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I	EES-STOFNANIR	
1.	EES-ráðið	
2.	Sameiginlega EES-nefndin	
3.	Sameiginlega EES-þingmannanefndin	
4.	Ráðgjafarnefnd EES	
II	EFTA-STOFNANIR	
1.	Fastanefnd EFTA-ríkjanna	
2.	Eftirlitsstofnun EFTA	
2006/EES/55/01	Auglýst eftir athugasemdum, í samræmi við 2. mgr. 1. gr. í I. hluta bókunar 3 við samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól, um áætlun stjórnvalda í Noregi um styrkveitingar til timburframleiðenda, svonefnda „timburáætlun“	1
2006/EES/55/02	Heimild til að veita ríkisaðstoð samkvæmt 61. gr. EES-samningsins og 3. mgr. 1. gr. í I. hluta bókunar 3 við samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól – Ákvörðun Eftirlitsstofnunar EFTA 61/06/COL frá 8. mars 2006 um tilkynningu um breytta áætlun um fjármögnun sprotafyrirtækja um land allt	20
2006/EES/55/03	Heimild til að veita ríkisaðstoð samkvæmt 61. gr. EES-samningsins og 3. mgr. 1. gr. í I. hluta bókunar 3 við samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól – Ákvörðun Eftirlitsstofnunar EFTA 62/06/COL frá 8. mars 2006 um tilkynningu um breytta áætlun um fjármögnun sprotafyrirtækja í héraði	21
3.	EFTA-dómstóllinn	
III	EB-STOFNANIR	
1.	Ráðið	
2.	Framkvæmdastjórnin	
2006/EES/55/04	Tilkynning um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4336 – MAN/Scania).	22
2006/EES/55/05	Tilkynning um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4420 – Crédit Agricole/Fiat Auto/FAFS).	23
2006/EES/55/06	Tilkynning um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4439 – Ryanair/Aer Lingus).	24

2006/EES/55/07	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4225 – Celsia/Fundia)	25
2006/EES/55/08	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4249 – Abertis/Autostrade)	25
2006/EES/55/09	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4298 – Aggregate Industries/Foster Yeoman)	26
2006/EES/55/10	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4315 – GE/CS/GIMP/JV)	26
2006/EES/55/11	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4327 – Egis/Alpine/Hochtief/Austrian Highway A5)	27
2006/EES/55/12	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4349 – Metro/Geant Polska)	27
2006/EES/55/13	Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4362 – Voestalpine/K+N/Euroshipping)	28
2006/EES/55/14	Nýjar almannaþjónustukvaðir sem stjórnvöld á Grikklandi hafa lagt á í tengslum við áætlunarflug á Grikklandi í samræmi við reglugerð ráðsins (EBE) nr. 2408/92	28
2006/EES/55/15	GR-Elliniko: áætlunarflug – Auglýsing stjórnvalda á Grikklandi um útboð á samningum um rekstur áætlunarflugs samkvæmt almannaþjónustukvöðum, birt í samræmi við d-lið 1. mgr. 4. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EBE) nr. 2408/92.	29
2006/EES/55/16	Æska og athafnir – Aðgerð 4.1 – Auglýsing eftir tillögum nr. 1/2007 – Auglýst eftir tillögum um styrkveitingar til stofnana sem starfa að æskulýðsmálum á Evrópuvísu. . . .	30
2006/EES/55/17	MEDIA 2007 – Þróun, dreifing og kynning – Framkvæmd áætlunar um að ýta undir framleiðslu, dreifingu og kynningu á evrópskum hljóð- og myndverkum – Aðgerðir til að auðvelda kynningu og markaðssetningu: hátíðir með hljóð- og myndefni – Skilyrt auglýsing eftir tillögum – EACEA nr. 05/ 06	31
2006/EES/55/18	Orðsending framkvæmdastjórnarinnar um framlengingu rammaáætlunar um ríkisaðstoð til skipasmíða	32
2006/EES/55/19	Reglur um upplýsingaskipti – Tæknilegar reglugerðir	33

3. Dómstóllinn

EFTA-STOFNANIR

EFTIRLITSSTOFNUN EFTA

Auglýst eftir athugasemdum, í samræmi við 2. mgr. 1. gr. í I. hluta bókar 3 við samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól, um áætlun stjórnsvalda í Noregi um styrkveitingar til timburframleiðenda, svonefnda „timburáætlun“ 2006/EES/55/01

Með ákvörðun nr. 147/06/COL frá 17. maí 2006, sem er birt í fullgilti útgáfu á upprunalegu tungumáli næst á eftir þessu ágripi, hóf Eftirlitsstofnun EFTA málsmeðferð samkvæmt 2. mgr. 1. gr. í I. hluta bókar 3 við samning milli EFTA-ríkjanna um stofnun eftirlitsstofnunar og dómstóls (samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól). Stjórnvöldum í Noregi hefur verið tilkynnt þetta með afriti af ákvörðuninni.

Eftirlitsstofnun EFTA veitir EFTA-ríkjunum, aðildarríkjum Evrópusambandsins og öðrum, sem eiga hagsmuna að gæta, eins mánaðar frest frá birtingu þessarar auglýsingar að telja til að leggja fram athugasemdir við áformaða ráðstöfun. Athugasemdir skal senda á eftirfarandi pósthfang:

EFTA Surveillance Authority
35, Rue Belliard
B-1040 Brussel/Bruxelles

Athugasemdunum verður komið á framfæri við stjórnvöld í Noregi. Þeim, sem leggja fram athugasemdir, er heimilt að óska nafnleýndar og skulu slíkar óskir vera skriflegar og rökstuddar.

Ágrip

Eftirlitsstofnunin hefur ákveðið að hefja formlega rannsókn á áætlun stjórnsvalda í Noregi um styrkveitingar til timburframleiðenda (svonefndri „timburáætlun“), en helsta markmið hennar er að bæta vinnslu trjáviðar, auka notkun hans og efla viðskiptasambönd skógræktarinnar og markaðarins á ýmsum stigum.

Stjórnvöld í Noregi settu timburáætlunina á fót árið 2000 til fimm ára. Samkvæmt henni eru veittir styrkir til fyrirtækja, stofnana o.fl. sem geta stuðlað að helstu markmiðum áætlunarinnar. Bráðabirgðaaafstaða stofnunarinnar er að timburáætlunin feli í sér ríkisaðstoð. Öll aðstoð, í skilningi 1. mgr. 61. gr. EES-samningsins, sem veitt er samkvæmt áætluninni, telst ólögmat þar eð timburáætlunin var ekki tilkynnt eftirlitsstofnuninni.

Eftirlitsstofnunin hefur lokið mati á timburáætluninni á grundvelli leiðbeininga stofnunarinnar um aðstoð vegna rannsókna og þróunarstarfs og um byggðaaðstoð. Eftirlitsstofnunin hefur einnig lokið mati á því hvort timburáætlunin samrýmist ákvæðum reglugerða um hópundanþágur vegna lítilla og meðalstórra fyrirtækja og regna aðstoðar til fræðslustarfs. Ennfremur hefur verið skoðað hvort timburáætlunin samrýmist ákvæðum c-liðar 3. mgr. 61. gr. á grundvelli þeirra sjónarmiða sem mælt er fyrir um í fyrirnefndum reglugerðum um hópundanþágur.

Í timburáætluninni er þó ekki að finna nægilega nákvæmar skilgreiningar á þeim tegundum verkefna sem eru aðstoðarhæf, lýsingar á styrkhæfum kostnaði eða hámarksfjárhæðir sem unnt er að greiða í styrki, og því er sú hættu fyrir hendi að aðstoð verði veitt samkvæmt áætluninni vegna annarrar starfsemi, án tillits til aðstoðarhlutfalls og óháð því hvort kostnaður er styrkhæfur. Stjórnvöld í Noregi hafa engu að síður lýst yfir að í reynd hafi timburáætlunin verið framkvæmd í samræmi við þau aðstoðarhlutföll sem um getur í Leiðbeiningum um ríkisaðstoð og reglugerðum um hópundanþágur. Eftirlitsstofnunin hefur því farið þess á leið við stjórnvöld í Noregi að þau leggi fram frekari gögn því til staðfestingar að stjórnsýsluframkvæmd í tengslum við timburáætlunina hafi verið í samræmi við Leiðbeiningar um ríkisaðstoð og efnisleg

sjónarmið reglugerða um hópundanþágur. Eftirlitsstofnunin hefur þó áskilið sér rétt til að taka endanlega afstöðu til slíkrar stjórnsýsluframkvæmdar að teknu tilliti til þess að tiltekin verkefni eru einnig kostuð að fullu samkvæmt timburáætluninni í þeim tilvikum að ekki er um ríkisaðstoð að ræða að mati stjórnvalda í Noregi.

Eftirlitsstofnunin telur ekki enn fullvíst að við þær aðstæður hafi styrkir verið veittir samkvæmt timburáætluninni í samræmi við Leiðbeiningar um ríkisaðstoð eða efnisleg sjónarmið reglugerða um hópundanþágur. Hún telur því vafa leika á að timburáætlunin samrýmist framkvæmd EES-samningsins.

Stjórnvöld í Noregi hafa lýst yfir að timburáætlunin hafi að geyma ákvæði sem samrýmast reglum um minniháttaraðstoð í reglugerð um minniháttaraðstoð eða eldri gerð 12. kafla Leiðbeininga um ríkisaðstoð, „Beiting reglunnar um minniháttar aðstoð“. Ekki er þó að sjá að reglur timburáætlunarinnar um minniháttaraðstoð hafi að geyma ákvæði þess efnis að sannreyna skuli hvort aðstoðarþegar hafi þegið minniháttaraðstoð af öðru tagi næstu þrjú ár á undan. Því er hugsanlegt að heildaraðstoð, sem þeir hafa hlotið, hafi farið yfir hámark minniháttaraðstoðar.

Af þessum sökum hefur eftirlitsstofnunin ekki getað skorið úr um hvort aðstoð, sem veitt hefur verið sem minniháttaraðstoð, sé talin slík aðstoð með réttu.

**EFTA SURVEILLANCE AUTHORITY DECISION
No 147/06/COL**

of 17 May 2006

on the wood scheme

(“*Verdiskapningsprogrammet for tre*”)

NORWAY

THE EFTA SURVEILLANCE AUTHORITY,

Having regard to the Agreement on the European Economic Area ⁽¹⁾, in particular to Articles 61 to 63 and Protocol 26 thereof,

Having regard to the Agreement between the EFTA States on the establishment of a Surveillance Authority and a Court of Justice ⁽²⁾, in particular to Article 24 thereof and Article 1(2) in Part I of Protocol 3 thereof,

Having regard to the Authority’s Guidelines ⁽³⁾ on the application and interpretation of Articles 61 and 62 of the EEA Agreement, and in particular Chapters 14 and 25 thereof as well as to the block exemption Regulations on aid for training and aid to small and medium-sized enterprises, respectively, as well as to the Regulation on *de minimis* aid ⁽⁴⁾,

Whereas:

I. FACTS

1. Procedure

By letter dated 1 February 2005 (Event no: 307555) the EFTA Surveillance Authority (the “Authority”) received a complaint (the “Complaint”) from a trade association for the Norwegian masonry and concrete industry, “*byggutengrenser.no*” (the “Complainant”). In the Complaint, which was both received and registered by the Authority on 3 February 2005, the Complainant alleges that the Norwegian state is granting state aid to the wood construction industry on the basis of “*Verdiskapningsprogrammet for tre*”, also referred to as “*Treprogrammet*” (hereinafter referred to as the “Wood Scheme”).

By letter dated 27 April 2005 (Event No: 313418), the Authority requested information from the Norwegian authorities. The Norwegian authorities responded by letter dated 27 May 2005, enclosed in a letter from the Norwegian Mission to the European Union dated 1 June 2005, received and registered by the Authority on 1 June 2005 (Event no: 323464).

