Portugal: The EIB and IFD provide €200 million in financing to upgrade elderly care infrastructure

©Unsplash

- **The investment programme comprises approximately 150 projects throughout Portugal, including projects for people with disabilities**
- **It will improve the availability of long-term care services through the construction, refurbishment and upgrade of facilities**
- **Major third-sector care-provider associations are involved in the project**

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Instituição Financeira de Desenvolvimento (IFD) have joined forces to finance a €400 million investment programme aimed at upgrading infrastructure for long-term and elderly care across Portugal, involving approximately 150 projects. The funds will be channelled to third-sector entities already providing services for the elderly in Portugal, in particular in the fields of health, accommodation and social support.

The EU bank will provide the IFD with a €200 million loan to be on-lent to financial institutions in Portugal, which will allocate funds to entities promoting the construction, refurbishment and upgrade of the infrastructure. The financial intermediaries will be selected through a call to tender process carried out by the IFD and will be required to match the amount lent by the EIB, thus making a total of up to €400 million available for the investment programme. This is the third operation conducted jointly by the EIB and the IFD.

This project will improve the availability of care services for the elderly and people with disabilities throughout Portugal with a direct positive impact not only on the quality of life of those requiring care, but also their support network, such as family members and the medical community.

Portugal has one of Europe's highest percentages of unhealthy seniors over the age of 65 and one of the highest ageing indices, with 153.2% reached in 2017. This operation will allow third-sector entities, such as the Misericórdias and Instituições Particulares de Solidariedade Social (IPSS), to develop a key investment programme in coordination with stakeholders operating in the sector and in Portugal as a whole. The goal is to increase existing availability since the current facilities are outdated and in many cases unable to cater for present needs. As a result, the Portuguese government is forced to provide continuing care in a hospital setting, thereby placing the national health service under much greater strain, or families are obliged to become or hire informal caregivers without the requisite training.

The agreement will focus primarily on small and medium investment projects, with a cost of less than €50 million each, with the final beneficiaries being entities in the social sector that already provide long-term and elderly care services. These beneficiaries will be selected in consultation with local authorities and key stakeholders based on the services required, with the IFD setting up a two-stage validation system to ensure that the proposed projects are eligible.

EIB Vice-President Ricardo Mourinho Félix, responsible for the Bank's operations in Portugal, said: *"I am very pleased that my first official announcement as EIB Vice-President responsible for the bank's operations in Portugal is this partnership with the IFD, which aims at improving care infrastructure for the most fragile Portuguese citizens such as elderly population and disabled citizens. This project will improve the well-being and the quality of life of people requiring care, along with their families and caregivers. The EIB is ready to support all the efforts to address European citizens' most urgent needs."*

IFD CEO Henrique Cruz added: *"This initiative is the latest outcome of the close relationship between the IFD and the EIB Group. It will be developed in partnership with third-sector entities and play a decisive role in compensating for the market failure resulting from the very long maturity of these projects and their strong dependence on public investment and support. This market failure is particularly acute in times of COVID with the need to expand capacity and improve the quality of elderly care services in Portugal. The IFD has received strong signs of interest from financial intermediaries in allocating these funds."*

Article – Coming up: budget 2021, Covid-19 measures, Gender Equality Week

Covid-19, rule of law and recovery

On Tuesday, the civil liberties committee will assess the impact emergency measures to tackle Covid-19 have had on fundamental rights and the rule of law.

The following day, Parliament's budgets and economic affairs committees will vote to strengthen the InvestEU programme. This fund for 2021-2027 aims to ensure private investment for medium- and long-term priorities such as the digital transition and the Green Deal but needs to be reinforced to cope with the economic impact of Covid-19.

EU budget

The budgets committee will vote on Wednesday on Parliament's priorities for the 2021 budget. Parliament has already said it wants more funding for young people, researchers, health workers, entrepreneurs, transport infrastructure and security.

Right to repair

In an effort to promote a culture of reuse, Parliament's consumer protection committee is expected to call on Monday for a "right to repair" for consumers. MEPs want to facilitate systematic and affordable repairs, encourage repair over replacement, and create a more sustainable single market for consumers and businesses.

ESMA sets out final position on Share Trading Obligation

The statement outlines that the trading of shares with a European Economic Area (EEA) ISIN on a UK trading venue in UK pound sterling (GBP) by EU investment firms will not be subject to the EU STO. This currency approach supplements the EEA-ISIN approach outlined in a previous ESMA statement of May 2019.

