Highlights

Commission opens in-depth investigations in air transport sector in Belgium, France and Germany
Brussels, 21 March 2012 - The European Commission will investigate whether financial arrangements between public authorities and the airports of Charleroi (Belgium), Angoulême (France) and Dortmund (Germany), as well as rebates and marketing agreements concluded between these airports and some of the airlines using them, are in line with EU state aid rules. The opening of proceedings gives interested third parties an opportunity to submit comments on the measures under assessment; it does not prejudge the outcome.

Commission opens in-depth investigation into aid granted to Nürburgring racetrack in Germany
Brussels, 21 March 2012 - The European Commission has opened an in-depth investigation to assess whether a €524 million set of aid measures supporting the racetrack and leisure park at Nürburgring in Germany is in line with EU state aid rules. The Commission has doubts whether these measures promote services of general economic interest or alleviate a funding default caused by the financial and economic crisis. The opening of an in-depth investigation gives Germany and interested third parties an opportunity to comment on the measures under examination. It does not prejudge the outcome.

The European Commission opens an investigation into the reduction of, or exemption from, a Danish tax on the protection of drinking water
Brussels, 21 March 2012 - The European Commission has decided to open a formal procedure under EU rules to investigate state aid for the reduction of, or exemption from, the Danish tax on the protection of drinking water in the farming sector. The Commission doubts whether this measure is compatible with EU law. The opening of a formal investigation authorises the Commission to examine this measure in a more detailed manner and provides interested parties with the opportunity to submit comments. It does not prejudice the outcome of the procedure.

Commission opens in-depth investigation into financing of arenas in Copenhagen and Uppsala
Brussels, 21 March 2012 - The European Commission has opened two distinct investigations to examine whether public funding for the construction of multifunction arenas in Copenhagen (Denmark) and in Uppsala (Sweden) is in line with EU state aid rules. At this stage, the Commission has concerns that the public funding may procure an undue economic advantage to the new arenas which their competitors do not have, thereby distorting competition in the internal market.

In the issue:
- Draft legislation and public consultations >>
- Decisions to open formal investigation >>
- Final Commission decisions >>
- Block exemptions >>
- Court of Justice of the European Union >>
- European Economic Area >>
- Additional points of interest >>
The opening of in-depth investigations gives interested third parties an opportunity to comment on the measures under examination. It does not prejudge the outcome of the procedure.

**Vice President Almunia and UEFA President Platini confirm Financial Fair-Play rules in professional football are in line with EU state aid policy**

Brussels, 21 March 2012 - Vice President Joaquín Almunia and UEFA President Michel Platini today issued a joint statement on the interaction between the application to professional football of Financial Fair Play (FFP) rules by UEFA and the control of State aid in professional football by the Commission. Both disciplines seek to achieve a situation in which professional football clubs live within their own means. The joint statement provides a basis for further cooperation between the Commission and UEFA with a view to promoting fair competition between football clubs.

**Commission approves pension relief and restructuring aid in favour of the Royal Mail Group**

Brussels, 21 March 2012 - The European Commission has approved UK plans to relieve the Royal Mail Group (RMG) from excessive pension costs relating to its past monopoly position and to provide RMG with restructuring aid consisting of a debt reduction of £1089 million (around €1311 million). RMG's revised restructuring plan will ensure a sustainable future for the group in its twofold function of providing universal postal services and of granting access to its delivery network to other providers in the UK. Moreover, the plan negotiated with the Commission includes appropriate measures to minimise distortions of competition induced by the aid.

**Commission approves France’s plan to digitise its film heritage**

Brussels, 21 March 2012 – The European Commission has ruled that a French scheme to support the digitisation of historic cinematographic works is compatible with the EU rules on state aid, *inter alia* because it helps promote culture while limiting the distortions of competition. The scheme is aimed at making European film heritage available to the widest possible audience thanks to new technology.

**Seminar: Services of General Economic Interest and State Aid - The Application of the Rules and National Experiences**

EIPA

Maastricht, 23-24 April 2012

For further information, click here

### Draft legislation and public consultations

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All public consultations: [DG Competition](#), [DG Agriculture](#), [DG Maritime Affairs and Fisheries](#)
# Decisions to open formal investigation

## 1. Decisions taken by the Commission

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| Belgium     | Avantages consentis par la Région Wallonne et Brussels South Charleroi Airport à la compagnie aérienne Ryanair  
*Decision to extend proceedings*  
| Denmark     | Financing of a new Multiarena in Copenhagen  
Press release | SA.33728 | Sectoral development aid | 21.03.2012   |
| France      | Plainte Air France - Aéroport d'Angoulême  
Press release | SA.33963 | Regional development aid | 21.03.2012   |
| Germany     | Dortmund Airport – NEO  
Press release | SA.29404 | Sectoral development aid | 21.03.2012   |
| Germany     | Social housing Neubrandenburg – Real estate funds "Bavaria“  
Press release | SA.23129 |                | 21.03.2012   |
| Germany     | Nürburgring  
Press release | SA.31550 |                | 21.03.2012   |
| Sweden      | Uppsala arena  
Press release | SA.33618 | Sectoral development aid | 21.03.2012   |
| Denmark     | Tax exemption and reduction for water users  
Press release | SA.32874 |                | 21.03.2012   |
|            | **DG Agriculture cases**                                              |             |                                  |               |