The Authority requested further information by letter dated 31 August 2005 (Event no: 323451) to which the Norwegian authorities responded by letter dated 29 September 2005, enclosed in a letter dated 3 October 2005 from the Norwegian Mission to the European Union, received and registered by the Authority on 5 October 2005 (Event no: 345465).

⁽¹⁾ Hereinafter referred to as the “EEA Agreement” or “EEA”.

⁽²⁾ Hereinafter referred to as the Surveillance and Court Agreement.

⁽³⁾ Procedural and Substantive Rules in the Field of State Aid Guidelines on the application and interpretation of Articles 61 and 62 of the EEA Agreement and Article 1 of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement, adopted and issued by the EFTA Surveillance Authority on 19 January 1994, published in OJ L 231, 3.9.1994, p. 1, EEA Supplement No. 32, 3.9.1994, p. 1, last amended by the Authority’s Decision No. 69/06/COL of 22 March 2006 on reference and discount rates (hereinafter referred to as the “State Aid Guidelines”).

⁽⁴⁾ Commission Regulation (EC) No. 68/2001 of 12 January 2001 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to training aid (OJ L 10, 13.1.2001, p. 20 as amended by OJ L 63, 28.2.2004, p. 20); Commission Regulation (EC) No. 70/2001 of 12 January 2001 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to State aid to small and medium-sized enterprises (OJ L 10, 13.1.2001, p. 33 as amended by OJ L 63, 28.2.2004, p. 22); and Commission Regulation (EC) No. 69/2001 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the EC Treaty to *de minimis* aid (OJ L 10, 13.1.2001, p. 30). The latter Regulation replaces the previous Chapter 12 in the State Aid Guidelines (adopted by the Authority’s Decision No. 54/96/COL of 15 May 1996, OJ L 245, 25.9.1996, p. 28). All Regulations have been incorporated into Annex 15 (in Sections 1(d)-(f)) to the EEA Agreement by means of Joint Committee Decision No. 88/2002 (OJ L 266, 3.10.2002, p. 56 and EEA Suppl. No. 49, 3.10.2002, p. 42) and Joint Committee Decision No. 131/2004 (OJ L 64, 10.3.2005, p. 67 and EEA Supplement No. 12, 10.3.2005, p. 49).

In addition hereto, during the months of November and December 2005 and January 2006 the Authority and the Norwegian authorities have had informal contact both via telephone and electronic mail regarding the Wood Scheme. Information received by the Authority in this context has been consolidated by the Norwegian authorities in a letter dated 3 March 2006, enclosed in a letter dated 8 March 2006 from the Norwegian Mission to the European Union, received and registered by the Authority on 9 March 2006 (Event no: 365992).

2. Description of the measures

2.1 *Objective and administration of the Wood Scheme described in preparatory legislative works*

The White Paper of 1998-99

The aim of the Wood Scheme is set out in a White Paper from the Government to the Parliament on the creation of value and opportunities within the forest sector (St. meld. nr. 17 (1998-99 "*Verdiskapning og miljø – muligheter i skogssektoren*") – hereinafter referred to as the "White Paper").

The aim of the White Paper was to establish a general policy for a rational and sustainable utilization of forest resources and to increase the forest sectors' contribution to the national economy and the general development of the Norwegian society. The White Paper proposed the introduction of various measures in order to achieve this goal – one of which was the Wood Scheme. In this respect the White Paper proposed the establishment of a five-year scheme for purposes of creating value within the sector of woodwork and the (wood) processing business. More specifically, the White Paper foresaw that the aim of the Wood Scheme should be to increase the creation of value in forestry and the (wood) processing business as well as to increase the contribution of the forest sector to achieve a more sustainable production and consumption⁽⁵⁾. Within these objectives, focus of the Wood Scheme should be on (i) improving the processing of woodwork; (ii) increasing the use of woodwork; and (iii) improving relations on different levels of trade between the forest sector and the market⁽⁶⁾. The White Paper also stated that focus of the new scheme should be on identifying possibilities in the areas of product development, design and architecture and that the scheme should pave the way for enabling woodwork to be considered as an attractive building material with a wide range of utilization purposes to a higher extent than up until presently⁽⁷⁾. Finally, on a more general level the White Paper pointed out that the aim of increasing value in the processing business for woodwork should be achieved internally (i.e., within Norway)⁽⁸⁾.

Recommendation (1998-1999) and Working Group Report

The framework for the establishment of the Wood Scheme was laid down in further detail in a recommendation from a Parliamentary standing committee addressed to the Parliament (Innst. S. nr. 208 (1998-1999)), dated 3 June 1999 (hereinafter referred to as the "Recommendation"). The Recommendation suggests, amongst others, that a working group should be established in order to lay down the strategies, implementation and financing needs of the new scheme.

Shortly afterwards in July 1999 a "Working Group" was established, composed of, amongst others, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, trade associations for producers of timber and forest owners (respectively), research and development institutions as well as companies in the sector. The Working Group issued a report (the "Working Group Report") on 14 April 2000 on the content, organisation and financing of the Wood Scheme as well as on the issue of inviting for cooperation from sector relevant organisations.

⁽⁵⁾ Section 7.3.3 of the White Paper.

⁽⁶⁾ Section 7.3.3 of the White Paper.

⁽⁷⁾ Section 2.4.1 of the White Paper.

⁽⁸⁾ Section 6.1.1 of the White Paper. Regarding the focus on Norwegian industry Section 6.1.1 of the White Paper also states that (translated by the Authority): *For purposes of increasing the creation of value it is important to consider both the possibility of reducing costs on the levels of processing as well as sales and to increase and improve the use/exploitation of woodwork produced in Norway.*

The Working Group Report recalls the objectives of the Wood Scheme referred to in the White Paper and the aims at which the Wood Scheme should be focused (of improving the processing of woodwork; increasing the use of woodwork; and improving relations on different levels of trade between the forest sector and the market) ⁽⁹⁾. The Working Group Report further specifies that the scheme should be limited to the processing chain between the forest sector and the mechanical wood processing industry but should also include the supply of raw material to the wood processing industry (e.g. to improve quality, precision and steady deliveries) ⁽¹⁰⁾. The Working Group Report also states that it is an objective that the Wood Scheme is focused on Norwegian wood resources and that improvements are achieved within the Norwegian (wood) processing business.

The Working Group Report places the responsibility for administration and implementation of the Wood Scheme with (i) “*Statens nærings- og distriktsutviklingsfond*”, generally referred to as “*SND*” (which was reorganised and renamed “*Innovasjon Norge*” as of 1 January 2004); and (ii) a management group (the “Management Group”) composed of market operators, appointed by the Ministry of Agriculture ⁽¹¹⁾.

The tasks of the Management Group is to ensure engagement from the value chain; verify that the activities within the scheme correspond to its aim and strategies; develop and turn the strategies into concrete actions; decide on overall priorities (such as with regard to areas to be focused on or target groups); and to contribute to the development of new strategic initiatives and active communication in order to obtain initiatives and engagement. The Management Group shall also cater for the interests of the businesses participating in the scheme. In the Working Group Report it is explained how the businesses - by means of the Management Group - will enjoy a central role in the strategic development of the scheme thereby ensuring active participation by business in the development and execution of the scheme. The Management Group must prepare annual reports on the implementation of activities and development of the scheme. The reports are forwarded to the Ministry of Agriculture and constitute the basis both for the process of preparing the budget within the Ministry and the preparation of guidelines to SND ⁽¹²⁾.

Finally, it appears from the Working Group Report that while during an initial phase initiatives are taken on the basis of funding under the Wood Scheme, later on, initiatives should come from the operators who must assume responsibility for the projects ⁽¹³⁾. All actions are to be realised in the form of projects, and proposals for projects are evaluated by reference to financing and the relevant objectives and criteria of the Wood Scheme.

2.2 *Legal basis and annual budgets*

It appears from the state budgets that the Wood Scheme is financed by the Ministry of Agriculture (renamed the “Ministry of Agriculture and Food” as of 30 September 2004) via annual awards over the state budget. Specific details on the financing of the Wood Scheme were laid down in the Government proposal to the Parliament, containing the state budget for the year 2000 (St. prp. nr. 1 (1999-2000)) where funding for the Wood Scheme was included in Chapter 1142 as item 71 ⁽¹⁴⁾.

⁽⁹⁾ Section 2.1 of the Working Group Report defines the forest based value chain (or the forest sector) as all operators involved from the stump to the end-user. “Forest” covers the supply side (forest owners and associations of such) and the commercial level (forest entrepreneurs, including terrain transport, timber measurement and turnover, forest culture work, operational planning etc.). “Production” covers all processing of timber into products suitable for end-users but with a focus on the wood mechanical processing chain (covering traditional work in sawmills and carpentry and further processing into doors, windows, staircases and other building elements as well as the production of wood furniture, wooden houses and manually produced productions). The “market” covers the end-users but includes also different trading levels and other operators in the forest based production system, such as subcontractors of goods and services to forestry and the forest based industry.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Section 1.4 of the Working Group Report which also states that the Wood Scheme does not cover forest culture, infrastructure, transport, fields, forest products for green decoration purposes and bio energy which are to be addressed via other measures by the Government.

⁽¹¹⁾ Sections 1.5, 6.2 and 6.3 of the Working Group Report. The Ministry of Agriculture also defines the mandate of the Management Group.

⁽¹²⁾ Sections 1.5, 6.2 and 6.3 of the Working Group Report.

⁽¹³⁾ Section 4.7 of the Working Group Report.

⁽¹⁴⁾ See also revised budget (St. prp. nr. 61 (1999-2000)). The Wood Scheme has been referred to in different manners including “*Treprogrammet*” and “*Verdiskapningsprogrammet for tre*” or by means of the original Recommendation from the Standing Committee to the Parliament (Innst. S. nr. 208 (1998-1999)).

The state budgets for the following years earmarked amounts for the years 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004 and 2005 for the Wood Scheme ⁽¹⁵⁾. In the first four years (2000-2003, both inclusive) funding for the Wood Scheme was earmarked under item 71 in Chapter 1142 of the state budget, whereas in the last two years (2004 and 2005) funding for the Wood Scheme was earmarked under item 71 in Chapter 1149 of the state budget.

In a letter dated 29 September 2005 the Norwegian authorities have informed the Authority that the budgets for the Wood Scheme for the financial years from 2000 to 2005 have been as follows:

Table 1 Annual budget

Year	Budget mill. NOK	Consents mill. NOK
2000	17	8,8
2001	25	25,7
2002	20	18,0
2003	36	39,4
2004	35	28,3
2005	33	(not available yet)
Total	166	—

Grants have been paid out within three years after the year that a consent (*"tilsagn"*) was given and upon completion of the project by the recipient. If a budget of a certain year would not be fully spent the remaining amount could be carried over to the subsequent year. Hence the total amount covering consents given in any one year may be higher than the budget amount in the same year.

Co-financing

Grants under the Wood Scheme to projects are conditional upon contributions by the recipients in the form of financing and work force.⁽¹⁶⁾ There is no general minimum requirement for co-financing; rather the share of it differs depending on the objectives and character of the project. However, the Norwegian authorities have stated that as aid under the Wood Scheme is granted in accordance with the aid intensities set forth in the State Aid Guidelines – which according to a table prepared by the Norwegian authorities – provide for a maximum rate of 75% of eligible costs, the co-financing consists in the remaining percentage. Nonetheless, projects may also be fully financed by the Wood Scheme, namely those which are addressed to the wood sector in general and where (according to the Norwegian authorities) the measure cannot be attributed to individual undertakings and results in a modest benefit only to an individual undertaking. An example of this, which has been referred to by the authorities, is the grant of NOK 125.000 to Norsk Treteknisk Institutt to a project for the product development of planed panels for internal use. The Norwegian authorities stated that results are accessible for its member companies, but that, in any event, much of Norsk Treteknisk Institutt's information is generally accessible via its library.

