

# PRESS RELEASE

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Engineering and  
Machinery Alliance

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## TAP is stuck at DIT, says Engineering and Machinery Alliance

The Engineering and Machinery Alliance today strongly criticises the Department for International Trade's handling of its grant support for smaller firms exhibiting at trade shows abroad - the Tradeshow Access Programme, or TAP. Exhibiting at foreign shows is widely recognised as a vital element of exporting, especially for manufacturing firms that the EAMA alliance represents. It enables visibility, credibility and the building of contacts with potential customers. TAP is the long-established vehicle for giving SMEs funding support to start exhibiting abroad.

More than £6 million was allocated for TAP in financial year 2019-2020 - but release of the detail of the shows for which funding support will be available has been repeatedly delayed. This means that firms have had to make decisions about shows before they know if support will be available to them.

Trade associations are also affected. EAMA members are among the many trade associations that provide important export support to firms, through organising UK pavilions at leading sector shows. Floor space must be booked well in advance and the lack of clarity on funding support means fewer firms travel, diminishing the UK presence at target shows.

'DIT said there would clarity on funding at the end of October, then that slipped to the end of November. In mid-December we got some news – but only covering the first quarter of the new financial year. We have heard nothing since then,' says EAMA secretary Jack Semple.

'This delay would be bad enough as a one-off, but it is the third year running that DIT has failed to confirm where the funding is allocated until the last minute. Two years ago, it was March, then last year February.

'This failure comes at a time when the need to mobilise UK manufacturers to export has never been greater, or more promoted by government. EAMA members cannot understand how DIT can fail on such an important issue and miss its own targets once again.

'A re-think at DIT is essential. That should giving much earlier confirmations, which should be at least one year ahead; but also increasing funding levels, which have steadily reduced in recent years, and changing eligibility rules, which have become too restrictive.

'DIT puts huge effort and resource into supporting the export efforts of Britain's largest companies through embassies around the world, and EAMA strongly supports that. It is good for the UK and for firms in the supply chain. But TAP is vital support for SMEs, some of which will be the big exporters of the future – and DIT must do much better,' Semple said.

**Note for editors:** EAMA is an alliance of 13 trade associations whose members, mostly SMEs, make up much of the little-seen supply chain infrastructure of British manufacturing.

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