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## Commission endorses €25 million aid to Sovello AG for STRING RIBBON™ solar modules plant in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany

**The European Commission has authorized €25 million of regional investment aid for the German company Sovello AG (formerly EverQ GmbH) for the production of STRING RIBBON™ solarmodules in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, for a solar energy investment project. The project involves investment of €115 million and created several 100 new jobs in the region. After an in-depth investigation, opened in May 2008, the Commission concluded that the positive impact of the investment on regional development outweighs the potential distortions of competition.**

Sovello was created in 2004 as a joint venture between Evergreen Solar Inc. of the US and Q-Cells SE of Germany. In 2005, Renewable Energy Corporation ASA of Norway entered the joint venture.

The project was implemented in Thalheim, Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany, a region with an abnormally low standard of living and high unemployment. It concerns the new plant, Sovello 2 (SV 2), for the integrated large scale production of solar energy modules using STRING RIBBON™. Sovello also already operated another plant, Sovello 1 (SV 1), in Thalheim, on land adjacent to SV 2, which started production of solar modules in April 2006. Sovello has already received regional investment aid of € 27.5 million, including a 15% SME bonus, for SV 1. The German authorities claimed that SV 1 was designed as a pilot project to validate Evergreen's STRING RIBBON™ patent in an industrial process, combined with the manufacturing techniques of Q-Cells.

The Commission opened an in-depth investigation to investigate whether SV 1 and SV 2 were part of the same investment project, which would have considerably reduced the amount of aid that could be allowed for the second plant.

The Commission analysed and balanced the contribution of the investment project to the economic development of the region, as set out in the Multisectoral Framework on regional aid for large investment projects. It concluded that SV 2 and SV 1 did not form a single investment project because no physical and no strong functional links exist between the two projects; both investments had different aims although both plants have the same technical function and both projects are independently viable.

The Commission also concluded that the additional production capacity created by the project would raise no state aid concerns.

Dr. Theodor Scheidegger, CEO of Sovello AG, said: "We express our pleasure about the positive outcome of this investigation and our thanks to all stakeholders who granted an open and fair hearing to Sovello in this matter."

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