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COMMUNICATION TO THE COMMISSION

Approval of the content of a draft for a Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EU) No 651/2014 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty and Regulation (EU) 2022/2473 declaring certain categories of aid to undertakings active in the production, processing and marketing of fishery and aquaculture products compatible with the internal market in application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty

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The purpose of the amendment is to ensure that the General Block Exemption Regulation (“GBER”) complements well a set of State aid Guidelines that have recently been revised and that the rules laid down in the GBER cater appropriately for market and technological developments as well as the current Commission priorities, in particular the European Green Deal and the Industrial and Digital Strategy.

The new rules will provide for ample possibility for Member States to mobilise more aid for projects in line with these priorities, in situations where the risk of distortion of competition is limited. In addition, they will help setting the right foundations for a sustainable economy in a time of recovery from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and will help combat some of the economic effects of Russia’s war against Ukraine.

The amending Regulation will introduce the following main changes:

- An extension and facilitation of the possibilities for aid in the area of environmental protection and energy, such as to support the rollout of renewable energy, facilitate investments in green hydrogen, support decarbonisation projects, increase energy efficiency or support green mobility;
- A facilitation of the implementation of certain ICPEI-related projects by means of higher aid intensities and notification thresholds;
- An extension of the possibilities for training and reskilling via an increase of the notification threshold for training aid to EUR 3 million;
- The introduction of new Articles to block exempt aid involved in measures set up by Member States to regulate prices for energy (electricity, gas and heat produced from natural gas or electricity).
- A very significant increase of notification thresholds for environmental aid as well as aid for RDI projects;
- A prolongation of the GBER until the end of 2026, to provide for legal certainty and regulatory stability;

- A general increase of thresholds in the GBER even beyond the areas under specific review to cater for the longer period of validity of the rules; and
- More broadly aligning the provisions of the GBER with the new Regional Aid Guidelines; the Climate, Energy and Environmental State aid Guidelines; the Risk Finance Guidelines; the Research, Development and Innovation Framework and the Broadband Guidelines;

The draft for a Commission Regulation is attached as Annex to this Communication.