The Norwegian authorities have pointed out that although projects are co-financed, it is clear that the relevant activities/projects would not have taken place had it not been for the grants awarded under the Wood Scheme. The grants under the Wood Scheme are precisely aimed at triggering (or encouraging) contributions and resources from those operators who might pursue projects covered by the objectives of the Wood scheme ⁽¹⁷⁾.

⁽¹⁵⁾ 2001: St. prp. nr. 1 (2000-2001) and revised budget (St. prp. nr. 84 (2000-2001)); 2002: St. prp. nr. 1 (2001-2002) and revised budget (St. prp. nr. 1 Tillegg nr. 4 (2001-2002)); 2003: St. prp. nr. 1 (2002-2003) and revised budget (St. prp. nr. 65 (2002-2003)); 2004: St. prp. nr. 1 (2003-2004) and revised budget (St. prp. nr. 63); 2005: St. prp. nr. 1 (2004-2005) and revised budget (St. prp. nr. 65 (2004-2005)).

⁽¹⁶⁾ Sections 1.4 and 7.1 of the Working Group Report.

⁽¹⁷⁾ Section 7.1 of the Working Group Report. See also bullet point 3 in Section 7.2 of the Working Group Report and the third paragraph of Section 4.7 where it is stated that the financing by the Wood Scheme must function as a trigger for projects.

2.3 *Recipients of support under the Wood Scheme*

The Working Group Report provides that the Wood Scheme should be directed towards companies and other operators with concrete projects, falling within the strategies and work areas of the scheme and which contribute to increased value creation ⁽¹⁸⁾.

The Norwegian authorities have further specified that the Wood Scheme is open to all relevant industries (referred to as *“mechanical wood-based industries and a variety of companies”*) and industries which can contribute to goal achievement within the Wood Scheme, such as industries exploring the use of wood in combination with other materials. Within these parameters the scheme is open to private persons, companies, authorities, unions, research and educational institutions, irrespectively of their country of establishment.

The Norwegian authorities have provided the Authority with two lists on the allocation of amounts granted under the Wood Scheme. The first list contains an overview of the amounts granted to recipients by consent over the period 2000-2004 (*“List 1 of Overview of Grants”*). The second list also includes the consents given during 2000-2004 but contains further details, such as the amounts that have been *“annulled”* and the amounts actually paid out to recipients (*“List 2 of Overview of Grants”*).

2.4 *Eligible costs and aid intensity*

General

In general the Norwegian authorities have stated that grants under the Wood Scheme have been awarded in compliance with the State Aid Guidelines such as Chapter 14 on aid for research and development and Chapter 25 on regional aid, or in accordance with the block exemptions for small and medium-sized enterprises (*“block exemption Regulation on SMEs”*) or training aid (*“block exemption Regulation on training aid”*) unless the grant would qualify to be considered as *de minimis* under the previous Chapter 12 in the State Aid Guidelines or the subsequent Regulation on *de minimis* aid (the *“de minimis Regulation”*) ⁽¹⁹⁾.

More specifically, the Norwegian authorities have stated that the Wood Scheme does not fund *“...investments in fixed or intangible assets nor ordinary day-to-day operations.”* but that *“The Wood Scheme may fund consultancy services for competence building and network building; product- and process-development etc.”* In this regard it appears from the Working Group Report that *“The Wood Scheme shall finance ‘soft’ investments, that is, development of skills, networking, product- and process development (but not for machines) communication solutions, including IT-infrastructure (but not machinery) market development and the like. The scheme should normally not contribute support to physical investments.”* ⁽²⁰⁾

Eligible costs

As regards eligible costs the Norwegian authorities have stated that grants under the Wood Scheme are awarded to eligible projects that *“... contribute to goal achievement within the strategies and work areas of the program”* and which trigger innovation. As regards strategies it appears from the Working Group Report that the following three strategies should be employed in order to achieve the objectives of the Wood Scheme. Each of the strategies should be implemented by means of the activities specified below each strategy ⁽²¹⁾. The costs of such activities are therefore eligible for funding under the Wood Scheme.

- i) Profile making & communication strategy (that is, to create engagement and willingness to develop the value chain, attract competence, people and capital, increase the visibility and active profiling of the forest and woodwork, focus on the advantages of wood as a material and information dissemination).

⁽¹⁸⁾ Section 4.6 of the Working Group Report.

⁽¹⁹⁾ Regulation Nos. 68/2001 (on training aid), 70/2001 (on small and medium-sized enterprises); and 69/2001 (on *de minimis* aid). The *de minimis* Regulation replaced the previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines. See references to all Regulations and Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines in footnote 4.

⁽²⁰⁾ Translation (by the Authority) of the second bullet point in Section 7.2 of the Working Group Report. The Norwegian authorities have added that *“These principles have been followed and communicated to the beneficiaries.”*

⁽²¹⁾ Sections 4.1- 4.4 and 5 of the Working Group Report.

Measures to be used to implement this strategy include campaigns which represent the forest/wood business in a positive manner, information dissemination via design/architecture journals with wood as a profile and the provision of information to professional users, universities and teaching institutions and consumers. Other measures include the establishment of an Internet wood portal and a network for purposes of channelling information throughout the value chain while also functioning as a general information resource as well as the establishment of meeting points both nationally and regionally to cater for research & development groups, architects, designers, IT oriented groups, trend researchers, innovators and investors etc.

- ii) Product development & novelties strategy (covering the realisation of new possibilities, ideas and initiatives, contributing to innovation and new creations).

Measures to be used include structural development programs, the establishment of business fora directed at small companies, innovation projects connected to different teaching institutions, design/architect competitions, development of new products within new market segments (such as the recreation market; facilities/infrastructure for “public areas”; wood products for health care etc.) and development projects which focus on generating profits in the value chain (such as raw materials, side products, wood trade and electronic trade). Other measures include the establishment of a forum and structures for developing novelties & innovation, student projects for innovation and architect & design competitions to increase the use of specific wood materials.

- iii) Cooperation and efficiency strategy (covering the improvement in the channelling of goods and processes in the value chain and in cost efficiency, value creation and profitability as well as the optimal use of human resources and infrastructure).

Measures include the development of an integrated system of logistics to improve the timing for distribution of goods and the quality and price of products, information technology to save costs on the sale/distribution level and the development of IT systems for communicating throughout the value chain to improve quality. Other measures include competitions, preparatory studies on the development of an integrated IT system and the digitalisation of information on goods throughout the value chain, competence programmes on cost efficiency in value development as well as (measures for) the generation of profits in the field of forest, wood industry and trade.

Specifically as regards research and development, the Norwegian authorities have stated that as the documents on which the Wood Scheme is based do not set forth any conditions which must be met in order for a research and development project to be eligible for support, case handlers have assessed projects on a case-by-case basis by reference to the project description given by applicants and Chapter 14 of the State Aid Guidelines. In this context the Norwegian authorities have stated that eligible costs could include personnel costs (researchers, technicians & assistance personnel, exclusively used for the research and development activity), instruments, equipment, working space and buildings (permanently and exclusively used for the research and development activity); consultancy assistance and corresponding services (exclusively used in the context of the research and development activity) and administration directly related to the research and development activity. Other eligible costs could be operating expenses such as materials, supplies and similar products which are directly related to the research & development activity.

Aid intensity

The Norwegian authorities have stated that: *“When aid to consultancy services is granted, the aid intensity lies within 50% of eligible costs, development projects (R&D) are funded within 35/25% of eligible costs depending on the size of the recipient.”* The authorities have subsequently added that it is assumed that the aid intensity must be 50% when financing projects are addressed to undertakings, and that to the extent that grants have exceeded 50% it has been for purposes of projects with a general and common purpose in which case the Norwegian authorities have considered that the grant does not constitute illegal state aid under Article 61 of the EEA Agreement, or that the amount qualifies as *de minimis*. However, the

Norwegian authorities have also (in the context of co-financing) referred to a maximum aid intensity of 75% albeit without linking this aid intensity to a specific set of guidelines ⁽²²⁾.

The Norwegian authorities have maintained that grants under the Wood Scheme have been implemented on the basis of the ceilings referred to in the following table (translated by the Authority) which according to the Norwegian authorities contains an overview of previously notified and approved schemes.

Attachment No. 3 Overview – funding rates applicable to the Wood Scheme

Maximum funding rates for schemes administered by Innovation Norway – size of enterprises and aid areas.

- () indicates that the scheme is only exceptionally relevant for the stated purposes and/or type of undertakings
- Up to 100.000 Euro may be granted under all schemes on the basis of the rules on de minimis aid

Measure - Scheme	Purpose	SMEs (<250 employees and two other criteria)		Large undertakings
		Small enterprises (<50 employees and two other criteria)	Medium-sized enterprises (<250 employees and two other criteria)	
Country-wide innovation scheme	Investments	15%	7,5%	0
	Soft aid	50%		0
	Training aid (shall not be given from LI for the moment)	(Specific/general - 35% / 70%)		(specific/general - 25 % / 50%)
	R&D:			
	• Development activities for commercialisation	35%		25%
OFU/IFU	Technical preparatory studies	75%		50%
	• (Individual Research, Technical preparatory studies)	(60% 75%)		(50% 75%)
	R&D:			
	• Development activities for commercialisation	35% (regional area + 5%)		25% (regional area + 5%)
	Technical preparatory studies	75%		50%
	• (Individual research, Technical preparatory studies)	(60% 75%)		(50% 75%)

⁽²²⁾ See Section 2.2 above.

Measure - Scheme	Purpose	SMEs (<250 employees and two other criteria)		Large undertakings
		Small enterprises (<50 employees and two other criteria)	Medium-sized enterprises (<250 employees and two other criteria)	
Contribution to county municipalities for regional development	Investments: • Zone A • Zone B • Zone C	30% 25% 20% (25%)*		25% 20% 10% (15%)
	Soft aid	50%		0
	Training aid	Specific/general - 40% / 75%		Specific/general - 30% / 55%
	R&D: • Development activities for commercialisation Technical preparatory studies • (Individual Research, Technical preparatory studies)	40% 75% (65% 75%)		30% 55% (55% 75%)
Rearrangements and new creations	Investments: • Outside reg. area • Within reg. area	15% 7,5% Zone A: 30%, B: 25% and C: 20% (25%)**		0 Zone A: 25%, B: 20% and C: 10% (15%)
	Soft aid: • Outside reg. area • Inside reg. area	50% 50%		
	Training aid: • Outside reg. area • Inside reg. area	Specific/general - 35% / 70% Specific/general - 40% / 75%		Specific/general - 25% / 50% Specific/general - 30% / 55%
	R&D: <i>Outside reg. area:</i> • Development activities for commercialisation Technical preparatory studies • (Individual research, Technical preparatory studies)	35% 75% (60% 75%)		25% 50% (50% 75%)
	<i>Inside reg. area:</i> • Development activities for commercialisation Technical preparatory studies • (Individual research, Technical preparatory studies)	40% 75% (65% 75%)		30% 55% (55% 75%)

Measure - Scheme	Purpose	SMEs (<250 employees and two other criteria)		Large undertakings
		Small enterprises (<50 employees and two other criteria)	Medium-sized enterprises (<250 employees and two other criteria)	
Establishment grant	De minimis aid	Max. NOK 400 000 (in spec. cases more but not over 100 000 Euro)		

* Up to 25%/15% may be used for measures which can be expected to have a strong effect from a district policy point of view. In the counties of Vest-Agder, Rogaland and Hordaland the aid threshold may not be in excess of 20%/10%.

