

**Question for written answer E-000316/2014
to the Commission
Rule 117
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Subject: Need to ensure greater consistency between the rules governing EU structural and investment funds, state aid and public procurement with a view to the development of general interest infrastructure

In line with the Europe 2020 strategy, the allocation of EU funding to general interest infrastructure projects is necessary and urgent if European local and regional authorities are to comply with the EU acquis, particularly in the environmental field (e.g. as regards wastewater treatment), and to contribute to social cohesion. EU funding for these projects is justified, given that, in many cases, citizens cannot bear the full cost recovery of the heavy investments needed to upgrade or build general interest infrastructure (such as municipal heating networks).

The EU institutions are either adopting or have adopted three different sets of rules that will have an impact on the development of general interest infrastructure: the cohesion policy package, including rules governing revenue-generating projects; revised state aid rules, including rules on environmental and energy projects; and the public procurement package.

The Commission's shift of position (following the recent Leipzig-Halle judgment) has made it mandatory for state aid assessments of infrastructure projects benefiting from EU funding to be conducted during the EU funding process already assessed under the revenue-generating rules. This new compulsory check has put additional constraints on the possibility to finance general interest infrastructure projects. It would have allegedly caused delays in the evaluation and approval of about 200 projects eligible for EU funding in the 2007-2013 programming period.

The lack of coherence between state aid rules and revenue-generating rules remains, as it will still be necessary under the new cohesion policy package to double-check any EU funding allocated to general interest infrastructure projects. The combination of cohesion policy rules and EU-compliant tendering procedures already provides significant guarantees for calculating what a relevant contribution from EU funds would be.

In view of the above, will the Commission ensure greater consistency between these three set of rules by:

1. publishing specific guidelines to clarify which rules apply when EU funds are used to support the development of general infrastructure projects?
2. creating a specific section on infrastructure in the General Block Exemption Regulation in support of the Europe 2020 objectives, specifying that investment aid granted to revenue-generating projects under the conditions laid down in the new cohesion policy package will be compatible with the internal market and will be exempt from the notification requirement provided for in Article 108(3) of the Treaty?