is the first project supported by the EIB that involves the creation of a portfolio of new energy efficiency loans that fulfil the requirements set by both the EU bank and the [Energy Efficiency Mortgage Action Plan](#) (EeMAP), an initiative run by the European Mortgage Federation and encouraged by the European Commission (EC).

The EIB support will enable UCI to finance the construction of Nearly Zero-

Energy Buildings and the energy refurbishment of residential properties in Spain and Portugal, with the final beneficiaries being private individuals and homeowners associations. The project will help to meet the region's climate and energy-saving targets and attract investments in the field of energy efficiency, while promoting the capital market for Residential Mortgage-Backed Securities (RMBSs) in Iberia, especially Portugal, where investments in this field have been modest since the past financial crisis.

It is estimated that around 25,000 m<sup>2</sup> of new buildings will be constructed and 450,000 m<sup>2</sup> of properties will be refurbished in Spain and Portugal. Over 3,000 people will benefit from these investments and the total final energy savings are projected to be 43.7 GWh per year after their complete implementation. In addition, the sub-projects are expected to create 1,230 jobs during the construction period.

**Emma Navarro, EIB Vice-President responsible for the Bank's activity in Spain and Portugal and for its Climate Action**, said: *"Despite the challenging circumstances we all face and the focus of our efforts in combating COVID-19, we will not lose sight of the EIB's long-term objective to underpinning Europe's transition to a low-carbon economy and society. We are very pleased to support this innovative operation that stimulates energy efficiency investments in Spain and Portugal and that shows our commitment to continue promoting green projects. We will do our utmost to ensure that Europe's recovery after the health emergency is climate and environmentally-focused."*

**Roberto Colomer, Chief Executive Officer of UCI**, stated that *"Our collaboration with the EIB under the EMF's EEMI project will allow us to continue promoting energy efficiency and more sustainable homes in both Spain and Portugal. The renovation of homes and buildings in Europe is essential if we are to fulfil the objectives of the Horizon 2030 plan for sustainable development in the EU, a goal to which UCI is fully committed"*.

*The recovery from the COVID-19 crisis should be based on a new green paradigm which secures new economic and social attitudes. The starting point will be a re-evaluation of the space and environment in which we live, in a completely different and, most importantly, sustainable way. Green investment in buildings will be the central cog of a mechanism which will trigger a new culture in the market"*, said **Luca Bertalot, Secretary General of the European Mortgage Federation.**

UCI will offer four different product lines: Green personal loans for the refurbishment of condominiums; Green personal loans for the refurbishment of individual properties; Green mortgage loans for newly built properties (energy classes A or B); and Green mortgage loans for existing properties (purchase and refurbishment).

### **Unión de Créditos Inmobiliarios**

Unión de Créditos Inmobiliarios (UCI) is a financial institution with over 30 years of experience, and is present in Spain, Portugal, Greece and Brazil (the latter as a joint venture with the Provincia Group). The company has over 600 employees, an outstanding balance of more than EUR 10 billion, and

over 350,000 customers. UCI enables access to housing and contributes to the renovation of the real estate stock to achieve more sustainable cities through its mortgages, and also through personal loans for renovations available to both individuals and condominiums. UCI has issued more than EUR 2 billion in RMBS securitisation bonds of the highest quality through its Prado programme in Spain since 2015.

The [Energy Efficient Mortgages Initiative \(EEMI\)](#), led by the [EMF-ECBC](#) together with a coalition of relevant market stakeholders from across European and global jurisdictions, is intended to design and deliver an energy efficient mortgage (EEM) product and accompanying framework, together with EEM data collection and disclosure capabilities.

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## [EASO resuming full operational activities in Member States](#)

***The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is gradually and safely resuming elements of its operations in Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta which were suspended due to COVID-19.***

Following the temporary suspension of certain close-contact operational activities in-line with national instructions, EASO is gradually resuming its full support activities to the asylum authorities of Cyprus, Greece, Italy and Malta, as per the respective [operating plans](#).

Commenting on the efforts being made by national authorities to ensure the EU's asylum *acquis* is implemented despite the challenging circumstances, the Executive Director of EASO, **Nina Gregori**, stated: *"I would like to thank the asylum authorities of the four Member States in which we operate for working in excellent cooperation with EASO's teams to find practical and safe methods to resume activities. I also take the opportunity to welcome the recent decision of the Maltese authorities to establish the International Protection Agency, which I am sure will further strengthen the effectiveness of the national asylum system."*

Following the suspension of certain activities, such as interviews and registrations, EASO re-assigned personnel to those which could continue remotely, such as casework, backlog management and file preparation. In cooperation with national authorities, the Agency adapted its operations in order to ensure the safety of asylum seekers, as well as its personnel. EASO operational premises have been modified in order to ensure physical distance rules, regular sanitisation, while adopting procedures for the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Wherever possible, activities will be conducted remotely, including with regard to interviews.