** Up to 25%/15% may be used for measures which can be expected to have a strong regional effect. In the counties of Vest-Agder, Rogaland and Hordaland the thresholds may not be in excess of 20%/10%.

The references to “zone” refer to the areas eligible for regional aid according to the Authority’s Decision on the regional aid map for Norway ⁽²³⁾.

2.5 De minimis aid

As regards *de minimis* aid the Norwegian authorities have submitted a list of those who in their view have received grants under the Wood Scheme that qualify as *de minimis* (the “*de minimis* List”). In this regard the Norwegian authorities have specified that it is the date that the authorities gave the consent (“*tilsagn*”) which determines whether the previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines on the *de minimis* rule, or the subsequent *de minimis* Regulation, is applicable to the grant in question. Moreover, the authorities have explained that when aid has been granted as *de minimis* aid the consent letter, sent to the aid recipient, contains a reference to the *de minimis* threshold and time frame as well as to the obligation of the aid recipient to inform of aid received from other sources within three years from the point in time at which the consent to be granted aid was given ⁽²⁴⁾.

2.6 Commencement of scheme and duration

The Norwegian authorities have stated that the Wood Scheme was operational as of 1 July 2000 (i.e., the date as of which applications for support could be made) and should remain in force for five years ⁽²⁵⁾. This is also stated in the comments to the proposal for the State Budget in St. prp. nr. 1 (2000-2001) from which it appears that the Wood Scheme entered into force in the second quarter of 2000.

2.7 Trade in wood products

It appears from the White Paper from the Government to the Parliament on the creation of value and opportunities within the forest sector that Norway exports its wood products to the EU. In this regard it is specifically stated in Section 4.3 of the White Paper that “Norway exports approximately 85-90% of the wholesale production of wood and paper products and approximately 35% of the timber production. Supplies to EU countries amount to 70% and 90% of total exports. Any strategies or political interventions within the EU which can effect EUs import of forest industry products could have large consequences for the Norwegian forest sector” ⁽²⁶⁾. Moreover, it appears from Eurostat statistics that wood products are extensively

⁽²³⁾ The Authority’s Decision 327/99/COL of 16 December 1999 on the map of assisted areas and levels of aid (Norway).

⁽²⁴⁾ This information request is phrased in the following manner: “EØS-regelverket - opplysningsplikt: Tildelingen av tilskuddet skjer i henhold til reglene for bagatellmessig støtte. Ved eventuelle nye søknader om offentlig støtte (uansett støttekilde) har støttemottaker plikt til å opplyse om dette tilskuddet. Opplysningsplikten gjelder i 3 år fra tilsagnstidspunktet. Støttemottakeren må ikke motta mer enn til sammen 100.000 Euro (ca. kr 815.000,-) i støtte etter reglene for bagatellmessig støtte over et tidsrom på 3 år.”

⁽²⁵⁾ The Working group Report also states that the Wood Scheme should be operational from the second quarter in the year of 2000 and remain in force for five years onwards.

⁽²⁶⁾ Translation by the Authority of the following quote: “Norge eksporterer ca 85-90% av produksjonen av tremasse og papirprodukter og ca 35% av trelast-produksjonen. Leveransene til EU-land utgjør henholdsvis 70% og 90% av eksporten. Eventuelle strategier eller politiske vedtak innen EU som kan påvirke EUs import av skogindustriprodukter vil kunne få store konsekvenser for den norske skogsektoren.”

traded in the EU ⁽²⁷⁾. Finally, it appears from statistics produced by “Statistics Norway” (“*Statistisk sentralbyrå*”) that Norway also imports substantial amounts of timber, processed wood and wood products (“*Tømmer, trelast og kork...*”) from the EU into Norway ⁽²⁸⁾.

II. APPRECIATION

1. The presence of state aid

As a preliminary point, the Authority considers that the Wood Scheme falls within the scope of the EEA Agreement. This view is based on the fact that it appears from Article 8(3) of the EEA Agreement that the EEA Agreement applies to the products listed in Chapters 25 to 97 of the Harmonised Commodity Description and Coding System, and the fact that wood and articles of wood are covered by Chapter 44 thereof. As support under the Wood Scheme is granted to the woodwork processing business and related wood industries the Authority takes the position that the scheme is within the scope of the EEA Agreement.

1.1 State aid within the meaning of Article 61(1) EEA

Article 61(1) of the EEA Agreement provides that: “*Save as otherwise provided in this Agreement, any aid granted by EC Member States, EFTA States or through State resources in any form whatsoever which distorts or threatens to distort competition by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods shall, in so far as it affects trade between Contracting Parties, be incompatible with the functioning of this Agreement.*”

To be termed state aid, within the meaning of Article 61(1) EEA a measure must meet the following four cumulative criteria: The measure must (i) confer on recipients an economic advantage which is not received in the normal course of business; (ii) the advantage must be granted by the State or through State resources and must (iii) be selective by favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods; and (iv) distort competition and affect trade between Contracting Parties. In the following it is examined whether the four cumulative criteria are met in the present case.

1.2 Economic advantage

The measure must confer on recipients an economic advantage which is not received in the normal course of business.

Under the Wood Scheme the Norwegian authorities award financial grants to companies, authorities, unions, etc. which can contribute to the objectives under the scheme. The undertakings receiving such grants receive an economic advantage, i.e., a grant, which they would not have received in their normal course of business.

1.3 Presence of State resources

The advantage must be granted by the state or through state resources.

The grants awarded under the Wood Scheme are financed by the Ministry of Agriculture (renamed the “Ministry of Agriculture and Food” as of 30 September 2004) and is therefore financed by the state.

⁽²⁷⁾ Statistics produced by EUROSTAT for the years between 1999 and 2004, covering both imports and exports of various varieties of refined wood and timber within the EU (where value is expressed either in thousands of cubic meters or tons), shows that there is extensive trade within the EU of wood products. The relevant statistics are (i) intra EU-25 imports and exports of round wood; “table fores51”; (ii) intra EU-25 imports of wood pulp and paper and paperboard; “table fores62”; (iii) intra-EU 25 exports of woodpulp “table fores62”; (iv) intra-EU 25 imports of sawnwood and wood based panels; “table fores61”; and (v) intra-EU exports of sawnwood “table fores61”. All available at <http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat> or via contacting EUROSTAT via their web-site.

⁽²⁸⁾ See the webpage: <http://www.ssb.no/muh/tab15-01.shtml> which shows table 15, entitled, “Trade with selected countries by two-digit SITC. Jan - mar 2006. Million kroner”.

1.4 *Favouring certain undertakings or the production of certain goods*

The measure must favour certain undertakings or the production of certain goods.

It appears from various legislative preparatory works (such as the White Paper, the Recommendation and the Working Group Report), leading up to the state budgets and the establishment of the Wood Scheme, that the scheme is aimed at improving value in (i) the wood processing business; and (ii) the relations on different levels of trade between the forest sector and the market (which includes the supply of raw material to the wood processing industry) along with a general aim of increasing the actual use of woodwork.

Thus grants under the Wood Scheme are awarded only where it is considered that they may benefit the wood processing sector and related wood industries as well as the supply of raw material to such industries. The Wood Scheme favours therefore undertakings within the wood industry sector and is hence selective in nature. In this respect the European Court of Justice has held that a measure may be selective even if it covers (undertakings in) an entire sector ⁽²⁹⁾.

It should be noted that although grants under the Wood Scheme may also be awarded to undertakings in other industries (for example where industries explore the use of wood in combination with other materials), this option is open only for such industries which can contribute to the overall aim of the Wood Scheme of generally improving value in the wood processing business. The Authority therefore considers that even this option is ultimately aimed at favouring undertakings in the wood processing industries and related wood industries.

1.5 *Distortion of competition and effect on trade between Contracting Parties*

The measures must distort competition and affect trade between the Contracting Parties.

Under the Wood Scheme the Norwegian authorities award grants to undertakings in the wood processing (and related) industries. Moreover, the Norwegian industry exports a large share of its wholesale timber and refined wood products (up to 90%) to other EEA countries where wood products are extensively traded. In addition, Norway also imports timber, processed wood and wood products from the EU. In such circumstances, the grant of support to undertakings under the Wood Scheme will strengthen the position of the recipients compared to other undertakings which are located in Norway or in other EEA countries and competing in the wood processing (and related) businesses. Moreover, since wood is merely one of the raw materials used in the construction business, grants received by construction companies under the Wood Scheme will strengthen and reinforce their position compared to other undertakings competing in the construction business ⁽³⁰⁾.

On this basis, the Authority considers that the grant of financial support to undertakings under the Wood Scheme will distort competition and affect trade.

1.6 *Conclusion*

In the light of the above, the preliminary conclusion of the Authority is that the Wood Scheme satisfies the test of Article 61(1) of the EEA Agreement and hence involves state aid. The Authority also takes the view that as the Wood Scheme is an act on the basis of which, without further implementing measures being required, individual aid awards may be made to undertakings defined within the act in a general and abstract manner, it qualifies as an aid scheme within the meaning of Article 1(d) in part II of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement.

⁽²⁹⁾ Case C-75/97 *Belgium v Commission* [1999] ECR I-3671, paragraph 33, Case C-66/02 *Italy v Commission* of 15 December 2005, not yet published, paragraph 95, Joined Cases E-5/04, E-6/04 and E-7/04 *Fesil and Finnford, Pil and others and The Kingdom of Norway v EFTA Surveillance Authority* [2005] Report of the EFTA Court, page 121, paragraphs 77-79.

⁽³⁰⁾ See in this respect Case 730/79 *Philip Morris v Commission* [1989] ECR 2671, at paragraph 11 where it is stated that "When State financial aid strengthens the position of an undertaking compared with other undertakings competing in intra-Community trade the latter must be regarded as affected by that aid."

2. Compatibility of the aid

As the preliminary conclusion of the Authority is that the Wood Scheme satisfies the test of Article 61(1) of the EEA Agreement and hence involves state aid, it has to be examined whether the Wood Scheme may be considered compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement under Article 61(2) or (3) of the EEA Agreement.

2.1 *Compatibility with Article 61(2) EEA*

It appears that none of the exceptions under Article 61(2) EEA apply in this case as the Wood Scheme is not aimed at the objectives listed in those provisions.

2.2 *Compatibility with Article 61(3) EEA*

A state aid measure is considered compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement under Article 61(3)(a) EEA when it is designed to promote the economic development of areas where the standard of living is abnormally low or where there is serious underemployment. However, as there are no such areas defined by the Norwegian regional aid map, this provision is not relevant ⁽³¹⁾.

Moreover, the exception in Article 61(3)(b) EEA does not apply since the state aid granted under the Wood Scheme is not intended to promote the execution of an important project of common European interest or to remedy a serious disturbance in the economy of Norway.

However, the exception laid down in Article 61(3)(c) EEA which provides that state aid may be considered compatible with the common market where it facilitates the development of certain economic activities or of certain economic areas and does not adversely affect trading conditions to an extent contrary to the common interest, may be applicable.

Regional aid

Undertakings become eligible for aid under this provision when they are established in certain regions defined by the Norwegian regional aid map, referred to above, and when the conditions set out in Chapter 25 of the State Aid Guidelines are met. However, the documents which establish the Wood Scheme (e.g. the state budgets, White Paper, Working Group Report etc.) do not contain any provisions which refer to the regional aid map for Norway or the conditions set out in Chapter 25 of the State Aid Guidelines.

The Norwegian authorities have, however, stated that the Wood Scheme has (in practice) been implemented on the basis of the (regional aid) ceilings referred to in the table entitled "Attachment No. 3 Overview – funding rates applicable to the Wood Scheme" (included in Section 2.4 in Part I on "Facts"). However, the Authority observes that this table does not contain any supplementing information on the application of the ceilings, such as a description of eligible costs. The Authority can therefore not reassure itself that grants awarded under the Wood Scheme are in accordance and compatible with Chapter 25 of the State Aid Guidelines on regional aid.

