NEWS FROM THE COMMISSION MIDDAY BRIEFING

TODAYS

News

Tuesday, 29 July, 2014

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European Union supports key reforms in the Republic of Moldova

The European Commission has announced a new annual support package for the Republic of Moldova to help public institutions, citizens and the business community to seize the benefits and opportunities of the Association Agreement and the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area with the EU (AA/DCFTA).

The fresh EU funding for the Republic of Moldova is designed to support the modernisation of key public institutions implementing the AA/DCFTA, improvement of public finance policy and management, competitiveness of rural business and trade opportunities with the EU and protection of minorities and vulnerable groups.

The programme will contribute to further political association and economic integration with the EU under the Eastern Partnership initiative. It is a first package of bilateral assistance granted to the Republic of Moldova under the Single Support Framework, which sets out strategic objectives and priorities for future EU-Moldova cooperation in 2014-2017.

State aid: Commission approves restructuring aid for LOT Polish Airlines

The European Commission has concluded that restructuring aid of PLN 804 million (around €200 million), which Poland plans to grant to its national flag carrier LOT, is in line with EU state aid rules. The Commission found, in particular, that LOT's restructuring plan will allow the company to become viable in the long-term without unduly distorting competition in the Single Market. Commission Vice President in charge of competition policy Joaquín Almunia said: "LOT has prepared a credible restructuring plan that should make it a viable company in the near future. At the same time, it gives up some profitable routes and slots at several congested airports, which creates opportunities for its competitors and reduces the competition distortions brought about by the aid."

State aid: Commission approves prolongation of Polish bank guarantee scheme

The European Commission has authorised under EU state aid rules a prolongation of the Polish bank guarantee scheme until 31 December 2014. The scheme covers guarantees and other liquidity support measures in favour of different types of solvent credit institutions in Poland. It was initially approved in September 2009 (see IP/09/1360). The pricing conditions of the scheme have been brought in line with the requirements of the Commission's subsequent 2011 Communication on state aid to banks during the crisis. Other conditions of the original scheme remain unchanged. The Commission found the prolongation of the scheme, last prolonged in February 2014 to be in line with its guidance on state aid to banks during the crisis because it is well targeted, proportionate and limited in time and scope. During the application of the extraordinary crisis rules for state aid to banks, the Commission is authorising guarantee schemes on banks' liabilities for periods of six months in order to be able to monitor developments and adjust conditions accordingly. More information will be available on the Commission's competition website, in the public case register, under the case number SA.39015 .

State aid: Commission approves transfer of last tranches under Irish asset relief scheme NAMA

The European Commission has authorised, under EU state aid rules, the transfer of the last tranches of risky financial assets resulting from the Irish real estate bubble (from tranches 3 to 9) to the Irish National Asset Management Agency (NAMA). The Commission found this transfer to be in line with the approved scheme (see IP/10/198) and with its guidance on the treatment of impaired assets (see IP/09/322). In particular, the transfer satisfies predefined transparency and disclosure requirements, the assets fulfil the criteria for participation in the scheme and their valuation complies with the requirements of the Commission's guidance and results in adequate burden sharing. More information will be available on the Commission's competition website under the case number SA.38562 .

OTHER NEWS

The household saving rate in the euro area was 13.0% in the first quarter of 2014, stable compared with the fourth quarter of 2013. In the EU28, the household saving rate was 10.6%, also stable compared with the previous quarter. These data come from a detailed set of seasonally adjusted quarterly European sector accounts released by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union and the European Central Bank (ECB).

In the first quarter of 2014, the business investment rate was 19.3% in the euro area, compared with 19.5% in the fourth quarter of 2013. This fall was the result of investment decreasing (-0.8%) and gross value added increasing (+0.2%). Total stocks (materials, supplies and finished goods) fell for the second quarter in a row. In the EU28 the investment rate was 19.5% in the first quarter of 2014, compared with 19.4% in the previous quarter. These data come from a detailed set of seasonally adjusted quarterly European sector accounts released by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union and the European Central Bank (ECB).

With more and more consumers choosing to spend their holidays outside their country of residence, they should feel safe in any tourism accommodation venue across the EU. Following calls from the European Parliament and the industry, the European Commission is asking for tourists' and businesses' views to collect information and evidence on consumers' experiences with tourism accommodation. The consultation will help evaluate certain fundamental aspects of tourism accommodation safety. For example, are existing EU rules sufficient and are they adequately implemented across the Member States? Are modern safety risks taken into account when providing cross-border tourism accommodation services? Are these risks linked to gaps in current legislation? What is the impact of existing requirements on small and medium-sized enterprises and vulnerable consumers? Interested parties have until 30 November 2014 to share their opinion on the topic. More information and the public consultation itself are available here .

If the sun is getting too much, you've finished that book and crosswords have lost their magic — then why not make August 2014 the summer you learn a new digital language? In advance of EU Code Week , taking place across Europe 11-17 October 2014, there are many ways you, your friends and family can learn how to code this summer. From a programming camp in Hungary to a coding goûter in France, the opportunities to develop digital skills are flourishing across Europe. European Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes (Digital Agenda) and Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou (Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth) have sent a joint letter to EU Education Ministers urging them to encourage children to get involved in EU Code week. "Promoting coding skills in Europe is part of the solution to youth unemployment," they say.

SOURCE: European Commission – News from the *M*idday Briefing.