This revised guidance aims at addressing the specific situation of the small number of EU issuers whose shares are mainly traded on UK trading venues in GPB. ESMA, based on EU-wide data, regards that such trading by EU investments firms occurs on a non-systematic, ad-hoc, irregular and infrequest basis. Therefore, those trades will not be subject to the EU STO, under Artcile 23 of MiFIR.

ESMA has done the maximum possible in close cooperation with the European Commission to minimise disruption and to avoid overlapping STO obligations and their potentially adverse effects for market participants. The approach put forward by ESMA will effectively avoid such overlaps if the UK adopts an approach that does not include EEA ISINs under the UK STO. ESMA however notes that the scope of the UK STO after the end of the transition period remains unclear at this stage.

In the absence of an equivalence decision in respect of the UK, the potential adverse effects of the application of the STO after the end of the transition period are expected to be the same as in the no-deal Brexit scenario considered in the previous ESMA statement.

The application of the STO to shares with a different ISIN should continue to be determined taking into account the previous ESMA guidance published on 13 November 2017.

Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on the announcement of a Ceasefire Agreement in Libya

The European Union and its Member States warmly welcome the signature of a Ceasefire Agreement by the Libyan representatives of the 5+5 Joint Military Commission (JMC) in Geneva on 23 October 2020 and commend UN Acting Special Representative Stephanie Williams for her successful efforts and determination.

Taking immediate effect, this complete, permanent and countrywide Ceasefire Agreement is a crucial step and the result of months of intense regional and international efforts, initiated within the framework of the UN-led Berlin process. The agreement also includes other important measures, in particular the resumption of transport connections between the different regions of Libya and other confidence building measures, such as a comprehensive process of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR), which are critical for the return of security and stability in Libya, notably the withdrawal within 90 days of all foreign fighters and mercenaries.

The European Union and its Member States now encourage the Libyan parties to fully and immediately implement the Ceasefire Agreement. The European Union and its Member States call on all international and regional actors to support the Libyan efforts unequivocally, refrain from foreign interference in the Libyan conflict and stop the violations of the UN arms embargo in full respect of the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. All foreign fighters and mercenaries must withdraw immediately. All foreign intervention is unacceptable. On its side, the European Union stands ready to support the implementation of the Ceasefire Agreement with concrete actions, in accordance with the UN Security Council decisions.

These positive security developments on the ground will pave the way for the relaunch of an inclusive political process in Libya. The European Union and its Member States look forward to a successful Political Dialogue Forum later this month and will continue to support UNSMIL in order to bring about a peaceful solution to the longstanding Libyan conflict in the interest of the Libyan population. In this regard, the EU recalls its instrument of sanctions against possible spoilers.

Article – Plenary highlights: Sakharov laureate, EU farm policy, digital services, Brexit

On Thursday, European Parliament President David Sassoli announced that the 2020 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought will be awarded to the Belarusian democratic opposition. The prize comes at a time of political crisis in Belarus after disputed presidential elections on 9 August led to an uprising, followed by a brutal crackdown on demonstrators by the regime.

On Wednesday, Parliament said the EU must comprehensively review its relations with Belarus. MEPs called for sanctions and new, free and fair elections.

On Friday, MEPs adopted their position on EU farm policy reform post-2022, calling for it to be more flexible, sustainable, and crisis-resilient, so that farmers can continue to deliver food security across the EU.

Members spelled out their priorities for regulations on digital services, including online platforms and marketplaces, and called for a binding mechanism to tackle illegal content online in three reports adopted on Tuesday. The recommendations will feed into the Commission’s proposal for a Digital Services Act, expected by the end of the year.

Parliament also paved the way for future artificial intelligence (AI) legislation on Tuesday, with a further three reports outlining how the EU can best regulate AI. The reports focus on ethics, responsibility and intellectual property rights.

In a debate on the outcome of last week's EU summit, MEPs stressed the importance of reaching an agreement on future EU-UK relations that does not compromise EU interests and values.

Parliament wants new rules to halt and reverse EU-driven global deforestation. In a vote on Thursday, MEPs called for better measures to fight illegal logging and more checks to stop unsustainably produced wood and products that contribute to forest loss from entering the EU market.

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted inequalities in access to education in the EU. On Thursday, MEPs called for the digital gap in education to be closed. They urged the Commission to invest in connectivity and equipment, criticised proposed Council cuts to programmes supporting education and training and reiterated their calls to triple the budget for Erasmus+.

At the opening of the plenary session on Monday, President Sassoli led a minute of silence to pay tribute to Samuel Paty, a history and geography teacher murdered by an Islamist terrorist in France. He paid tribute to all victims of terrorism and those who work to uphold freedom of expression.