Aid for research and development in Chapter 14 of the State Aid Guidelines

In Chapter 14 of the State Aid Guidelines aid granted to firms for research and development may be regarded as compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement on the basis of Article 61(3)(c) EEA. Chapter 14 sets out the definition of different types of research and development, such as "*fundamental research*", "*industrial research*" and "*pre-competitive development activity*" and the aid intensities which apply.

⁽³¹⁾ The Authority's Decision 327/99/COL of 16 December 1999 on the map of assisted areas and levels of aid (Norway).

However, the documents which establish and implement the Wood Scheme do not contain any definition or requirements as regards the type of research and development for which support may be granted, nor do they describe the costs which are considered as eligible or set out any ceilings on the maximum amount of aid which may be granted.

The Norwegian authorities have stated that aid for research and development activities have (in practice) been granted in accordance with the rules set forth in Chapter 14 of the State Aid Guidelines and that research and development projects are funded within 35/25% of eligible costs, depending on the size of the recipient. However, the Norwegian authorities have also provided statements referring to other aid intensities, such as 50% when financing projects are addressed to undertakings; and 100% where the grant was assumed not to qualify as aid either because the activity could not be attributed to individual undertakings or qualified as *de minimis* ⁽³²⁾. Moreover, in the context of co-financing the Norwegian authorities have referred to a maximum aid intensity of 75%.

As regards the eligible costs the Norwegian authorities have stated that they could include personnel costs, instruments, equipment, working space & buildings, etc. While these are costs referred to as eligible costs in Chapter 14.6 of the State Aid Guidelines, the Authority recalls that grants under the Wood Scheme may also be awarded to support the costs of a range of other elements such as campaigns, information dissemination, establishment of Internet portals & networks, meeting points for specific groups, development projects with focus on value generation and systems of logistics and on digitalisation.

On the basis of the above the Authority cannot reassure itself that grants awarded under the Wood Scheme are in accordance with Chapter 14 of the State Aid Guidelines for research and development.

Compliance with the block exemption Regulations on SMEs and training aid

Aid granted in compliance with the block exemption Regulations on SMEs and/or on training aid is considered compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement and is exempt from the notification requirement provided that the scheme fulfils all the conditions of the relevant block exemption Regulation and contains an express reference to it (by citing its title and publication reference in the Official Journal of the European Communities; now the Official Journal of the European Union) ⁽³³⁾.

However, neither the state budgets nor the Working Group Report or any of the other legislative preparatory works regarding the Wood Scheme include a reference to the application of the block exemption Regulation on SMEs nor to the block exemption Regulation on training aid. Moreover, the Authority has not received any information from the Norwegian authorities on the application of any of the block exemption Regulations for publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

On this basis the Authority takes the preliminary view that the Norwegian authorities have not complied with the formal requirements in the block exemption Regulations with respect to the Wood Scheme.

Compatibility directly under Article 61(3)(c) EEA on the basis of the material principles in the block exemption Regulation

The Authority may assess the Wood Scheme directly under Article 61(3)(c) EEA in the light of the material principles established in the block exemption Regulations on SMEs and training aid for purposes of determining whether the Wood Scheme may be considered compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement.

⁽³²⁾ See Sections 2.4 and 2.2 above.

⁽³³⁾ See Article 3(3) in the block exemption Regulations on SMEs and on training aid, respectively.

However, neither the state budgets or any of the other legislative preparatory works regarding the Wood Scheme provide that support must be granted to companies qualifying as SMEs, or contain a definition of this term. Nor do they provide that support must be granted to training aid or contain a definition of the latter.

The Norwegian authorities have, on the other hand, stated that the Wood Scheme has (in practice) been implemented on the basis of the ceilings referred to in the table entitled “Attachment No. 3 Overview – funding rates applicable to the Wood Scheme” (included in Section 2.4 in Part I on “Facts”). However, this table does not contain any supplementing information on the application of the ceilings, such as a description of eligible costs. The Authority can therefore not reassure itself that grants awarded under the Wood Scheme have been based on a practice which is in accordance with the material principles on the grant of aid to SMEs.

On this basis the Authority takes the preliminary view that even taking into account the material principles set out in the block exemption Regulations the Authority has doubts that the Wood Scheme is compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement under Article 61(3)(c) EEA.

2.3 Conclusions

In view of the fact that the Authority cannot establish that the Wood Scheme qualifies for any of the exemptions provided for in the EEA Agreement, the Authority therefore has doubts that the Wood Scheme could be considered compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement.

The documents submitted to the Authority which establish and implement the Wood Scheme do not contain sufficiently specific definitions of the type of projects for which support may be granted, descriptions of eligible costs or ceilings on the maximum amount of aid which may be granted. However, the Norwegian authorities may have an administrative practice to implement the Wood Scheme in accordance with the State aid Guidelines and the material principles in the block exemption Regulations. In the light of this the Norwegian authorities are invited to submit any information showing that internal instructions or other authoritative orders have been issued for purposes of implementing the Wood Scheme in compliance with the principles set out in the State Aid Guidelines or material principles in the block exemption Regulations.

However, the Authority wishes to point out that even if such an administrative practice could be demonstrated the Authority reserves its right to take a position on whether the Wood Scheme may be considered compatible under Article 61(3)(c) in view of the existence of the practice under the Wood Scheme to grant 100% support to projects where the grant was assumed by the administering authority not to qualify as aid because the activity could not be attributed to individual undertakings and considered to result in a modest benefit only to an *individual* undertaking. Indeed in the example given in Section 2.2 (in Part I on “Facts” under “*co-financing*”) where the Wood Scheme financed 100% of the costs of a development project, the presence of state aid cannot be excluded merely because the results were made available to “member companies”. The Norwegian authorities are invited to submit any further information it may have in respect of this practice, including on the existence of any eventual internal instructions to implement the Wood Scheme in this manner.

3. *De minimis* aid

The Norwegian authorities have submitted that grants awarded on the basis of specific provisions under the Wood Scheme fulfil the conditions for qualifying as *de minimis* aid. In other words, according to the Norwegian authorities the Wood Scheme contains provisions setting out conditions which, when they are met, ensure that grants qualify as *de minimis* aid.

The grant of aid may qualify as *de minimis* under the previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines or the subsequent *de minimis* Regulation (which replaced Chapter 12 as of 1 February 2003)⁽³⁴⁾ with the consequence that the measure does not contain state aid within the meaning of Article

⁽³⁴⁾ The previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines was deleted by the Authority’s Decision No. 198/03/COL of 5 November 2003, but as stated above Chapter 12 was superseded by the *de minimis* Regulation already as of 1 February 2003.

61(1) of the EEA Agreement and that there is no obligation to notify ⁽³⁵⁾. As the Wood Scheme was implemented between 1 July 2000 and the end of 2005 both sets of *de minimis* rules are relevant for the scheme. According to the Norwegian authorities it is the date that the Norwegian authorities gave their consent ("*tilsagn*") which determines whether the previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines or the subsequent *de minimis* Regulation is applicable to the grant in question.

It appears from Article 3(1) of the *de minimis* Regulation that the national authorities can only grant *de minimis* aid after first having verified that the total amount of *de minimis* aid received by the company is not raised by virtue of other *de minimis* aid having been received during the previous three years. The previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines contained a provision to the same effect by providing that it must be ensured that any additional aid granted to the same recipient does not raise the total amount of aid granted beyond the *de minimis* threshold. Under the *de minimis* Regulation one manner of verifying the *de minimis* threshold is by obtaining full information from the recipient on this matter. Under the previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines the *de minimis* rule should be verified by means of a control modality (e.g. control "*machinery*"). In the view of the Authority this could likewise consist of obtaining complete information from the recipient on the matter.

Under the Wood Scheme, Innovasjon Norge has made reference to the *de minimis* rules and informed recipients of an obligation to inform the authorities of other *de minimis* aid received three years after the consent to receive *de minimis* aid was given. However, this information obligation only concerns *de minimis* aid received *after* aid has been received under the Wood Scheme, and recipients have therefore not been required to submit information on whether any *de minimis* aid has been received *prior* to receiving *de minimis* aid under the Wood Scheme. As a consequence it cannot be excluded that recipients have received other *de minimis* aid prior to the grants received under the Wood Scheme with the result that total aid may exceed the *de minimis* threshold. The Authority can therefore not be certain that aid which has been stated by the Norwegian authorities to qualify as *de minimis* aid under the Wood Scheme does indeed qualify as such. The Authority is therefore of the preliminary opinion that the provisions under the Wood Scheme, potentially constituting a *de minimis* scheme, does not comply with the *de minimis* rules.

4. Procedural requirements

Pursuant to Article 1(3) in Part I of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement, "*the EFTA Surveillance Authority shall be informed, in sufficient time to enable it to submit its comments, of any plans to grant or alter aid (...). The State concerned shall not put its proposed measures into effect until the procedure has resulted in a final decision*".

The Norwegian authorities have not notified the Wood Scheme to the Authority prior to implementing the scheme. The Authority observes that it has not received information from the Norwegian authorities showing that the Wood Scheme is a continuance of a previous scheme which is similar to that of the Wood Scheme in terms of substance and structure. Moreover, the Wood Scheme is not covered by any other aid scheme notified by the Norwegian authorities to the Authority. In view of the fact that the preliminary conclusion of the Authority is that the Wood Scheme involves state aid within the meaning of Article 61(1) EEA it is the preliminary opinion of the Authority that the Norwegian authorities have not respected its obligation to notify pursuant to Article 1(3) in Part I of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement. Any state aid within the meaning of Article 61(1) of the EEA Agreement which is not notified will be treated as "unlawful aid" within the meaning of Article 1(f) in Part II of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement.

The Norwegian authorities are invited to confirm that the Wood Scheme has been terminated by referring to the specific date of its termination.

⁽³⁵⁾ The second paragraph of the previous Chapter 12 of the State Aid Guidelines on *de minimis* and Article 2(1) of the *de minimis* Regulation.

5. Conclusion

Based on the information submitted by the Norwegian authorities, the Authority is of the preliminary opinion that the Wood Scheme constitutes aid within the meaning of Article 61(1) of the EEA Agreement. Furthermore, the Authority has doubts that the Wood Scheme can be regarded as compatible with Article 61(3)(c) of the EEA Agreement in combination with the requirements laid down in Chapters 14 and 25 of the Authority's State Aid Guidelines. Moreover, the Authority's preliminary view is that the Norwegian authorities have not complied with the block exemption Regulations on aid to SMEs and training aid, and that the Wood Scheme cannot be approved directly under Article 61(3)(c) EEA in the light of the material principles of the block exemption Regulations. Consequently, the Authority has doubts that the Wood Scheme is compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement.

In addition, the Authority has doubts that the provisions under which *de minimis* aid allegedly is granted is in compliance with the previous Chapter 12 of the State aid Guidelines and the *de minimis* Regulation.

Consequently, and in accordance with Article 13(1) cf. Article 4(4) in Part II of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement, the Authority is obliged to open the procedure provided for in Article 1(2) in Part I of Protocol 3 of the Surveillance and Court Agreement. The decision to open proceedings is without prejudice to the final decision of the Authority, which may conclude that the Wood Scheme is compatible with the functioning of the EEA Agreement.

As the Wood Scheme has not been notified to the Authority, any aid within the meaning of Article 61(1) EEA granted under the Wood Scheme constitutes unlawful aid within the meaning of Article 1(f) in Part II of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement. It follows from Article 14 in Part II of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement that the Authority shall decide that unlawful aid which is incompatible with the state aid rules under the EEA Agreement must be recovered from the beneficiaries.

