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Answer given by Executive Vice-President Ribera
on behalf of the European Commission
(26.8.2026)

The Commission's Decision of 2022 authorised a EUR 453 million aid to bring SATA Air Açores ('SATA')¹ back to viability in line with the Guidelines for rescuing and restructuring undertakings in difficulty (the 'Guidelines')². To ensure that distortions of competition remained limited whilst securing return to viability of SATA, Portugal committed that SATA would divest activities that are not central to its regional airline business, such as ground handling in some airports and airfields. Indeed, the Commission Decision considers the divestment of non-core activities as necessary also for the credibility of SATA's financial projections³. Hence, after restructuring, SATA should only discharge public service obligations and services of general economic interest to the benefit of the Azorean community. To prevent abuses in ground-handling, Portugal has both regulatory and competition law instruments.

Under the Guidelines⁴ a Member State may request changes to the restructuring plan, but the revised plan must still show a return to viability within a reasonable timescale and, if the restructuring costs are increased, the own contribution must also increase. Furthermore, if the proposed measures to limit distortions of competition are more limited, the amount of aid must be reduced, as was the case in the amending decision adopted by the Commission at Portugal's request in 2025 to extend the timeline for divestments⁵.

The initial Commission decision already considered that SATA could not withstand further divestments or withdrawals of capacity without impairing its return to viability⁶.

¹ Commission Decision of 7 June 2022, SA.58101 (2020/C ex 2020/N) and SA.62043 (2021/C ex 2021/N) which Portugal is planning to implement for rescuing and restructuring the SATA Group, C/2022/3816, OJ L, L/2023/160.

² Communication from the Commission — Guidelines on State aid for rescuing and restructuring non-financial undertakings in difficulty, OJ C 249, 31.7.2014, pp. 1–28.

³ Commission Decision of 7 June 2022, recital 199.

⁴ Section 7.2.2.

⁵ Commission Decision of 23 December 2025, SA.121011 - Extension of timeline for divestments (amendment to SA.62043 – Restructuring aid to SATA), OJ C, C/2026/1165.

⁶ Commission Decision of 7 June 2022, recitals 270–272.