State aid: Commission approves reductions in renewable electricity and cogeneration surcharges for energy-intensive companies in Greece

Greece provides support to renewable electricity and high-efficient cogeneration of electricity and heat. This support is financed through a surcharge imposed on final electricity consumers based on their electricity consumption, known as the "ETMEAR levy".

EU State aid rules, in particular the 2014 Guidelines on State aid for environmental protection and energy, authorise reductions – up to a certain level – in contributions levied on energy-intensive companies exposed to international trade and used to fund renewable energy support schemes. These provisions enable Member States to support renewable energies while safeguarding the international competitiveness of their energy-intensive companies.

The Commission found that the reductions of the ETMEAR levy will only be granted to energy-intensive companies exposed to international trade.

Furthermore, Greece submitted an adjustment plan to align the level of reductions for all eligible companies and to phase out after a transitory period the reductions for non-eligible companies that were benefitting from an ETMEAR levy reduction until now.

Therefore, the Commission found that the Greek measure and the adjustment plan are in line with EU State aid rules. The measure will promote EU energy and climate goalsand ensure the global competitiveness of energy-intensive industries,without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market.

Background

The Commission approved the Greek renewable and cogeneration support scheme on 16 November 2016 (SA.44666).

The Commission's 2014 Guidelines on State Aid for Environmental Protection and Energy allow Member States to grant state aid for electricity from renewable energy sources and cogeneration, subject to certain conditions. These rules are aimed at meeting the EU's ambitious energy and climate targets at the least possible cost for taxpayers and without undue distortions of competition in the Single Market.

The 2014 guidelines also apply to non-notified reductions granted before the 1 July 2014. In order to ensure a smooth transition for the companies concerned, Member States are required to submit an adjustment plan to progressively bring non-notified reductions in line with the criteria of the 2014 guidelines.

More information on today's decision will be available, once potential confidentiality issues have been resolved, in the State aid register on the Commission's competition website under the case number SA.52413. The State Aid Weekly e-News lists new publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the EU Official Journal.