In the light of the foregoing considerations, the Authority, acting under the procedure laid down in Article 1(2) in Part I of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement as well as Articles 6(1) in Part II thereof, requests the Norwegian authorities to submit its comments and to provide all such information as may help to assess the aid granted under the Wood Scheme within **one month** of the date of receipt of this decision.

HAS ADOPTED THIS DECISION:

Article 1

The Authority has decided to open the formal investigation procedure provided for in Article 1(2) in Part I of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement against Norway with regard to the Wood Scheme.

Article 2

The Norwegian authorities are requested, pursuant to Article 6(1) in Part II of Protocol 3 to the Surveillance and Court Agreement, to submit their comments on the opening of the formal investigation procedure within one month from the notification of this decision and to provide all such information which may help to assess the Wood Scheme.

Article 3

Other EFTA States, EC Member States, and interested parties shall be informed by means of publication of this decision in its authentic language version, accompanied by a meaningful summary in languages other than the authentic language version, in the EEA Section of the Official Journal of the European Union and the EEA Supplement thereto, inviting them to submit comments within one month from the date of publication.

Article 4

This Decision is authentic in the English language.

Article 5

This Decision is addressed to the Kingdom of Norway.

Done at Brussels, 17 May 2006

For the EFTA Surveillance Authority

Bjørn T. Grydeland

President

Kurt Jaeger

College Member

Heimild til að veita ríkisaðstoð samkvæmt 61. gr. EES-samningsins og 3. mgr. 1. gr. 2006/EES/55/02
í I. hluta bókunar 3 við samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól

Eftirlitsstofnun EFTA hefur ákveðið að hreyfa ekki andmælum við ráðstöfunum þeim sem tilkynntar hafa verið.

Dagsetning ákvörðunar: 8. mars 2006

EFTA-ríki: Noregur

Málsnúmer: 58699

Fyrirsögn: Ákvörðun Eftirlitsstofnunar EFTA frá 8. mars 2006 um tilkynningu um breytta áætlun um fjármögnun sprotafyrirtækja um land allt

Markmið: Að auka framboð á sprotafjármagni

Lagaheimild: *St.prp. nr. 1 (2004–2005), Budsjett-innst. S. nr. 6 (2004–2005) og Budsjett-innst. S. nr. 8 (2004–2005)*

Gildistími: Allt að 15 árum

Fjárveiting: Vikjandi lán að fjárhæð 667 milljóna norskra króna (um 81 milljónar evra) og afskriftasjóður að fjárhæð 167 milljóna norskra króna (um 20 milljóna evra)

Fullgildan texta ákvörðunarinnar, að trúnaðarupplýsingum slepptum, er að finna á eftirfarandi slóð:
www.eftasurv.int/fieldsOfWork/fieldStateAid/stateAidRegistry

**Heimild til að veita ríkisaðstoð samkvæmt 61. gr. EES-samningsins og 3. mgr. 1. gr. 2006/EES/55/03
í I. hluta bókunar 3 við samninginn um eftirlitsstofnun og dómstól**

Eftirlitsstofnun EFTA hefur ákveðið að hreyfa ekki andmælum við ráðstöfunum þeim sem tilkynntar hafa verið.

Dagsetning ákvörðunar: 8. mars 2006

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Fyrirsögn: Ákvörðun Eftirlitsstofnunar EFTA frá 8. mars 2006 um tilkynningu um breytta áætlun um fjármögnun sprotafyrirtækja í héraði

Markmið: Að auka framboð á sprotafjármagni og stuðla að uppbyggingu í héruðunum sem njóta aðstoðar

Lagaheimild: *St.prp. nr. 1 (2004–2005), Budsjett-innst. S. nr. 6 (2004–2005) og Budsjett-innst. S. nr. 8 (2004–2005)*

Gildistími: Allt að 15 árum

Fjárveiting: Vikjandi lán að fjárhæð 700 milljóna norskra króna (um 85 milljóna evra), afskriftasjóður að fjárhæð 175 milljóna norskra króna (um 21 milljónar evra) og stjórnsýslukostnaður að fjárhæð 50 milljóna norskra króna (um 6,1 milljónar evra)

Fullgildan texta ákvörðunarinnar, að trúnaðarupplýsingum slepptum, er að finna á eftirfarandi slóð:
www.eftasurv.int/fieldsOfWork/fieldstateaid/stateaidregistry

EB-STOFNANIR

FRAMKVÆMDASTJÓRNIN

Tilkynning um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu fyrirtækja (Mál COMP/M.4336 – MAN/Scania)

2006/EES/55/04

1. Framkvæmdastjórninni barst 30. október 2006 tilkynning samkvæmt 4. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004 ⁽¹⁾ um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu þar sem þýska fyrirtækið MAN AG öðlast að fullu yfirráð í skilningi b-liðar 1. mgr. 3. gr. fyrrnefndrar reglugerðar yfir sænska fyrirtækinu Scania AB með tilboði um yfirtöku á öllu hlutafé fyrirtækisins.
2. Starfsemi hlutaðeigandi fyrirtækja er sem hér segir:
 - MAN: framleiðsla og sala á flutningabifreiðum, hópbifreiðum og hreyflum til nota í iðnaði og í skipum
 - Scania: framleiðsla og sala á flutningabifreiðum, hópbifreiðum og hreyflum til nota í iðnaði og í skipum
3. Að lokinni frumathugun telur framkvæmdastjórnin að samfylkingin, sem tilkynnt hefur verið, geti fallið undir gildissvið reglugerðar (EB) nr. 139/2004. Fyrirvari er þó um endanlega ákvörðun.
4. Hagsmunaaðilar eru hvattir til að senda framkvæmdastjórninni athugasemdir sem þeir kunna að hafa fram að færa um hina fyrirhuguðu samfylkingu.

Athugasemdir verða að berast framkvæmdastjórninni innan tíu daga frá því að tilkynning þessi birtist í Stjtið. ESB (C 274, 10. nóvember 2006). Þær má senda með símbréfi (faxnr. +32 (0) 22 96 43 01 og 22 96 72 44) eða í pósti, með tilvísuninni COMP/M.4336 – MAN/Scania, á eftirfarandi pósthfang:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Competition
Merger Registry
J-70
B-1049 Bruxelles/Brussel

⁽¹⁾ Stjtið. ESB L 24, 29.1.2004, bls. 1.

Tilkynning um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4420 – Crédit Agricole/Fiat Auto/FAFS)

2006/EES/55/05

1. Framkvæmdastjórninni barst 27. október 2006 tilkynning samkvæmt 4. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004 ⁽¹⁾ um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu þar sem franska fyrirtækið Crédit Agricole SA og ítalska fyrirtækið Fiat Auto SpA („Fiat“), sem tilheyrir Fiat-samsteypunni, öðlast með hlutafjárkaupum í sameiningu yfirráð í skilningi b-liðar 1. mgr. 3. gr. fyrrnefndrar reglugerðar yfir ítalska fyrirtækinu Fidis Retail SpA („Fidis“). Í framhaldi af þessum viðskiptum verða tiltekin dótturfyrirtæki Fiat-samsteypunnar færð undir þetta sameiginlega fyrirtæki sem skráð verður á Ítalíu og gefið nafnið Fiat Auto Financial Services SpA („FAFS“).
2. Starfsemi hlutaðeigandi fyrirtækja er sem hér segir:
 - Crédit Agricole: banka- og fjármálaþjónusta
 - Fiat: bifreiðaframleiðsla
 - FAFS: bifreiðalán fyrir neytendur og bifreiðaumboð, langtímaleiga atvinnuökutækja og umsýsluþjónusta fyrir bifreiðaflota
3. Að lokinni frumathugun telur framkvæmdastjórnin að samfylkingin, sem tilkynnt hefur verið, geti fallið undir gildissvið reglugerðar (EB) nr. 139/2004. Fyrirvari er þó um endanlega ákvörðun.
4. Hagsmunaaðilar eru hvattir til að senda framkvæmdastjórninni athugasemdir sem þeir kunna að hafa fram að færa um hina fyrirhuguðu samfylkingu.

Athugasemdir verða að berast framkvæmdastjórninni innan tíu daga frá því að tilkynning þessi birtist í Stjtið. ESB (C 271, 8. nóvember 2006). Þær má senda með símbréfi (faxnr. +32 (0) 22 96 43 01 og 22 96 72 44) eða í pósti, með tilvísuninni COMP/M.4420 – Crédit Agricole/Fiat Auto/FAFS, á eftirfarandi póstfang:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Competition
Merger Registry
J-70
B-1049 Bruxelles/Brussel

⁽¹⁾ Stjtið. ESB L 24, 29.1.2004, bls. 1.

Tilkynning um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4439 – Ryanair/Aer Lingus)

2006/EES/55/06

1. Framkvæmdastjórninni barst 30. október 2006 tilkynning samkvæmt 4. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004 ⁽¹⁾ um fyrirhugaða samfylkingu þar sem írski fyrirtækið Ryanair Holdings plc („Ryanair“) öðlast með yfirtökuboði, sem var tilkynnt 23. október 2006, að fullu yfirráð í skilningi b-liðar 1. mgr. 3. gr. fyrrnefndrar reglugerðar yfir írski fyrirtækinu Aer Lingus Group plc („Aer Lingus“).
2. Starfsemi hlutaðeigandi fyrirtækja er sem hér segir:
 - Ryanair: lágfargjaldaflugfélag sem starfar aðallega í Evrópu
 - Aer Lingus: flugfélag sem starfar um allan heim
3. Að lokinni frumathugun telur framkvæmdastjórnin að samfylkingin, sem tilkynnt hefur verið, geti fallið undir gildissvið reglugerðar (EB) nr. 139/2004. Fyrirvari er þó um endanlega ákvörðun.
4. Hagsmunaaðilar eru hvattir til að senda framkvæmdastjórninni athugasemdir sem þeir kunna að hafa fram að færa um hina fyrirhuguðu samfylkingu.

Athugasemdir verða að berast framkvæmdastjórninni innan tíu daga frá því að tilkynning þessi birtist í Stjtið. ESB (C 274, 10. nóvember 2006). Þær má senda með símbréfi (faxnr. +32 (0) 22 96 43 01 og 22 96 72 44) eða í pósti, með tilvísuninni COMP/M.4439 – Ryanair/Aer Lingus, á eftirfarandi pósthfang:

European Commission
Directorate-General for Competition
Merger Registry
J-70
B-1049 Bruxelles/Brussel

⁽¹⁾ Stjtið. ESB L 24, 29.1.2004, bls. 1.

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4225 – Celsia/Fundia)

2006/EES/55/07

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 28. júlí 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4225. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4249 – Abertis/Autostrade)

2006/EES/55/08

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 22. september 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4249. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4298 – Aggregate Industries/Foster Yeoman)

2006/EES/55/09

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 6. september 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fíánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4298. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4315 – GE/CS/GIMP/JV)

2006/EES/55/10

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 1. september 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fíánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4315. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4327 – Egis/Alpine/Hochtief/Austrian Highway A5)

2006/EES/55/11

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 8. september 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fíánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4327. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4349 – Metro/Geant Polska)

2006/EES/55/12

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 11. september 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fíánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4349. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Ákvörðun um að hreyfa ekki andmælum við tilkynntri samfylkingu fyrirtækja
(Mál COMP/M.4362 – Voestalpine/K+N/Euroshipping)

2006/EES/55/13

Framkvæmdastjórnin ákvað 26. september 2006 að hreyfa ekki andmælum við framangreindri tilkynntri samfylkingu og lýsa yfir að hún samrýmdist sameiginlega markaðnum. Ákvörðunin er tekin í samræmi við b-lið 1. mgr. 6. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EB) nr. 139/2004. Óstýtt útgáfa af ákvörðuninni er eingöngu til á ensku og verður birt eftir að brott hafa verið felld hvers kyns viðskiptaleyndarmál. Hún verður fíánleg:

- á samkeppnisvefsetri framkvæmdastjórnarinnar (<http://ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/mergers/cases>). Þar má leita að einstökum ákvörðunum um samfylkingar m.a. eftir fyrirtæki, málsnúmeri, dagsetningu og atvinnugrein;
- á rafrænu sniði á vefsetrinu EUR-Lex undir skjalnúmeri 32006M4362. EUR-Lex er vefsetur með beinlínuaðgangi að löggjöf Evrópubandalaganna (<http://ec.europa.eu/eur-lex/lex>).

