

INVESTEU

ADVISORY BOARD

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INNOVATION AND JOB CREATION IN EUROPE



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European
Commission

MINUTES

Sixth Meeting of the Advisory Board (AB) of InvestEU Programme

Plenary composition

Thursday, 7 December 2023

Hybrid meeting held in Brussels (CCAB) and via videoconference

1. Welcome by the Chair

The Chair (Mr Giorgio Chiarion Casoni) and the Vice-Chair (Ms Teresa Czerwińska, Vice-President of the EIB) welcomed the participants. The Chair noted the online presence of two experts working on the InvestEU interim evaluation, who are attending as observers. The Vice-Chair summarized EIB Group achievements since the last Advisory Board (AB) meeting in April 2023, particularly highlighting the amount of financing operations approved and signed.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

3. State of play of the InvestEU programme

The Chair presented an update on the implementation of InvestEU focusing on progress made since the previous meeting of the Advisory Board. His presentation included an overview of the guarantee agreements (GA) signed, contributions agreements and top-ups from other Union programmes, and approval of InvestEU operations, highlighting that the 2023 NGEU deadline in terms of approved operations has been met at the end of November.

The Chair also presented progress made in the other pillars of InvestEU: the Advisory Hub and the Portal.

He also referred to the InvestEU mid-term evaluation, which will feed in the impact assessment on a potential follow up investment programme in the next MFF. The Chair closed the presentation by inviting the members to register for upcoming events in January 2024 – the InvestEU high-level conference on 23 January and the EU Sustainable Investment Summit on 24 January.

Advisory Board members recognised the progress achieved. For future updates, members from Belgium, Germany and Sweden requested information on progress on horizontal objectives (climate, gender and others) as well as more detailed presentation on signed and disbursed amounts. It was requested to include this type of information also on the InvestEU website. The Portuguese member asked for a more detailed information on the implementation progress by implementing partners other than the EIBG. It was agreed that the Advisory Board members will be provided with a report on the InvestEU implementation progress, by early April 2024, in preparation of the next Advisory Board meeting.

In reply to the questions raised, the EIB and EIF members informed about the amount of financing signed by the two institutions. Other implementing partners recalled that it takes several months to bring a product to the market and reach final beneficiaries, noting inter alia the difficulties posed by state aid requirements. Implementing partners also cautioned about excessive reporting requirements, which render the programme less attractive and more difficult to implement. In this regard, the Chair informed about the Commission proposal on the reduction of reporting for operational reports to be provided on an annual basis and progress reports on a quarterly basis.

Other questions from the members of France, Belgium and Sweden addressed the InvestEU Portal. The discussions concluded with a point on supporting critical raw materials projects under InvestEU.

4. Second call for expression of interest for other implementing and advisory partners

Ms Marina Vatchkova and Mr Martin Koch from DG ECFIN presented the second call for expression of interest for the other implementing and advisory partners, which was launched on 25 October 2023.

For the Advisory Hub, the maximum allocated budget per applicant is EUR 5 million with no differentiation of the number of Member States covered. The call will be open until August 2025 or until the exhaustion of the budget. Received applications are reviewed every six months. Novelties related to evaluation criteria were highlighted such as the inclusion of pillar assessment as an eligibility criterion and assessing the readiness to implement the advisory initiative.

For the InvestEU Fund call, EUR 1.37 billion of MFF resources is available and may be increased depending on other resources becoming available. The call has four cut-off dates and will remain open until February 2026 or until the exhaustion of the budget. In terms of main features of the call, at least 30% of the available budget is reserved for new implementing partners; the call is only open to pillar assessed entities and the evaluation process has been simplified for the existing implementing partners.

DG ECFIN may organise bilateral meetings with potential applicants to provide general information and clarification on the call. A number of information documents will be published on the InvestEU website early January. Moreover, on 18 January, a dedicated webinar will be organised to address questions received from the potential applicants.

In reply to the question from the member from Ireland about pillar assessment for advisory partners, it was clarified that the pillar assessment may not need to cover financial instruments but other relevant pillars, depending on the proposed activity of the advisory partner. The reference to policy discount in the InvestEU Fund call in terms of remuneration for the EU guarantee for the risk taken was also explained. In reply to a question from CDP, it was also clarified that an indicative split of the EU guarantee per window is included in the call.

5. Final report of the Advisory Board Subgroups on Energy efficiency financing gaps and Social infrastructure investment

Mr Robert Dzierzgwa, Chair of the Subgroup on Energy efficiency financing gaps, presented the final report of the subgroup. He recalled the mandate of the subgroup and the work undertaken for the completion of the report. He followed by presenting the outline of the report, which covered an overview of barriers to energy efficiency in the EU, achievements under InvestEU related to energy efficiency, best practices and concluding reflections.

