

Consultation

State aid – review of rules on exemptions for small amounts of aid to services of general economic interest

30 May 2023

About Cooperatives Europe

Cooperatives Europe is the European cross-sectoral organisation representing cooperative enterprises and the regional office of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA). Its network counts members from 34 European countries, representing 176,000 cooperative enterprises across all business sectors (industry, services, energy, housing, agriculture, banking, consumer, pharmaceuticals). Cooperatives Europe advocates for an economy that serves people and promotes the cooperative business model, as a locally rooted and democratically owned business.

KEY ELEMENTS

1. Cooperatives Europe welcomes the increase of the SGEI de minimis ceiling from EUR 500 000 to EUR 650 000 but considers it is not enough. Therefore, we call for an increase of the threshold to EUR 800 000 over three fiscal years.
2. We support the introduction of a mandatory public register at national or EU levels, but these should be accompanied by capacity-building measures to support public authorities in their implementation.

JUSTIFICATION

We welcome the increase of the SGEI de minimis ceiling from EUR 500 000 to EUR 650 000 that an SGEI provider may receive per Member State over any period of three years. This is an important step in the right direction but sadly insufficient. This increase only accounts for the inflation but not for the growing financial needs of the entities providing these services. Considering their structural difficulties to access finance while generating value for the general interest of society, **it seems only fair and just to increase the threshold to EUR 800 000.**

While raising these thresholds, we stress in parallel the need to **maintain a level playing field among companies providing SGEI** and avoid creating additional sub-



categories with different de minimis ceilings, which will only complexify the proper implementation of the rules across Member States.

In addition, we also welcome the efforts to strengthen the transparency requirements with the introduction of a mandatory public register at national or EU levels. Since we value an efficient and equal implementation across Member States, we therefore call for accompanying capacity-building measures to support public authorities in its implementation. The Social Economy Action Plan (SEAP) states that “public authorities and recipients often do not make the most of existing State aid possibilities”. This particularly applies to rules on services of general economic interest, which public and local authorities are generally less familiar with than the general ones. Reviewing the rules on exemptions for small amounts of aid to SGEI must therefore be combined with facilitating/advisory support measures to raise awareness about these specific rules and help authorities navigating the complexity of the implementation of the de minimis ceiling.

End.

