

Dear Madam, Sir,

Please find below my response, following your announcement on state aid, 'Commission launches public consultation on measures to improve state aid for innovation', dated 21 September 2005, reference IP/05/1169.

We welcome your initiative.

As I see it, the effect and success of a new policy in this area will very much depend on two factors:

1. Effective communication to the public, and
2. Clear criteria.

1. Effective communication

In my perception, there can be a large distance between institutions like yourself, and the public. How can one effectively reach target groups? My suggestion would be that you use various media and channels to make policies and policy measures known to the public. Also, I want to suggest that you do not only try to generate interest and exposure at the time a policy is determined and approved, but also on more occasions. Thirdly, as you are most probably already aware of, you may want to cooperate with others like agencies, national or local (public) offices, associations, industry organisations and representatives, and the like.

2. Clear criteria

A difficult question seems to me how to set clear and concise criteria. In my view, the borderline between legitimate and effective state aid versus inappropriate state aid can be narrow and a tricky one.

Based on my previous experience, I have a practical suggestion. In summaries of announcements and publications, please do not only mention the due date for tenders or proposals as a calendar date, but also make a brief remark that the due date has to be XXX months before the start a specific project (if applicable).