Despite suspending some activities, by quickly adjusting its resources over



the past two months, EASO continued to implement all possible elements of its operations through the use of remote arrangements. This included the ongoing facilitation of the [relocation](#) of 1,600 unaccompanied minors from Greece and the relocation of *ad hoc* disembarkations in the Central Mediterranean.

Throughout the ongoing pandemic, EASO also supported the European Commission in preparing its [guidance](#) on the implementation of EU rules on asylum procedures, and also published [recommendations](#) for remote interviews for asylum applicants.

*Any further information may be obtained from the European Asylum Support Office on the following email address: [press@easo.europa.eu](mailto:press@easo.europa.eu).*

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## [Poland: First EIB support for solar energy project](#)



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- PLN 82m loan (around EUR 18m) is EIB's first ever financing for photovoltaic plants in northern Poland
- With a combined capacity of up to 66MW, serving the equivalent of 19.000 households, the plants will help reduce 47,000 tons of carbon dioxide each year

- **The project is guaranteed by the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and will contribute to the development of renewable energy sources in Poland**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed today its first loan to a company building and running photovoltaic plants in Poland. The EU bank will lend PLN 82m (around EUR 18m) to Energy Solar Projekty sp.z o.o. for the construction and operation of 66 small-scale, independent photovoltaic (PV) plants. With an average nominal capacity for each plant of less or equal than 1 MW, the total capacity will reach about 65,6 MW. This is the equivalent of 19,000 households, which could be supplied with the energy generated by the project.

The borrower, Energy Solar Projekty sp.z o.o., is a subsidiary company of the Energy and Infrastructure SME Fund managed by the Lithuanian-based investment management company Lords LB Asset Management.

The operation has the guarantee of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), which is the financial pillar of the Investment Plan for Europe jointly managed by the European Commission and the EIB. The EIB is co-financing the project with DNB Bank Polska, each bank providing 50% of senior debt (total amount PLN 164m). The shareholders of the borrower (Energy Solar Projekty sp.z o.o.) will put around 30% of total funding needs of the project.

The PV plants are located in northern Poland, covering areas in the Voivodships of West Pomerania, Pomerania, Warmia-Masuria and Kuyavia-Pomerania, with a larger conglomeration in the first three regions. The PV plants are grouped in eight project companies, each comprising of one or more individual plants. Energy Solar Projekty sp.z o.o. is the holding company owning the overall portfolio.

The total capacity of all newly built independent PV plants in the portfolio will produce approximately 68,000 MWh of electricity in the first year and will help to reduce 47,000 tons of carbon dioxide each year. It is estimated that the total installed capacity of all solar power plants in Poland has reached around 1.3 GW in the end of 2019.

*"We welcome the EIB's first ever financing for a solar energy project in Poland", said **prof. Teresa Czerwińska, EIB Vice-President**, who oversees operations in this country. "Photovoltaics play a role in the decarbonisation of the energy sector and are a fast-growing industry in many countries. Poland is no exception. The auction system introduced by the government has generated a lot of interest from domestic and international investors, as shown here by the Lithuanian company Lords LB Asset Management. This is the first concrete project financed by the EIB under a programme loan dedicated to solar energy in Poland and approved in 2018. We hope more will come to life in the near future".*

**Domas Kacinskas, Board Member at Lords LB Asset Management and Manager of Energy and Infrastructure SME Fund** pointed: *"Lords LB Asset Management appreciates the European Investment Bank's financing and supports the values*

*and mission of its climate action policy. This loan will enable Energy and Infrastructure SME Fund to build on its momentum and expand its operations as the independent provider of energy services in Poland, with a stronger emphasis on smart energy management systems and solutions for energy efficiency. Investing in expansion of renewable energy sources will make a major contribution to combating climate change, while also saving on energy bills. Through this project we aim to increase our competitiveness and make a significant contribution to accelerated decarbonization of energy sector”.*

**European Commissioner for the Economy, Paolo Gentiloni**, said: *“The financing agreement signed today to build these solar energy plants is excellent news both for Poland’s economy and its environment. The European Green Deal will be at the heart of our efforts to rebuild our economies after the coronavirus pandemic and Poland should continue to make use of all the EU support on offer.”*

