Horizontal state aid: application of Articles 92 and 93 of the EC Treaty

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The number of cases involving state aids notified to the Commission has risen sharply over the last years. Many of these are standard cases where Commission approval raises no legal problems. To lighten its administrative burden, the Commission has put forward a proposal to introduce a system of group exemptions for state aid, similar to those used for agreements or mergers and acquisitions. Under the proposal, the Commission (assisted by an advisory committee) will be able to adopt group exemption decisions in the case of state aids coming under regional policy and granted in accordance with EC regulations in respect of aid to SME:s, R&D, environmental protection, employment and training, and for export credits and credit insurance. Reporting for the Committee, Pervenche Berès (PES, F) supports the Commission proposal but has introduced a number of amendments seeking to ensure that the Commission informs the EP before it adopts any group exemptions. Other amendments seek to increase the transparency, eg. by obliging the Member States to inform the Commission of aid granted falling below the threshold value mentioned above, as well as publish details about the it in the Official Journal.