Highlights

EU competitiveness: “challenges to the EU internal market in a globalised world and expanding the knowledge society as the key to success”

At the Informal Competitiveness Council in Würzburg on 26-27 April, EU Ministers discussed, on the one hand, central areas of research policy preparing the ground for Europe's future competitiveness and, on the other hand, the challenges for EU competitiveness in a globalised world focusing on the internal market’s achievements and its future strategy.

“The task of this conference is to set clear markers to make Europe an attractive location for research”, German Minister for Education and Research Annette Schavan said. Innovation, mobility and closer cooperation between researchers and business should be encouraged to foster the attractiveness of the European Research Area.

The Research ministers’ discussions focused on the establishment of a European Institute of Technology (EIT) as an innovation network, the further development of the European Research Area and a European Charter for the management of intellectual property.

Ministers in charge of the internal market held discussions on the strategic and political reorientation of the EU's internal market with a view to safeguarding Europe's attractiveness for investments. In this context, they exchanged their views with Commissioner Kroes on how the European state aid regimes can cope with the challenges of global competition. (source: the Council of the EU – website)

More information:
- Presidency Press Release on research
- Presidency Press Release on competitiveness
- Presidency’s summary of the Informal Competitiveness Council on research

State aid and globalisation – the competition perspective

Neelie Kroes, European Commissioner for Competition Policy
Informal Competitiveness Council
Würzburg, 25th April 2007
To read the full speech, click here

I. Draft legislation and public consultations

Draft general block exemption regulation

Deadline for comments: 3 June 2007
Interested parties may submit their comments on the draft GBER to the following address:
European Commission
Directorate-General for Competition
II. New legislation

- none –

III. Decisions to open formal investigation

1. Decisions taken by the Commission

- none -

2. Decisions pending OJ publication

Click here to see the full list

3. Decisions published in the OJ from 03.04.2007 to 03.05.2007 – Formal comments period running

* Where the last day of the public comments period falls on a public holiday in a Member State, the deadline for comments of parties residing in that Member State ends on the following working day.

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IV. Final Commission decisions

1. Decisions taken by the Commission

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Spain  Aides aux activités promues en faveur du développement de programmes volontaires de divulgation de la qualité alimentaire (Castilla-León)  N 20/2007  27.04.2007

DG Transport and Energy cases

Poland  Aides à l'industrie houillère 2004-2006  N 84/2007  27.04.2007

1.2. Decisions to close formal investigation

- none -

2. Public versions of decisions made available

2.1. No objection decisions

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| Poland | DELITISSUE Sp. z o.o. | NN 4/2007 | Regional development aid | 01.03.2007 |
| Spain | Financing of workforce reduction measures for RTVE | NN 8/2007 | Services of general economic interest | 07.03.2007 |

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2.2. Decisions to close formal investigation

- none -

3. Decisions published in the OJ

3.1. No objection decisions
* Decisions not to raise objections are frequently grouped together in one single document for publication in the Official Journal. Since the link can only be made to the top of the first page of the document, you may have to scroll down in the document to find a particular case.

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Germany  
Investment aid for Rolandwerft  
positive decision  

Poland  
Restructuring aid to Huta Stalowa Wola  
positive decision  

Slovakia  
Measures in favour of Frunova Kosice  
negative decision with recovery  

Sweden  
Digital Terrestrial Television in Sweden  
positive decision  

DG Agriculture cases

France  
Taxes parafiscales CIVDN  
negative decision without recovery  

V. Other types of decisions

- none -

VI. Block exemptions

Information sheets published in the OJ

* Block exemption information sheets are frequently grouped together in one single document for publication in the Official Journal. Since the link can only be made to the top of the first page of the document, you may have to scroll down in the document to find a particular case.

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VII. European Court of Justice

* In order to consult the available languages of documents uploaded in the Curia website, please click on the earth symbol on the left side toolbar.

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2. Court of Justice

- none -

VIII. European Economic Area

Based on the Agreement on the European Economic Area (EEA), the EFTA States participating in the EEA have entrusted the EFTA Surveillance Authority and the EFTA Court with similar decision making powers to that of the Commission and the European Court of Justice, respectively, in the field of state aid for the EFTA States.

