

Spain: Financing for SMEs: EIB and Banco Sabadell provide credit lines totalling EUR 700m

- EUR 100m of this financing will be used for investment in business innovation and digitisation
- Agricultural SMEs will also be able to benefit from the EIB-Sabadell credit lines to finance investments to improve their environmental impact

The European Investment Bank (EIB) and Banco Sabadell are joining forces to provide Spanish SMEs with the resources they need to finance their investments. The two institutions have signed several partnership agreements to enable small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to access credit on the EIB's favourable conditions in terms of both interest rates and maturities. The total volume of these new EIB-Banco Sabadell credit lines stands at EUR 700m.

Support for the RDI of Spanish SMEs

The EIB will provide Banco Sabadell with EUR 235m, to which it will add a further EUR 235m of its own resources. These funds will help finance the investments of SMEs to guarantee their competitiveness and contribute to wealth and job creation. Of the EUR 470m jointly provided by the EIB and Banco Sabadell, EUR 100m will go towards promoting investment in business innovation and digitisation, granting financing to enable Spanish SMEs to implement their research, development and innovation (RDI) strategies.

Financing for agricultural sector SMEs

The EIB and Banco Sabadell have also signed an agreement to support the investments of agricultural, agri-food, fisheries and livestock sector SMEs. A EUR 115m EU bank loan will be accompanied by a further EUR 115m from Banco Sabadell, and is part of the EIB programme loan for this kind of company.

One of the aims of this EIB-Sabadell credit line for agricultural sector SMEs is to help these companies to modernise by implementing new production processes that improve their environmental impact. To this end, some of these funds will be earmarked for SMEs whose investments contribute to climate action.

These new agreements are another step forward for the close relationship between the EIB and Banco Sabadell that began in 2009 with the goal of providing financing to Spanish SMEs on favourable terms. The last agreement between the two institutions was signed in March 2018 and has made it possible to grant around EUR 900m to finance 1 700 projects implemented by SMEs.

Joint statement on behalf of President Juncker and Prime Minister May

President Juncker and Prime Minister May met today to take stock of their efforts to deliver the UK's orderly withdrawal from the EU, in line with the process launched by them on 7 February.

Their discussions covered:

- which guarantees could be given with regard to the backstop that underlines once again its temporary nature and give the appropriate legal assurance to both sides. Both reconfirmed their commitment to avoiding a hard border on the island of Ireland and to respect the integrity of the EU's internal market and of the United Kingdom. The Prime Minister acknowledged the EU's position and notably the letter sent by President Tusk and President Juncker on 14 January. She welcomed the continued engagement of Task Force 50 with her team;
- the role alternative arrangements could play in replacing the backstop in future, where they tasked the Commission's Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier and Secretary of State Stephen Barclay with considering the process the European Commission and the UK will follow; and
- whether additions or changes to the Political Declaration can be made that are consistent with the EU and UK Government positions and increase confidence in the focus and ambition of both sides in delivering the future partnership envisaged as soon as possible. The Commission's Chief Negotiator and the Secretary of State will follow up.

The two leaders agreed that talks had been constructive, and they urged their respective teams to continue to explore the options in a positive spirit. They will review progress again in the coming days, seized of the tight timescale and the historic significance of setting the EU and the UK on a path to a deep and unique future partnership.

President Juncker and Prime Minister May agreed to talk again before the end of the month.

The EESC reinforces its rules of procedure and adopts a new code of

conduct for its members



(A version in English will be available soon.)

Le Comité économique et social européen (CESE) se dote d'instruments plus efficaces pour garantir le respect rigoureux de standards éthiques, de non-discrimination, d'égalité des chances et de respect de la dignité sur le lieu de travail avec des sanctions pour toutes formes de harcèlement.

Lors de sa session plénière du 20 février 2019, le CESE a adopté (avec 239 votes pour, 30 contre et 13 abstentions) la proposition de la Commission du règlement intérieur (rapporteur général : **Georges Dassis**), qui modifie son règlement intérieur de 2010 et qui inclut en annexe une nouvelle version du code de conduite de ses membres. Les modifications apportées au règlement intérieur et au code de conduite ont tenu compte aussi des indications exprimées par le Parlement européen dans le cadre de la dernière procédure de décharge, ainsi que de son règlement intérieur récemment approuvé, plus particulièrement en relation avec la prévention et la lutte contre toute forme de harcèlement.

En affirmant le principe du respect de la dignité sur le lieu de travail, à **l'initiative du président du CESE, Luca Jahier, et avec le plein appui des groupes et de l'administration**, le Comité s'est doté d'un dispositif de contrôle interne vis-à-vis des différentes formes de harcèlement concernant

les membres et prévoyant aussi des sanctions. Un Comité consultatif sera chargé de surveiller la mise en application des principes de ce code de conduite.

Le code de conduite, auquel les membres devront souscrire à leur entrée en fonction, *«régit leur conduite vis-à-vis les uns des autres ainsi que vis-à-vis de toute autre personne travaillant au Comité»*. Dans son article 4 il est notamment précisé que *«dans l'exercice de leurs fonctions, les membres s'engagent, dans la préservation de toute leur liberté d'expression, à honorer leur mission dans la dignité sur le lieu du travail. Ils s'abstiennent de toute forme de harcèlement et condamnent cette pratique»*.

