

**Question for written answer P-009694/2012
to the Commission**

Rule 117

Riikka Manner (ALDE)

Subject: Revision of state aid rules in the context of European territorial cooperation

The regulatory framework for state aid is to be revised in support of an effective launch of the new multiannual financial framework.

The current state aid rules were not designed to accommodate European territorial cooperation (ETC). In a multi-country environment, the safest solution seems to be to grant state aid under the *de minimis* rule, which, however, entails disproportionately burdensome administrative efforts relative to the comparatively small subsidies provided in the context of the ETC cross-border, transnational and interregional programmes. For most ETC programmes, therefore, revising state aid rules could prove to be a necessary step, as it would allow those programmes to take on board private partners – and more innovative projects – and thereby to contribute even more to the Europe 2020 goals.

Since ETC programmes and projects are cross-sectoral, many general block exemptions would have to be applied at the same time. This is not manageable for most programme administrations, as it could imply complicated patterns of co-financing rates that vary among cooperation partners and cooperation activities.

Current state aid rules force many programmes systematically to eliminate or reduce the productive stages and private partners involved in their cooperation projects, even though both would benefit the programmes. This is particularly relevant in the fields of innovation, alternative energy, SME development, and training and transport – the fields highlighted in the Europe 2020 Strategy. In order to make ETC a more effective tool for fulfilling the Europe 2020 goals, obstacles to the functioning of ETC should be carefully evaluated before the new regulations are applied. ETC projects are carried out in – and can benefit – poorer and richer regions at the same time. In order to create more effective projects, more partners in richer regions should be encouraged to cooperate, thus transferring their knowledge to poorer regions.

An ETC block exemption that allows for a single co-financing rate for cooperation with ETC, regardless of the economic sector or the region where beneficiaries are located, is one possible answer. Has the Commission begun to define the problems, and their solutions, associated with state aid in the special case of the ETC, and will a common approach to state aid for 2014-2020 be adopted in this context?