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EUROPEAN COMMISSION

PRESS RELEASE

Brussels, 18 December 2013

State aid: Commission approves French aid for construction and renovation of stadiums for UEFA EURO 2016 Championship

The European Commission has found French public support for the construction and renovation of nine stadiums in order to host the UEFA EURO Championship in 2016 to be in line with EU state aid rules. After the championship, the stadiums will continue to be available to clubs and citizens for social, sports and cultural events. The Commission therefore concluded that the measure will further the promotion of sport and culture without unduly distorting competition in the EU internal market.

Commission Vice President in charge of competition policy Joaquín Almunia said: "France will build and renovate 9 modern multifunctional stadiums. This will not only allow for a smooth organisation of the UEFA EURO 2016 but will also promote sport and culture in France and benefit clubs and citizens for many years after the championship."

France was designated to host the UEFA 2016 in 2010. In order to comply with the UEFA requirements, France plans to provide around €1 052 million public support for the construction or renovation of nine stadiums. The project covers the construction of four new stadiums in Bordeaux, Lille, Lyon and Nice and the renovation of five existing ones: Parc des Princes in Paris, Stade Geoffroy Guichard in Saint-Etienne, Stade Vélodrome in Marseille, Toulouse Municipal Stadium and Lens Stadium Felix Bollaert.

The Commission found that the public financing will provide an advantage to the companies involved in the construction and renovation of the stadiums as well as to the operators and users of the stadiums. The measure therefore involves state aid in the meaning of the EU rules. Such aid can be found compatible if it furthers a common EU objective without unduly distorting competition in the internal market.

The Commission found that the project would not have been viable without public support. Moreover, the aid granted for the construction and the renovation of the stadiums is limited to the minimum necessary to ensure that they will conform to the UEFA requirements in time for the Euro 2016 championship. Furthermore, after the championship, the stadiums will continue to be available for the resident clubs and will also serve as multifunctional arenas for the public for sport, cultural and social events.

The conditions for the further commercial exploitation and use of the stadiums are not yet fully defined. Today's decision is therefore limited to the aid needed for the construction and renovation of the stadiums. France committed to notify to the Commission the outstanding conditions of exploitation and of use of the stadiums after the championship, as soon as these elements will have been finalised. France will also set up a system of permanent control of the prices paid by the resident clubs, in order to ensure that they are used at market conditions. This is intended to limit the risk of distorting competition, for example through granting undue advantages to particular football clubs.

Background

In a joint statement on 21 March 2012, VP Almunia and President Platini of UEFA agreed that the control of State aid to professional football and UEFA's Financial Fair Play rules address identical concerns and that professional football clubs should live within their own means (IP/12/264).

Before today's decision, the Commission has authorised state aid for a series of multifunctional stadiums in Belgium (see IP/13/1120), Sweden (see IP/13/394), and Germany (see cases SA.35440, SA.35135, SA.36105).

The Commission is also looking at measures envisaged by other Member States, which were brought to its attention and has sent a letter to all Member States concerning State aid to professional football in October 2012.

The non-confidential version of the current decision will be made available under the case number SA.35501 in the State Aid Register on the DG Competition website once any confidentiality issues have been resolved. New publications of state aid decisions on the internet and in the Official Journal are listed in the State Aid Weekly e-News.

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