**Artur Tomaszewski, President of the Management Board of DNB Bank Polska**, said: *“DNB Bank Polska is extremely proud to support Lords LB Asset Management in this project alongside the European Investment Bank. This is the first project finance loan for a PV project in Poland granted by DNB and one of the first and the largest one in the market thus far. As one of the most active lenders to the renewable energy sector in Poland, we have been in a position to leverage off our strong expertise in the sector coming from a number of onshore wind deals in order to shape the financing structure in an efficient manner. Our bank has a strong commitment to facilitate the transition of economy towards green and sustainable solutions, and the development of renewable energy sources in Poland is therefore one of the highest priorities for us. I am convinced that the financing for this project will boost the green energy sector in Poland.”*

## **Background information**

The overall EIB financing made available under **the 2018 programme loan for solar energy projects in Poland** amounts to PLN 450 million (around EUR 100m). The programme loan supports land-based small and medium-sized photovoltaic (PV) plants in Poland, enjoying revenue protection support against price fluctuations, awarded under the renewable energy auctions held in the country. The programme supports the EU and Poland’s national targets for renewable energy generation and will help to reduce global greenhouse gas emissions. See more details [here](#).

## **Lords LB Asset Management**

Lords LB Asset Management is a premier provider of investment management services to institutional clients and high net worth individuals. Established in 2008, Lords LB Asset Management focuses on real estate and private equity investment strategies. The company currently manages 15 funds: 12 real estate funds, 2 private capital funds and 1 energy and infrastructure funds. The total value of assets managed by the funds reached more than EUR 530 million at the end of December 2019.

## **Energy and Infrastructure SME Fund**



Energy and Infrastructure SME Fund was established in 2016. The Fund focuses on investing in the renewable energy, infrastructure and public-private partnership cooperation projects in the Baltics and Poland and aims to raise capital up to EUR 75 million.

## COVID-19 puts asylum seekers at a higher risk as conditions in camps deteriorate and asylum procedures are suspended



### **Situation at the border**

In the fight against the COVID-19 disease, all EU countries put in place some border or travel restrictions. NGOs had to suspend their search & rescue operations at sea to comply with emergency legislation. Italy, Malta and Cyprus closed their ports for most boats. There were also media reports of Cypriot authorities pushing back a boat with 175 Syrians, including 69

children.

The duty of search and rescue and to allow disembarkation in a place of safety are imperatives of international law.

### **Asylum procedure and residence permits**

Travel bans and other emergency measures led to a 43 % decline in asylum applications in March 2020. Due to the pandemic, many countries suspended asylum procedures. In Sweden, asylum application facilities remained open with measures taken to ensure health and safety. Denmark reintroduced the resettlement of refugees.

Several countries (Croatia, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, North Macedonia and Poland) allowed certain third-country nationals whose residence permit expired to remain legally in the country until the end of the pandemic.

### **Situation in reception centres**

Many organisations raised alarm about the deplorable conditions in reception centres, for example in Cyprus, Greece, Italy or Malta and in the informal camps in France, stressing that they make preventing the infection impossible. Lack of information on the COVID-19 measures in different languages has been a problem across the EU as well.

For countries receiving high numbers of arrivals, relocation of refugees can be an important measure of European solidarity.

### **Child protection**

Many children continued living in precarious and overcrowded conditions, making it difficult to properly implement COVID-19 measures.

### **Detention and return**

Inadequate living conditions and overcrowding in detention and return centres raised serious concerns. In Italy, detainees started a hunger strike to protest against the risk of the virus spreading in the centre. In Belgium, some centres started releasing detainees, simply leaving them with no assistance and nowhere to go.

In addition, numerous countries suspended Dublin transfers.

### **Legal developments**

The Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) rules that Poland, Hungary and Czechia are breaking EU law by refusing to comply with the temporary relocation mechanism which aims to distribute refugees across the EU countries based on a quota system.

### **Background:**

This latest migration quarterly bulletin covers the period between 1 January

and 31 March 2020. Moreover, the first section of the report covers developments relating to the COVID-19 outbreak up to 30 April 2020.

FRA has been regularly collecting data on migration since September 2015.

Access [previous migration quarterly reports >>](#)

### **Evaluation of Quarterly Bulletin's on migration 2020**

To help us improve our work, we are very keen to hear your feedback about our migration reports. We would be grateful if you could complete a short [survey](#). It should not take more than 5 minutes to answer the 10 questions. Participation is anonymous and voluntary; your views are very important to us.

We would appreciate your response by 19 June 2020.