Any public money given in the form of grant or other subsidy to a business that exports or is intending to export is counted by the European Commission as a State Aid. The Commission sees such State Aid as possibly affecting the balance of competitiveness between Member States when they compete for export opportunities. The Commission have therefore set rules to limit the amount of State Aid that can be given.

The starting point for the Commission is that all State Aids should be prescribed. However, a complex set of exemptions have also been agreed by the Commission for cases where there would be no real effect on competition between Member States. We have chosen the de minimis exemption regulation as the one that can apply most easily to our grant. The de minimis regulation recognises that some State Aids are too insignificant in size to be a concern. The limit for de minimis is €200K over any rolling three year period for any one business.

There are other exemption regulations, for instance one that applies specifically to training. There are also other, more wide ranging, exemptions covered by other Commission agreements, for instance research and development funding has its own rules on what support can be given before State Aid rules bite. The way the different forms of exemption are used can become quite complex and it is therefore up to the grant giver to decide which form of exemption best fits.

Here are a few questions and answers –

Q. What do participants need to include on the form?

A. Any grant or subsidy they receive from public funds unless the giver has specifically informed them that the grant can be set outside State Aids restrictions e.g. covered by one of the Commission exemption regulations - other than the de minimis exemption regulation.

Q. What period is covered?

A. Any rolling three year period, most easily interpreted for our grant as the three years leading up to the date they sign the application form.

Q. What if they are unsure about any other grants they might receive between completing our application form and the event taking place.

A. They must make their own judgement on this. If any subsequent offer of grant would bring them over the €200K within three years (including our grant) then they should decline that offer of grant or confirm with the giver that it is being exempted in some other way.

Q. Is there any way of checking what other money they have received could be exempted?

A. We can't check this. They must ask the body that gave them the money. If the grant giver is exempting the aid in some way then they should explain this to the recipients. If they have not done so then the business should check the situation with them.

Q. What happens if the other grant giver confirms that their contribution is exempted in some way other than de minimis?

A. That's fine. It does not need to be included on the form.