## 2. Decisions pending OJ publication

Click [here](#) to see the full list

## 3. Decisions published in the OJ from 22.02.2012 to 23.03.2012 – 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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Netherlands

**Land sale Leidschendam NL**

OJ C 86 of 23.03.2012, p. 12

Deadline for comments*: 23.04.2012

**SA.24123**

25.01.2012

---

**DG Agriculture cases**

France

**L'accord interprofessionnel conclu dans le cadre de l'Association française pour la valorisation des produits et des secteurs professionnels de l'horticulture et du paysage**

OJ C 66 of 06.03.2012, p. 32

Press release

Deadline for comments*: 10.04.2012

**SA.23257** (ex NN 8/2010)

11.01.2012

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**Final Commission decisions**

1. **Decisions taken by the Commission**

1.1. **Decisions to close formal investigation**

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2. Public versions of decisions to close formal investigation*

* Since the OJ publication of no objection/no aid decisions follows very shortly their publication on the website, this section of the e-News focuses only on decisions to close formal investigations. For the latest texts of no objection/no aid decisions please look section 3 "Decisions published in the OJ".

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| Sweden           | Alleged sale of public property below market price by the Municipality of Vänersborg  
|                  | Negative decision with recovery  
|                  | Press release                                                | SA.28809    | Conditional decision  

3. Decisions published in the OJ

3.1. Decisions to close formal investigation

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| Greece           | Paiements de compensation versés par l'Organisme grec d'assurances (ELGA) pendant l'année 2008 et 2009  
|                  | Conditional decision  
|                  |                                                              | (ex NN 39/2010)                                      |               |                             |

3.2. 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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**Block exemptions**
Block exemption Information sheets published in the OJ and/or in the State Aid register between 15.03.2012 and 22.03.2012

Court of Justice of the European Union

* 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. General Court

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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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| Iceland | Icelandic Housing Financing Fund Íbúðalánsjóður (HFF)  
Decision 364/11/COL  
OJ L 82 of 22.03.2012, p. 16 bg es cs da de et el en fr it lv lt hu mt nl pl pt ro sk sl fi sv | 64864 | No aid | 23.11.2011 |

2. EFTA Court

- none -

3. State Aid New Legislation

EFTA Surveillance Authority Decision amending, for the 78th time, the procedural and substantive rules in the field of State aid by introducing a new chapter on best practices for the conduct of State aid procedures  
OJ L 82 of 22.03.2012, p. 7 bg es cs da de et el en fr it lv lt hu mt nl pl pt ro sk sl fi sv

4. Other EEA points of interest

- none -

Additional points of interest

Events

State Aid in the Transport Sector  
EIPA  
Maastricht, 31 May - 1 June 2012  
For further information, click here

Advanced State Aid Seminar and Maastricht Forum on State Aid
Studies and reports

- none -

Invitations to tender

Call for proposals: Training of national judges in EU Competition Law and judicial co-operation between national judges
On September 2007 the European Parliament and the Council adopted Decision No 1149/2007/EC establishing for the period 2007-2013 the Specific Grant Program Civil Justice as part of the General Program Fundamental Rights and Justice. One of the actions provided for by the Decision concerns training for national judges in European competition law, including state aid rules and private damages training. Thus, grants may be awarded to support measures taken by bodies which foster judicial cooperation and other measures aimed at promoting training in EU competition law for national judges and cooperation between them.
Deadline: 17 April 2012
Read more

COMP/2012/001 - Provision of consultancy services on technical, economic and legal matters in the context of ICT and media competition cases
In the context of competition investigations (antitrust, merger and state aid) and compliance enforcement in the information and communications technology (ICT) and media industries, the Commission is confronted with conflicting arguments that are sometimes highly technical. By the very nature of the industries concerned, such technical arguments/evidence can be crucial to the Commission's objective assessment of the facts in their correct economic and technological context.
Deadline: 24 April 2012
Read more

Miscellanea

EU uses Regional Development Fund to guarantee up to €1 billion worth of loans for Greek enterprises
EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Johannes Hahn has yesterday in Athens added another element to boost growth by launching a new Guarantee Fund for Small and Medium-Sized enterprises (SMEs) for Greece. This new facility, agreed in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) will help SMEs which have been worst hit by the crisis to access credit, by providing the banks in Greece with sufficient liquidity. This is another step to assist the country in optimising the use of EU Structural Funds: some €500 million from the
European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) will guarantee loans with an expected leverage of €1 billion through EIB loans to SMEs. Banks will act as intermediary bodies.

Midday Express, 22 March 2012

Next publication date: Friday 30.03.2012

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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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