Regarding the concluding reflections directed to implementing partners, these included use of best practices, which may serve as a point of reference for the design of financial products. In terms of design of specific financial products, the concluding reflections proposed to focus on residential building stimulating deep renovation and guarantee schemes for contracting and to work with market operators to identify the needs. Further reflections addressed improvements related to project identification and the need to reinforce the access to technical assistance.

Regarding the concluding reflections directed to Member States, the importance of blending grants with financial instruments was highlighted as was the need to develop a common toolkit for the promotion of energy efficiency and to reinforce technical assistance for public administration.

In the ensuing discussion, the EESC member noted the need to consider the new financing needs that will be created by recently adopted regulations and directives, such as the Energy Performance of Buildings directive (EPBD) currently under amendment, for example. The Belgian member, supported by the EESC member, asked for a more detailed proposal regarding the simplification of reporting, while the Swedish member pointed to the various tools for project identification presented in the report and inquired whether there would be an interest among implementing partners for one standardized, taxonomy-aligned, tool. This may not be feasible to realize as the partners implement various financial products for different type of final beneficiaries.

Mr Filipe Cartaxo, Chair of the Subgroup on Social infrastructure investment, presented the final report of the subgroup. He thanked the members and implementing partners for their presentations over the course of the subgroup and contributions to the report. The Chair recalled the mandate of the subgroup and referred to the scoping paper, which outlined the proposed scope and objectives of the work. He highlighted that not all questions of the scoping paper were answered given the reliance on secondary research. The subgroup's Chair presented the key takeaways of the report, which are highlighted in the executive summary. His presentation focused on the concluding reflections – calls for action – covering project aggregation, the need to attract private finance and the need to simplify private public partnership models.

6. Recommendations to be issued to the Steering Board

The Chair recalled that the draft recommendations were shared with the Advisory Board members ten days prior to this meeting. Comments received by 4 December were included in a revised version, which was circulated one day before the meeting. The Vice-Chair presented in detail the individual recommendations stemming from the three subgroups while the Chair concluded with the horizontal recommendations linked to communication aspects.

The CEB member commented on the social infrastructure investments section and identified three areas on which CEB would be ready to work with the Commission, including project aggregation and the creation of an investment platform for social infrastructure. This was echoed by CDP. CEB could also share its data about the target [or priority] segments of the Social Investments and Skills window, including estimated gaps in each of the segments and likelihood of projects, in order to support further investments in the area. The CDP member noted the importance of the energy efficiency recommendations for Italy.

It was clarified that all recommendations are addressed to current as well as potential implementing partners.

It was concluded that the recommendations are approved by the Advisory Board. The final version, including the proposed modifications made during the discussion will be shared with the Advisory Board members.

7. Discussion on potential topic of a future Subgroup

Ms Katerina Borunska from DG ECFIN presented three possible topics of a new subgroup to be launched – sustainable mobility, European economic security and InvestEU post-2027 – noting that the intention is to launch one subgroup to ensure a good level of participation.

There was an overall consensus to launch a subgroup on sustainable mobility, drawing on previous work done by the European Commission as well as on existing best practices, and analysing, which EU funds are available for this sector. The importance of addressing the electrification of the road sector was also mentioned.

Regarding the topic of European economic security, Advisory Board members agreed on the importance of the topic, noting the need to monitor the related political discussions. On the topic of InvestEU post-2027, Advisory Board members agreed with postponing the discussion on the topic after the conclusion of the InvestEU mid-term evaluation and when more data on InvestEU implementation is available (end 2024 / early 2025). There was a broad consensus among the members that the Advisory Board can bring valuable input to the discussion.

The member from Portugal raised the issue of the definition of social and affordable housing as a potential topic for future discussion, which was echoed by members from EBRD and Belgium. It was noted, however, that social and affordable housing is addressed differently in each Member State and such the implementing partners need to follow the local regulations.

The Chair concluded that the topic of sustainable mobility has been chosen. The subject of European economic resilience and security can be brought for discussion at the next Advisory Board meeting with a presentation focusing on critical raw materials by the European Commission, EIB, EBRD. The question of social and affordable housing can also be put on the agenda of a future meeting, without reopening the social infrastructure investment subgroup.

8. Any other business

The Chair informed that the next meeting would take place again in hybrid mode (physical meeting in Brussels or Luxembourg with possibility to join on-line) and proposed 11 April 2024. Several topics were suggested for the agenda of the next meeting as described in these minutes.

Action points

For the Advisory Board Secretariat under the instructions of the Chair / Vice-Chair:

- Provide, by early April 2024, a report on the InvestEU implementation progress in preparation of the next Advisory Board meeting;
- Submit the Advisory Board recommendations to the Steering Board;
- Set up the subgroup on Sustainable Mobility;
- Include in the agenda of the next Advisory Board meeting the topic of European economic resilience and security, with a presentation focusing on critical raw materials by the European Commission, EIB and EBRD.

Annex

- **Recommendations**
- **Attendance list**

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InvestEU website

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