



EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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Dear President,

The Commission would like to thank the Senato della Repubblica for its Opinion concerning the Proposal for a Regulation on the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) and amending Regulations (EU) No 1291/2013 and (EU) No 1316/2013 {COM(2015) 10 final}. EU legislators have since successfully concluded negotiations on the Regulation.

The Commission takes note of the Senato della Repubblica's view that the Investment Plan is not sufficiently large to have a macroeconomic impact. At the same time, the Commission would like to recall that the sum of at least 315 billion euros in additional investments targeted by the Investment Plan amounts to 2% of the EU GDP at current market prices. Hence, it will substantially complement – although admittedly not replace – the efforts of Member States to strengthen the EU economies.

The Commission takes into account the Senato della Repubblica's reflections on institutional reforms of the Economic and Monetary Union, an issue which is an integral part of its Work Programme and on which the Commission intends to present proposals in due time.

With respect to Member State contributions to the EFSI initiative, the Commission has clarified how it intends to make use of the existing flexibility under the Stability and Growth Pact through its Communication from 13 January 2015 {COM(2015) 12 final}. The Commission would like to emphasise that a growth-promoting composition of public expenditure while respecting the requirement of budgetary discipline is not only in the interest of every Member State but also of the Union as a whole.

The European Parliament, the Council and the Commission have jointly ensured that the legislative text establishing EFSI determines requirements that projects need to fulfil in order to be considered for support. In this context, the Commission is confident that these requirements, and especially the need to ensure additionality, are fully in line with the Senato della Repubblica's reflections. Furthermore, the consistency with Union policies

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and the link to Union policy priorities are key elements of the agreement reached between the institutions.

The Commission takes note of the Senato della Repubblica's concerns related to the pricing of support to national promotional banks but would like to stress that the EFSI will be a managed account within the European Investment Bank (EIB) and will not have legal personality. By way of construction of the legislative act the EU guarantee can thus only be extended to the EIB. The determination of the pricing and the procedures and requirements of EIB funding are subject to the exclusive competence of the EIB in accordance with Article 9 of its statute.

The Commission fully agrees with the Senato della Repubblica's pledge for fast and simple project appraisal and approval in the context of the EFSI initiative and welcomes its support for the European Investment Project Portal and the third pillar of the Investment Plan. With regard to the latter, it stresses the comprehensive scope of the exercise including reforms at both the Union and the Member State level. The Commission invites the Senato della Repubblica to actively contribute to the promotion and implementation of the Commission's proposals for appropriate reform measures issued in the context of the European Semester.

The Commission takes note of the Senato della Repubblica's wish to earmark part of the support provided by the EFSI initiative to companies with up to 250 employees. In this context, the Commission would like to stress that the EFSI's capacity to support investments should not be reduced by overly restrictive eligibility criteria. These considerations notwithstanding, the Regulation¹ provides for a clear focus on SMEs and foresees an explicit possibility to increase it further, should the demand for measurers directed towards SMEs prove to be high.

The Commission hopes that these clarifications address the issues raised by the Senato della Repubblica and looks forward to continuing our political dialogue in the future.

Yours faithfully,

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Member of the Commission*

¹ Regulation (EU) 2015/1017 of 25 June 2015 on the European Fund for Strategic Investments, the European Investment Advisory Hub and the European Investment Project Portal and amending Regulations (EU) No 1291/2013 and (EU) No 1316/2013 — the European Fund for Strategic Investments, Official Journal of the European Union, L 169, 1.7.2015.