

Feedback from the University of Groningen (NL) to the Targeted review of the General Block Exemption Regulation (State aid): extension to national funds combined with certain Union programmes

For the University of Groningen the European Framework programmes for Research and Innovation are of great value. We see it as an important tool to build up knowledge for the benefit of European society in general and the scientific community specifically. We find it important to include all European areas and memberstates in this common programme to fully benefit from the European potential.

We are disappointed to see that there is an Innovation Divide and would welcome good suggestions to close that Divide. The concept of Seal of Excellence, in combination with national specific European funds could very well be a good solution to the problem. And indeed the current State Aid rules could prevent using that solution and should therefore be adapted. We warmly support the proposed adaptation of the Rules.

We have however a few remarks:

- It is important to define the Seal of Excellence. Does it apply to all proposals evaluated above threshold? Is it for all projects with the highest score on Scientific Excellence? In our view there should be a uniform and unambiguous definition that is valid for the entire Framework programme/Horizon Europe.
- For mono host proposals there will be only one Member State involved, but with cooperative projects with more than two Member States involved it will be important to make good arrangements between these Member States.
- The notification requirement will be dropped for these projects. It would be advisable to require registration by the Member State of all projects receiving this aid. And also to publish a list of projects funded through the Seal of Excellence together with the regularly funded Horizon projects. Also the publication and public reporting should be in line with the regular Horizon projects. In this way real synergy can be achieved between all projects