L'article 8 prévoit les procédures à suivre en cas de violation du code de conduite: entre autres, et *«sans préjudice du respect de la présomption d'innocence et de la protection des victimes, lorsqu'il y a lieu de penser qu'un membre peut avoir enfreint le présent code de conduite, le président informe les membres concernés par écrit et saisit le Comité consultatif»*.

En termes de sanctions, en fonction du degré de gravité du comportement du membre, il peut être prononcé *«une suspension temporaire de toute fonction de rapporteur, président et membre de groupe d'étude, et la suspension temporaire de toute participation aux missions et aux réunions extraordinaires»*.

Dans son nouveau règlement intérieur le Comité souligne notamment que *«s'il n'a pas signé la déclaration afférente audit code de conduite, un membre du Comité ne peut être élu titulaire d'une fonction au sein d'un des organes du Comité, être nommé rapporteur ou participer à une mission officielle»* (1.3 bis). Le Comité insiste également sur le *«respect des principes d'égalité de genre et de non-discrimination [...]»* et sur la nécessité que *«dans tous les organes du Comité, la proportion des femmes soit supérieure à leur proportion dans l'Assemblée»* (1.4).

Le texte complet du règlement intérieur et du code de conduite sera bientôt disponible sur le [site web du CESE](#).

[Foundation of a new era for Eurofound](#)



On 26 May 1975 the Council passed Regulation (EEC) No 1365/75 on the creation of a new Agency that would aim to contribute to the planning and establishment of better living and working conditions, through the dissemination of knowledge pivotal to working life in Europe. Now, almost 44 years later, the Founding Regulation of Eurofound gets a 21st Century update that reflects the organisation's expertise, and continued modernisation and adaptation to a rapidly changing Europe.

The new Founding Regulation puts emphasis on the role of Eurofound in shaping and implementing policies and promoting dialogue between management and labour. It envisages that Eurofound will play a pivotal role in enhancing and disseminating knowledge, provide evidence and services for policy making, and facilitate knowledge-sharing among and between the EU and national actors.

The new Regulation seeks to adapt the Agency's mandate to reflect the complex and rapidly changing working environment of modern Europe. It gives greater definition to Eurofound's role; extends Eurofound's services to the EU institutions, social partners and national stakeholders; and enshrines cooperation between different actors within the Agency's tripartite institutions. It also updates the Agency's governance procedure in a way that maximises transparency and accountability; this includes a new direct role for the European Parliament.

Speaking about the coming into force of the new Founding Regulation, Eurofound Executive Director Juan Menéndez-Valdés said, "The adoption of Eurofound's new Founding Regulation is very significant: it enshrines a spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding that is fundamental for modern Europe. The Regulation also recognises the pivotal work of the Agency, its utility for the EU, national governments, and social partners, and its continued modernisation and adaptation to ongoing change."

The full text of the new Founding Regulation is available via the [Official Journal of the European Union](#).

Read more:

[**New EASO Practical Guide on the best interests of the child in asylum procedures**](#)

EASO has published a new [Practical Guide on the best interests of the child in asylum procedures](#).

Why was this practical guide created?

The aim of this practical guide is to help to identify and highlight the key milestones for the implementation of the best interests of the child. This is done in order to support EU+ states in applying the best interests principle and enhancing the guarantees within asylum procedures for children. EU+ states should establish child-friendly asylum processes that ensure the protection of the child throughout the procedure in line with EU and international law.

How was this practical guide developed?

This practical guide has been developed by EASO with the support of a group of experts from Belgium, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway and Romania, as well as the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef).

What is in the practical guide?

This new practical guide aims to provide guidance and support to the competent national authorities on the required guarantees and safeguards which will ensure that the child's best interests are given primary consideration when making decisions affecting the child in the asylum procedures. It is divided into five sections including an overview of the terminology, the background and elements of the best interests of the child, the relevant guarantees, guidance on how to assess the best interests in practice and vulnerability and risk indicators.

At the end, the practical guide presents a comprehensive checklist designed to ensure that all key steps are completed by the responsible authorities and appropriately taken into account when assessing the child's best interests. The guide is complemented with a set of annexes; a compilation of policy and guidance documents relevant to the topic and an overview of the legal framework including international, European and EU legal instruments.

How to use this guide?

The practical guide provides generic guidance and can be used as a benchmark or source of inspiration to update and/or improve specific standard operating procedures developed for children at national level.

The guide proposes a best interests of the child checklist which will support and ensure the ongoing information gathering and assessment process. It will enable the assessor to verify if the relevant information and safeguards have been provided with due consideration of data protection/security.

The practical guide can be used in conjunction with relevant EU, international and national legislation, respecting a child-rights approach.

The new Practical Guide is available in English language on the EASO website at <https://www.easo.europa.eu/practical-tools>. The document is currently being translated into other languages, which will be made available on the organisation's website in the coming months.

For more information, please contact vulnerablegroups@easo.europa.eu.

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