Nýjar almannajónustukvaðir sem stjórnvöld á Grikklandi hafa lagt á í tengslum
við áætlunarflug á Grikklandi í samræmi við reglugerð ráðsins (EBE) nr. 2408/92

2006/EES/55/14

Stjórnvöld á Grikklandi hafa ákveðið að leggja á almannajónustukvaðir í tengslum við áætlunarflug á eftirtöldum leiðum á grundvelli a-liðar 1. mgr. 4. gr. reglugerðar (EBE) nr. 2408/92:

- Atena–Kalimnos
- Þessaloníkí–Kalamata
- Þessaloníkí–Límnos–Ikaria

Um nánari upplýsingar sjá [Stjtið. ESB C 260, 28.10.2006](#).

GR-Elliniko: áætlunarflug**2006/EES/55/15****Auglýsing stjórnvalda á Grikklandi um útboð á samningum um rekstur áætlunarflugs samkvæmt almannaþjónustukvöðum, birt í samræmi við d-lið 1. mgr. 4. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EBE) nr. 2408/92**

Stjórnvöld á Grikklandi hafa ákveðið að leggja á almannaþjónustukvaðir, frá 1.4.2006 að telja, í tengslum við áætlunarflug á eftirtöldum leiðum, á grundvelli a-liðar 1. mgr. 4. gr. reglugerðar ráðsins (EBE) nr. 2408/92 frá 23.7.1992 um aðgang bandalagsflugfélaga að flugleiðum innan bandalagsins:

- Atena–Kalimnos,
- Þessaloníkí–Kalamata,
- Þessaloníkí–Límnos–Ikaria.

Upplýsingar um almannaþjónustukvaðirnar birtust í *Stjórnartíðindum Evrópusambandsins* C 260, 28.10.2006.

Hafi enginn flugrekandi tilkynnt grísku flugmálastjórninni (Civil Aviation Authority) fyrir 1.4.2007 að hann hyggist stunda áætlunarflug á einni eða fleiri ofangreindra leiða frá 1.5.2007 að telja, í samræmi við áhvílandi almannaþjónustukvaðir fyrir þá leið eða þær leiðir og án þess að fara fram á fjárstyrk, munu stjórnvöld á Grikklandi takmarka flugrekstur á einni eða fleiri ofangreindra leiða við einn flugrekanda um þriggja ára skeið í samræmi við ákvæði d-liðar 1. mgr. 4. gr. ofangreindrar reglugerðar og bjóða út í almennu útboði heimild til að halda úti flugi á viðkomandi leiðum frá 1.5.2007.

Útboðsgögnin í heild, m.a. útboðslýsing, fylgiskjöl sem krafist er vegna þátttöku í útboðinu og ýmis önnur gögn, fást endurgjaldslaust hjá: Hellenic Civil Aviation Authority, Directorate for Air Operations, Vas. Georgiou 1, GR-166 04 Elliniko, sími (30-210) 891 61 49, bréfasími (30-210) 894 71 01.

Tilboð skulu send í fimmriti í ábyrgðarpósti með móttökukvittun á neðangreint pósthfang eða afhent á sama stað gegn kvittun:

Ministry of Transport and Communications, Civil Aviation Authority, Directorate-General for Air Transport, Directorate for Air Operations, Section II, Vasileos Georgiou 1, GR-16604 Elliniko.

Frestur til að leggja fram tilboð er til kl. 12.00 á hádegi á 32. degi eftir að útboðsauglýsingin birtist í fylgiriti *Stjórnartíðinda Evrópusambandsins* (31.10.2006).

Ef tilboð eru send í pósti verða þau að berast áður en þessi frestur er liðinn og ræður þá tíminn sem skráður er á móttökukvittunina.

Um nánari upplýsingar sjá [Stjtið. ESB C 262, 31.10.2006](#).

Æska og athafnir**2006/EES/55/16****Aðgerð 4.1****Auglýsing eftir tillögum nr. 1/2007****Auglýst eftir tillögum um styrkveitingar til stofnana sem starfa að æskulýðsmálum á Evrópuvísu**

Tillögur framkvæmdastjórnar Evrópubandalaganna um framkvæmd áætlunarinnar „Æska og athafnir“ (Ath.: óstaðf. þýð.) árin 2007–2013 hafa ekki verið samþykktar formlega á vegum löggjafa Evrópusambandsins. Framkvæmdastjórnin og framkvæmdastofnun menntamála, hljóð- og myndgerðar og menningarmála („stofnunin“) hafa engu að síður ákveðið að auglýsa eftir tillögum nú til þess að framkvæmd áætlunarinnar tefjist ekki eftir að löggjafi Evrópusambandsins hefur samþykkt lagagrundvöllinn, en þess mun ekki langt að bíða, og til þess að hugsanlegir styrkþegar geti hafið undirbúning tillagna sem fyrst.

Auglýsingin eftir tillögum, sem framkvæmdastjórn Evrópubandalaganna birtir, varðar aðgerð 4.1 í áætluninni, en samkvæmt henni eru veittir styrkir til stofnana sem starfa að æskulýðsmálum á Evrópuvísu. Þessi auglýsing eftir tillögum, sem varðar styrki sem koma til úthlutunar árið 2007, bindur hvorki hendur framkvæmdastjórnarinnar né stofnunarinnar lagalega. Svo kann að fara að hún verði felld niður og í staðinn birtar auglýsingar eftir tillögum með öðrum skilmálum og viðeigandi skilafresti ef löggjafi Evrópusambandsins gerir verulegar breytingar á lagagrundvöllinum.

Jafnframt er framkvæmd auglýsinga eftir tillögum vegna styrkveitinga árið 2007 háð því að uppfyllt verði eftirtalin skilyrði sem framkvæmdastjórnin og stofnunin hafa ekki vald yfir:

- Evrópuþingið og ráð Evrópusambandsins afgreiði endanlega gerð lagagrundvallarins sem áætlunin byggist á.
- Árleg starfsáætlun áætlunarinnar „Æska og athafnir“ verði samþykkt eftir umfjöllun í umsjónarnefnd áætlunarinnar.
- Fjárlög Evrópusambandsins fyrir árið 2007 hljóti samþykki fjárveitingavaldsins.

Skoðaðar verða ítarlega allar umsóknir sem fullnægja eftirtöldum viðmiðum:

Til þess að stofnun geti átt kost á rekstrarstyrk verður hún:

- að vera óháð stjórnvöldum,
- að hafa haft stöðu lögaðila um meira en eins árs skeið,
- að vera rekin án hagnaðar,
- að vera æskulýðssamtök, eða að öðrum kosti samtök með víðari skírskotun sem skipuleggja hluta af starfsemi sinni með tilliti til æskufólks,
- að gera æskufólki kleift að hafa áhrif á starfsemi sem komið er af stað með æskulýð í huga,
- að hafa að minnsta kosti einn fastan starfsmann (launaðan eða ólaunaðan).

Tekið verður við umsóknum frá stofnunum í eftirtöldum löndum:

- Ríkjum sem eiga aðild að Evrópusambandinu hinn 1. janúar 2007.
- Þeim aðildarríkjum Fríverslunarsamtaka Evrópu (EFTA) sem eiga aðild að Evrópska efnahagssvæðinu: Íslandi, Liechtenstein og Noregi.
- Ríkjum sem sótt hafa um aðild að Evrópusambandinu og njóta ákvæða áætlunar um ríki sem bíða aðildar: Tyrklandi.
- Ríkjum á vestanverðum Balkanskaga í samræmi við það sem ákveðið verður í samráði við þau ríki í kjölfar rammasamninga sem gera þeim kleift að taka þátt í áætlunum Evrópusambandsins: Albaníu, Bosníu og Hersegóvínu, Króatíu, Makedóníu (fyrirverandi lýðveldi í Júgóslavíu), Svartfjallalandi, Serbíu.
- Ýmsum ríkjum í austanverðri Evrópu: Hvíta-Rússlandi, Moldóvu, Rússneska ríkjasambandinu, Úkraínu.
- Svissneska ríkjasambandinu, þó með fyrirvara um gerð tvíhliða samnings við það ríki.

Stofnanir, sem leggja fram umsóknir, verða að hafa virk aðildarsamtök í átta ofangreindra ríkja hið minnsta.

Umsóknir skulu sendar framkvæmdastjórninni eigi síðar en **22. desember 2006**.

Styrkumsóknir skulu fullnægja öllum ákvæðum sem er að finna í heildartexta auglýsingarinnar og skal þeim skilað á til þess gerðu eyðublaði. Þessi skjöl eru birt á lýðnetinu á eftirtöldum vefsetrum:

- Europa-vefsetri framkvæmdastjórnar Evrópubandalaganna (heildartexti auglýsingarinnar):
http://ec.europa.eu/youth/program/ingyo_en.html
- Vefsetri stofnunarinnar (heildartexti auglýsingarinnar og umsóknareyðublað):
http://eacea.cec.eu.int/static/en/overview/Youth_overview.htm

Sjá einnig **Stjtið. ESB C 262, 31.10.2006**, en þar birtist auglýsingin eftir tillögum.

MEDIA 2007 – Þróun, dreifing og kynning

2006/EES/55/17

Framkvæmd áætlunar um að ýta undir framleiðslu, dreifingu og kynningu á evrópskum hljóð- og myndverkum

Aðgerðir til að auðvelda kynningu og markaðssetningu: hátíðir með hljóð- og myndefni

Skilyrt auglýsing eftir tillögum – EACEA nr. 05/ 06

Fyrirvari

Tillögur framkvæmdastjórnarinnar um framkvæmd MEDIA-áætlunarinnar hafa ekki verið samþykktar formlega á vegum Evrópulöggjafans. Til þess að framkvæmd áætlunarinnar tefjist ekki eftir að Evrópulöggjafinn hefur samþykkt þennan lagagrundvöll, en þess mun ekki langt að bíða, og til þess að hugsanlegir styrkþegar geti hafið undirbúning tillagna sem fyrst, hefur framkvæmdastjórnin engu að síður ákveðið að birta þessa auglýsingu eftir tillögum.

Þessi auglýsing eftir tillögum er ekki lagalega bindandi fyrir framkvæmdastjórnina. Hún getur felld hana niður og birt auglýsingar eftir tillögum með öðrum skilmálum og viðeigandi skilafresti ef Evrópulöggjafinn gerir verulegar breytingar á lagagrundvöllinum.

Í almennara skilningi er framkvæmd auglýsinga eftir tillögum árið 2007 háð eftirfarandi skilyrðum sem eru ekki í valdi framkvæmdastjórnarinnar:

- Evrópuþingið og ráð Evrópusambandsins afgreiði endanlega gerð lagagrundvallarins sem áætlunin byggist á án verulegra breytinga.
- Árleg starfsáætlun MEDIA-áætlunarinnar, ásamt tilheyrandi almennum framkvæmdarleiðbeiningum og viðmiðum og aðferðum sem beitt er við val umsókna, verði samþykkt eftir umfjöllun í áætlunarnefndinni.
- Fjárlög Evrópusambandsins fyrir árið 2007 hljóti samþykki fjárveitingavaldsins.

