



Associazione Esposizioni e Fiere Italiane
Italian Exhibition & Trade Fair Association

Press release

EXHIBITIONS (AEFI): WE WELCOME THE WAIVER OF THE 'DE MINIMIS' CONSTRAINT, A CRITICAL RESULT FOR ITALIAN EXHIBITIONS AND PRODUCTS

DANESE: CONGRATULATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT AND GARAVAGLIA. COMPETITIVE EXHIBITION CENTRES ARE KEY TO THE RELAUNCHING OF THE MADE IN ITALY BRAND

(Rome, 6 August 2021). Aefi – Italian Exhibition and Trade Fair Association expresses its satisfaction for the waiver of the restrictions on state aid granted to the industry by the European Commission in response to the request of Minister for Tourism Massimo Garavaglia, who has always promoted this measure, fundamental to the survival of the principal players in the Italian exhibitions industry. The news, which is not yet official, will be formalised only after the August 15 holiday. “Today marks the opening up of new prospects for the major Italian exhibition centres,” commented the President of **Aefi**, **Maurizio Danese** –. The exhibitions industry has suffered from the effects of the pandemic more than any other sector, with a drop in turnover of around 70% last year and 95% in the first half of 2021. Now the 4 main exhibition businesses in Italy - Fiera Milano, BolognaFiere, leg (Italian Exhibition Group) and Veronafiere, together worth 70% of the entire Italian exhibition industry - can finally count on adequate grants which until just yesterday, thanks to the ‘*de minimis*’ criterion, covered little more than 20% of the losses incurred in 2020. We congratulate the Government and Minister Garavaglia on this result, which enables us to align our own aid system with that already available to Germany,” added Danese, “and we are fully committed to relaunching the Made in Italy brand with our national and international events which, prior to the pandemic, generated business worth 60 bn euro a year and 50% of exports from Italian SMEs. At the same time, we hope that the resources set aside in other - so far unused - grants will be transferred to the Ministry of Tourism and contribute to supporting exhibition centres.”

“The economic crisis generated by the pandemic has hit the European exhibitions industry hard,” says **Luca Palermo**, Vice-President of Aefi and Managing Director of **Fiera Milano**. “The European Commission’s decision to waive the *de minimis* criterion will enable the entire Italian exhibitions industry to regain its competitiveness, especially at the international level. Following the resumption of physical participation at exhibitions, this is an extremely positive initiative. Italian exhibitions are one of the columns of the Made in Italy brand, given the strategic role they play in internationalising and promoting Italian products.”

The President of **BolognaFiere**, **Gianpiero Calzolari**, commented: “The waiver of the *de minimis* criterion by the European Commission for the Italian exhibitions industry partly remedies a situation which put us at a strong disadvantage relative to our main European competitors. The incoming economic resources are a recognition of the strategic importance of trade fairs and will be critical to the resumption of our work, including in support of the national economy. I would like to express my sincere thanks to the institutions which have supported this initiative at the European Commission.”

“The European Commission’s waiving of the limits to Covid grants set in the Temporary Framework on state aid,” said **Lorenzo Cagnoni**, President of **leg - Italian Exhibition Group**, “is something we have



been hoping for for some time. It makes us more optimistic about the future of the exhibitions and conferences industry and, as a result, our ability to promote Italian business. We now hope that the government's action in assigning these resources to individual companies will be quick, easy and equitable.”

According to **Maurizio Danese**, President of **Veronafiere**: “This decision enables the Italian exhibitions industry to resume its strategic role in our country's industrial policy. This indispensable measure will enable us to invest in the future and also play our proper role in the re-opening of international markets, guaranteeing the growth and development of the Italian value chain.”

European regulations on state aid, governed by the Temporary Framework, included the imposition of a *de minimis* criterion for aid to the exhibitions industry, a community-wide standard that sets a fixed ceiling on public subsidies to private companies (set at 10 mn euro). Germany had previously obtained the European Commission's waiver of the *de minimis* limit in the light of Article 107 par. 2 letter b of the treaty, which allows for aid without limitation in case of exceptional events, such as the Covid-19 pandemic. It has today been announced that the second largest European player in the exhibitions industry, Italy, has also obtained this waiver. The current Ministry of Tourism fund for non-repayable grants to the exhibitions industry, without the *de minimis* ceiling, is around 190 mn euro, of which 130 mn euro are intended to cover the losses incurred in 2020.

Aefi, whose members include 41 exhibition centres responsible for 96% of international events held in Italy, represents an industry which organises around 1000 trade fairs a year, with the participation of 200,000 exhibitors and an average of 20 million professional visitors from around the world.

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