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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: Plenary Session of the European Parliament, 4 July 2012, Strasbourg
Financial aid in the field of the trans-European transport and energy networks

The rapporteur, Mr FÄRM (S&D, SE) indicated that a massive level of investment was needed in transport, energy and IT, and stressed the need to develop to that end innovative instruments, such as private project bonds. He highlighted the leverage effect of project bonds, and expressed the hope that they would be developed further.

Deputy Minister MAVROYIANNIS welcomed the timely conclusion of the file, which he said had been fully taken into account by the latest European Council. He stressed that project bonds were designed to facilitate private financing of priority projects and would ensure that scarce budgetary resources were used as effectively as possible.

Vice-President REHN considered that the project bonds initiative was especially necessary given that the EU was at critical juncture and that its adoption would help Europe to recover from the crisis.

EIB President HOYER stressed that project bonds did not impose an additional budgetary burden, since they relied on a small EU contribution redirected from existing programs. He said he was optimistic that the EIB could use its expertise in order to ensure the success of the initiative.

On behalf of ITRE, Mr LANGEN (EPP, DE) highlighted the need to rely on EIB expertise, and stressed that the EIB should not be subject to external influence. On behalf of TRAN, Mr CANCIAN (EPP, IT) expressed his support for the pilot phase on project bonds, but regretted the limited funding available.

Intervening on behalf of their groups, Mr RIQUET (EPP, FR), Ms AYALA SENDER (S&D, ES), Ms JENSEN (ALDE, DK), Ms DURANT (Greens/ALE, BE), Mr MORGANTI (EFD, IT) expressed support for project bonds. In particular, Mr RIQUET welcomed the outcome of the negotiations, while Ms DURANT called for clear assessment criteria, the inclusion of sustainability criteria, and the need to take into account financial risk. On behalf of his group, Mr ASHWORTH (ECR, UK) cautioned that project bonds must have a European added value and stressed the importance of an independent analysis at the end of the pilot phase. Also on behalf of his group, Mr HÉNIN (GUE/NGL, FR) called for public ownership of infrastructure.

The MEPs who took the floor individually broadly supported project bonds, many of them insisting on a thorough assessment at the end of the pilot phase (Ms VĂLEAN (ALDE, RO), Mr EL KHADRAOUI (S&D, BE), Ms ANGELILLI (PPE, IT)) and stressing that the pilot phase was only a first step (Mr DE BACKER (ALDE, BE), Mr KOZŁOWSKI (EPP, PL)). Mr TURMES (Greens/ALE, LU) regretted that major renewable energy projects were not covered by the initiative and called for this issue to be addressed in the next budget. Mr FAJMON (EFD, CS) expressed some scepticism, considering that project bonds would lead to an increase in private and public debt.

EIB President HOYER stressed that the implementation of the project bonds initiative would be thoroughly assessed and that clear and precise assessment criteria were necessary. He also considered that EIB expertise would be crucial to assess the submitted projects, and regretted the absence of funding for energy projects.

Vice-President REHN thanked the Parliament for its support for the initiative, and indicated that the Commission and the EIB would sign a cooperation agreement as soon as possible. He also stressed that the Commission considered project bonds as an integral part of the Connecting Europe facility.

Deputy Minister MAVROYIANNIS welcomed the broad consensus around project bonds, and agreed on the need to choose projects carefully and on the importance of evaluation. He considered that a close dialogue between the Commission, the EIB, the Parliament and the Council would be important in order to draw lessons from the pilot phase.

Closing the debate, Mr FÄRM considered that the adoption of this initiative would open up new possibilities, and indicated that he was open to discussing the inclusion of renewable energy projects in the framework of the next MFF. He also stressed that no unreasonable risk was being taken with taxpayers' money.