1. Markmið og lýsing

Auglýst er eftir tillögum á grundvelli ákvörðunar Evrópuþingsins og ráðsins um að stofna til sameiginlegrar áætlunar til nokkurra ára um aðgerðir Evrópubandalagsins á sviði hljóð- og myndefnis árin 2007 til 2013.

Í ofangreindri ákvörðun ráðsins eru m.a. sett eftirtalin markmið:

- „að greiða fyrir og hvetja til kynningarstarfs og útbreiðslu evrópskra hljóð- og myndmiðlaverka og kvikmyndaverka á sölusýningum, kaupstefnum og hljóð- og myndmiðlunarhátíðum í Evrópu og um heim allan, að því marki sem slíkir viðburðir geta gegnt mikilvægu hlutverki í kynningu evrópskra verka og tengslamyndun milli fagfólks“
- „að hvetja til tengslamyndunar milli evrópskra rekstraraðila með því að styðja sameiginlegar aðgerðir innlendra, opinberra eða óháðra aðila, sem vinna á sviði kynninga, á evrópskum og alþjóðlegum mörkuðum“

2. Hlutgengir umsækjendur

Auglýsingunni er beint til fyrirtækja í Evrópu, þ.e. fyrirtækja sem eru skráð í aðildarríkjum Evrópusambandsins, löndum sem eiga aðild að EES-samningnum og taka þátt í áætluninni MEDIA 2007 (Íslandi, Liechtenstein og Noregi) og Sviss og eru undir yfirráðum ríkisborgara þessara landa.

Þessi fyrirtæki verða að standa að hátíðum með hljóð- og myndefni sem stuðla að ofangreindum markmiðum og þar sem hlutfall evrópskra kvikmynda af heildarframboði er að minnsta kosti 70 af hundraði, og skulu sýndar myndir frá að minnsta kosti 10 ríkjum sem eiga aðild að MEDIA-áætluninni.

3. Fjárveiting og lengd verkefna

Fé, sem er til ráðstöfunar vegna þessarar auglýsingar eftir tillögum, er 700 000 evrur og kemur það af fjárveitingu vegna ársins 2007.

Styrkir framkvæmdastjórnarinnar geta ekki orðið hærri en sem nemur 50% af heildarfjárhæð styrkhæfs kostnaðar.

Þessi auglýsing eftir tillögum varðar eingöngu verkefni í tengslum við hátíðir með hljóð- og myndefni sem hefjast á tímabilinu 1. júní 2007 til 31. október 2007.

4. Umsóknarfrestur

Umsóknir skulu sendar EACEA eigi síðar en 1. desember 2006.

5. Nánari upplýsingar

Heildartexta auglýsingarinnar ásamt umsóknareyðublöðum er að finna á eftirfarandi slóð:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/media/festiv_en.html

Umsóknir skulu fullnægja öllum ákvæðum heildartextans og ber að skila þeim á til þess gerðum eyðublöðum.

Orðsending framkvæmdastjórnarinnar um framlengingu rammaáætlunar um ríkisaðstoð til skipasmíða

2006/EES/55/18

Rammaákvæði um ríkisaðstoð til skipasmíða ⁽¹⁾ („rammaákvæðin“) falla úr gildi 31. desember 2006.

Rammaákvæðin hafa gilt frá 1. janúar 2004, en það er fremur stuttur tími. Aðeins fáein mál hafa verið metin samkvæmt rammaákvæðunum. Þess er einkum að gæta að rammaákvæðin hafa að geyma reglur um aðstoð til nýsköpunar sem eru einsdæmi í þessari atvinnugrein og reynsla framkvæmdastjórnarinnar af þeim er takmörkuð.

Framkvæmdastjórnin hefur af þessum sökum ákveðið að rammaákvæðin skuli gilda áfram til 31. desember 2008. Hún væntir þess að geta fyrir þann tíma metið hvort rétt sé að viðhalda atvinnugreinabundnum reglum um ríkisaðstoð til skipasmíða, með hliðsjón af nýrri reynslu sem aflað hefur verið. Þar eð reglugerð ráðsins (EB) nr. 1177/2002 frá 27. júní 2002 um tímabundnar varnarráðstafanir fyrir skipasmíðaiðnaðinn ⁽²⁾ féll úr gildi 31. mars 2005 eiga vísanir til þeirrar reglugerðar í rammaákvæðunum ekki lengur við. Framkvæmdastjórnin mun því hætta að beita ákvæðum liða 9 og 12(e) í rammaákvæðunum frá 1. janúar 2007 að telja.

⁽¹⁾ Stjótið. ESB C 317, 30.12.2003, bls. 11.

⁽²⁾ Stjótið. EB L 172, 2.7.2002, bls. 1. Ákvæði reglugerðarinnar gilda með áorðnum breytingum samkvæmt reglugerð (EB) nr. 502/2004 (Stjótið. ESB L 81, 19.3.2004, bls. 6).

Reglur um upplýsingaskipti – Tæknilegar reglugerðir

2006/EES/55/19

Tilskipun Evrópuþingsins og ráðsins 98/34/EB frá 22. júní 1998 sem setur reglur um tilhögun upplýsinga-skipta vegna tæknilegra staðla og reglugerða og reglna um þjónustuskrifstofur upplýsingasamfélagsins (Stjtið. EB L 204, 21.7.1998, bls. 37 og L 217, 5.8.1998, bls. 18; EES-viðbætur við Stjtið. EB nr. 3, 18.1.2001, bls. 87 og nr. 57, 15.11.2001, bls. 246).

Tilkynningar um drög að innlendum tæknilegum reglugerðum sem hafa borist framkvæmdastjórninni

Tilvísunarnúmer ⁽¹⁾	Heiti	Lok þriggja mánaða stöðvunartímabils ⁽²⁾
2006/0480/F	Auglýsing um skilmála sem varða heilsuviðvörðun sem fylgja skal auglýsingum og kynningartexta á tilteknum matvörum og drykkjum	⁽⁴⁾
2006/0481/HU	Reglugerð efnahagsráðherra frá .../2006 um öryggi tækjabúnaðar í skemmtigörðum	5.12.2006
2006/0482/PL	Reglugerð efnahagsráðherra um gerð þrýstímæla fyrir hjólbarða ökutækja ásamt ákvæðum um prófanir og rannsóknir sem fara eiga fram við lögbundið eftirlit með slíkum mælitækjum	5.12.2006
2006/0483/LV	Drög að stjórnarreglugerð: „Reglugerð um tæknilega gerð rafeindatækja og rafeindabúnaðar til skráningar á sköttum og öðrum gjöldum og um reglur um sérfræðiálit“	6.12.2006
2006/0484/D	Fjórða reglugerð um breyting á tóbaksreglugerð	6.12.2006
2006/0485/FIN	Reglugerð samgönguráðuneytisins um breyting á 18. gr. reglugerðar um gerð og búnað bifreiða og eftirvagna (1248/2002)	7.12.2006
2006/0486/FIN	Reglugerð samgönguráðuneytisins um breyting á 10. gr. reglugerðar um gerð og búnað ökutækja á tveimur og þremur hjólum og fjórhjóla (1250/2002)	7.12.2006
2006/0487/A	RVS 05.02.13 Umferðarstjórn, búnaður til umferðarstýringar, umferðarmerki og upplýsingar, merkingar og vegvísar á hraðbrautum	11.12.2006
2006/0488/D	Tæknilegir afhendingarskilmálar fyrir byggingarefni og blöndur byggingarefna sem notaðar eru í sementsbundin burðarlög og slitlög úr steinsteypu; þý. stutth. <i>TL Beton – StB 06</i>	8.12.2006
2006/0489/D	Viðauki við tæknilega samningsskilmála og leiðbeiningar vegna gerðar sementsbundinna burðarlaga og slitlaga úr steinsteypu; þý. stutth. <i>ZTV Beton – StB 06</i>	8.12.2006
2006/0490/S	Drög að reglum um sprengivinnu ásamt leiðbeiningum um framkvæmd reglnanna	8.12.2006
2006/0491/NL	Reglugerð um styrki í tengslum við svonefnda 2. áfanga-einingu, <i>Food & Nutrition Delta</i> , tilraunareglugerðar um styrki til nýsköpunarverkefna	⁽⁴⁾
2006/0492/NL	Reglugerð um styrki í tengslum við svonefndan innoWATOR-þátt tilraunareglugerðar um styrki til nýsköpunarverkefna	⁽⁴⁾
2006/0493/B	Drög að tilskipun um ræktun erfðabreyttra nytjajurta samhliða ræktun hefðbundinna nytjajurta og nytjajurta sem ræktaðar eru með lífrænum aðferðum	13.12.2006
2006/0494/FIN	Ríkisstjórnarfrumvarp til laga um breyting á lögum um fjarskipta-markaðinn	13.12.2006
2006/0495/UK	Reglugerð um tilgreinda sýkla sem leggjast á dýr 2006 (breyting) (Skotland)	14.12.2006
2006/0496/NL	Tilskipun um jarðvegsgæði	14.12.2006
2006/0497/DK	BL 3-5, Reglur um þryllupalla á mannvirkjum á hafi úti, skipum o.s.frv., 4. útgáfa	14.12.2006

Tilvísunarnúmer ⁽¹⁾	Heiti	Lok þriggja mánaða stöðvunartímabils ⁽²⁾
2006/0498/FIN	Tillögur að breytingum á 1. og 2. kafla finnsk-sænskra reglna um ísflokkun skipa	15.12.2006
2006/0499/NL	Reglugerð um nánari forskrift um orkunýtingu bygginga	18.12.2006
2006/0500/NL	Tilskipun frá ... 2006 um reglur um jaðarbúnað og útvarpsbúnað	18.12.2006
2006/0501/NL	Tilskipun frá ... 2006 um reglur um rafsegulsviðssamhæfi tækjabúnaðar	18.12.2006

⁽¹⁾ Ár – skráningarnúmer – upprunaríki.

⁽²⁾ Á þessu tímabili er ekki heimilt að samþykkja drögin.

⁽³⁾ Ekkert stöðvunartímabil vegna þess að framkvæmdastjórnin fellst á ástæður tilkynningarríkisins fyrir því að samþykkja drögin án tafar.

⁽⁴⁾ Ekkert stöðvunartímabil vegna þess að ráðstöfunin varðar tækniforskriftir eða aðrar kröfur í tengslum við skatta- eða fjármálaráðstafanir samkvæmt þriðja undirlið annars málslíðar 11. mgr. 1. gr. tilskipunar 98/34/EB.

⁽⁵⁾ Upplýsingameðferð lokið.

Framkvæmdastjórnin vekur athygli á dómi frá 30. apríl 1996 í málinu „CIA Security“ (C-194/94 – Dómasafn I, bls. 2201) þar sem úrskurður Evrópudómstólsins var á þann veg að túlka bæri 8. og 9. gr. tilskipunar 98/34/EB (áður 83/189/EBE) á þann hátt að einstaklingar gætu skírskotað til þeirra fyrir dómstólum aðildarríkjanna og þeim bæri skylda til að neita að beita innlendri tæknilegri reglugerð sem ekki hefði verið tilkynnt í samræmi við tilskipunina.

Þessi dómur staðfestir orðsendingu framkvæmdastjórnarinnar frá 1. október 1986 (Stjtið. EB C 245, 1.10.1986, bls. 4).

Af þessu leiðir að brot á tilkynningaskyldunni ógildir viðkomandi tæknilegar reglugerðir og er þá ókleift að framfylgja þeim gagnvart einstaklingum.

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Frekari upplýsingar um þessar tilkynningar fást í eftirtöldum stjórnsýsludeildum aðildarríkjanna:

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