

Question for written answer E-005710/2016
to the Commission
Rule 130
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Subject: Introduction of an exemption from state aid rules in the case of financing projects bearing the Seal of Excellence using ESIF

The Seal of Excellence scheme – which was introduced to recognise the quality of projects not financed under the Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SME) Instrument, and to allow for automatic funding of those projects from the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) without the need for further evaluation – seems to encounter practical problems. One of the major obstacles that Member States come across is the issue of state aid. Under current state aid rules, only Horizon 2020 projects are exempted, whereas other projects, including those financed under ESIF, need to comply with general state aid rules. This means in practice that the financing will need to fall from 70 % to the maximum of 60 % and will require the verification of its components.

Does the Commission plan to introduce an exemption to SME Instrument projects holding the Seal of Excellence in order to allow for automatic financing of 70 % without notification?