1. Decisions of the EFTA Surveillance Authority

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Norway  
Decision to close the formal investigation procedure regarding the Norwegian VAT Compensation Act by means of a negative decision  
Press release  
Decision to open formal investigation – formal comments period running
* Where the last day of the public comments period falls on a public holiday in a Member State, the deadline for comments of parties residing in that Member State ends on the following working day.

Iceland  
Decision on the taking over by the Icelandic State of pension-related liabilities of Sementsverksmiðjan  
OJ C 77 of 05.04.2007, p. 21 bg es cs da de et el en fr it lv lt hu nl pl pt ro sk sl fi sv  
Press release  
Deadline for comments*: 07.05.2007

Norway  
Aid granted in the airline pilot education sector in Troms County  
OJ C 77 of 05.04.2007, p. 35 bg es cs da de et el en fr it lv lt hu nl pl pt ro sk sl fi sv  
Press release  
Deadline for comments*: 07.05.2007

2. EFTA Court

- none -

3. State Aid New Legislation

63rd Amendment of the State Aid Guidelines - EFTA Surveillance Authority decision updating and incorporating a new chapter on the rules applicable to unlawful aid  
Decision 154/07/COL of 03.05.2007  
Press release  
EFTA Surveillance Authority's State Aid Guidelines

4. Other EEA points of interest

- none -

IX. Additional points of interest

Events

5th Expert’s Forum on new developments in European State aid law
Brussels, 21-22 May 2007
For further information, click here

Seminar on Transport: State Aid and Liberalisation Issues
The seminar aims to equip participants with a comprehensive understanding of the concept of state aid in the transport sector. Its aim is to familiarise public officials with the Commission’s approach to state aid cases in this sector and with the experiences in other Member States. It focuses on recent issues and goes into greater depth.
Maastricht, 24–25 May 2007
For further information, click here

Advanced State Aid Seminar and Maastricht Forum on State Aid
The aim of the Advanced Seminar is to discuss the main recent developments and future challenges in state aid policy in the European Union. The purpose of the Maastricht Forum on State Aid is to provide an opportunity to participants to discuss issues of common concern and identify potential solutions. The deliberations of the Forum will be published in proceedings that will be widely distributed.
Maastricht, 28-29 June 2007
For further information, click here

Studies and reports

March 2007: Euro area unemployment down to 7.2%
Euro area (EA13) seasonally-adjusted unemployment stood at 7.2% in March 2007, compared with 7.3% in February. It was 8.2% in March 2006. The EU27 unemployment rate was 7.3% in March 2007, the same as February. It was 8.2% in March 2006.
Read more

April 2007: Business Climate Indicator for the euro area continues to rise in April
After levelling off in March, the Business Climate Indicator (BCI) for the euro area picked up again slightly in April, to reach an all-time high. This augurs well for continued strong industrial production growth in the first two quarters of 2007, in line with the pick-up recorded in February.
Read more

April 2007: Economic sentiment stabilises at a high level in both the EU and the euro area
The Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) remained broadly stable at a high level in both the EU and the euro area in April. The indicator edged down by 0.2 of a point in the EU and by 0.1 of a point in the euro area, to 113.6 and 111.0 respectively.
Read more

Flash estimate - April 2007: Euro area inflation estimated at 1.8%
Euro area annual inflation is expected to be 1.8% in April 2007 according to a flash estimate issued by Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities. It was 1.9% in March.
Read more

Fourth quarter of 2006: EU25 current account deficit 4.8 bn euro
According to the latest revisions, the EU25 external current account recorded a deficit of 4.8 billion euro in the fourth quarter of 2006, compared with a deficit of 24.0 bn in the fourth quarter of 2005 and a deficit of 20.5 bn in the third quarter of 2006.
Read more

Miscellanea

Proposed Budget 2008: Growth and employment at the heart of EU spending
For the first time, spending on growth and employment policies will represent the highest share of the budget, ahead of agriculture and natural resources. This is the key message sent by the Commission in its budget proposals for 2008, adopted today. At EUR 129.2 billion in commitment appropriations, the budget increases by 2% compared to 2007. Payment appropriations are set at EUR 121.6 billion, a 5.3% increase.

Read more

Co-ordinating Cohesion Policy and Framework Programme Support for R&D
Danuta Hübner, European Commissioner responsible for Regional Policy
German Presidency (CREST) Conference
Brussels, 3rd May 2007
To read the full speech, click here

Next publication date: Friday 11.05.2007

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Other documents related to the cases, can be found under the link to the State aid Register: http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/register/

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