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*Plenary sitting*

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**B9-0347/2023**

10.7.2023

## **MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION**

to wind up the debate on the statement by the Commission

pursuant to Rule 132(2) of the Rules of Procedure

on the state of the SME Union  
(2023/2750(RSP))

**Martina Dlabajová**  
on behalf of the Renew Group

**European Parliament resolution on the state of the SME Union  
(2023/2750(RSP))**

*The European Parliament,*

- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 March 2020 entitled ‘An SME Strategy for a sustainable and digital Europe’ (COM(2020)0103),
  - having regard to Directive 2011/7/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 February 2011 on combating late payment in commercial transactions<sup>1</sup> (Late Payment Directive),
  - having regard to the State of the Union address by Commission President von der Leyen at the European Parliament plenary of 14 September 2022,
  - having regard to the Commission report of 27 June 2023 entitled ‘Annual Report on European SMEs 2022/2023’,
  - having regard to Rule 132(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) have faced significant challenges and hardships as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia’s war of aggression against Ukraine, which have led to disruptions in global value chains and persistent inflation;
- B. whereas the 2022/2023 annual report on European SMEs highlighted that inflation rates have caused interest rates to rise, which in turn have reduced access to public and private finance; whereas the same report recommended that measures aimed at mitigating the negative impacts of inflation should focus on enhanced access to finance for SMEs; whereas the report underlined the lack of skilled workers as an obstacle for SMEs across the EU;
- C. whereas the Commission President announced, during the 2022 State of the Union address, that the Commission will put forward an SME relief package; whereas the President also announced that the Late Payment Directive will be revised as it is not fair that one in four bankruptcies in the EU are due to invoices not being paid on time;
- D. whereas Parliament, representing the interests of European citizens, acknowledges the crucial role of SMEs in fostering economic growth, job creation and social cohesion;
1. Calls for the urgent adoption of a revised Late Payment Directive, providing SMEs with a robust and predictable legal framework to address payment delays in both business-to-business and business-to-government relations, while ensuring a balanced approach that preserves the freedom of contracts;
  2. Supports the creation of an observatory on late payments as announced in the SME

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<sup>1</sup> OJ L 48, 23.2.2011, p. 1.

strategy; urges the Commission to support the widespread use of digital tools, such as e-invoicing and automated payment systems in order to increase transparency, security and efficiency;

3. Welcomes the publication of the Listing Act package; recognises its potential to facilitate capital access for SMEs and to enable their scalability; acknowledges that this package will provide an opportunity to deepen the capital markets union and increase investments in SMEs across the EU; emphasises the need to prioritise equity funding for SMEs within the capital markets union project;
4. Calls for the development of an ambitious retail investment package to facilitate SMEs' access to finance from retail investors;
5. Urges the Member States to ensure that the Temporary Crisis and Transition Framework fully encompasses SMEs in its implementation; calls on the Commission to ensure fair competition for SMEs and to prevent distortions in the single market as a result of temporarily relaxed State aid rules; asks the Commission to assess the possibility of revising State aid rules to provide more flexibility for SMEs;
6. Highlights the need to review the current definition of SMEs in order to facilitate their access to venture capital; regrets that the strengthening of the InvestEU SME window was not proposed during the review of the multiannual financial framework;
7. Stresses the importance of engaging SMEs in dedicated programmes and resources under the Green Deal Industrial Plan, particularly in the development of clean technology;
8. Calls for further incentives to encourage SME participation in the Horizon Europe funding calls, ensuring that the sub pillar on SMEs within the European Innovation Council has the flexibility to mobilise funds quickly and to increase its budget when necessary;
9. Encourages the Commission to earmark a portion of the proposed strategic technologies for Europe platform specifically for SMEs;
10. Calls for work on a European strategy for SME export credits to be stepped up in order to provide consistent and effective export credit guarantees across the EU;
11. Highlights the need to support companies experiencing financial difficulties by offering adequate financial and non-financial support to avoid bankruptcy; calls on the Member States to implement the Directive on Preventive Restructuring<sup>2</sup>;
12. Expresses its concern over the inconsistent application of the SME Test during impact assessments conducted by the Commission; stresses that the impact assessments should be carried out during the drafting of all draft legislation; calls for the test to be updated throughout the whole legislative process; recommends a comprehensive review of the

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<sup>2</sup> Directive (EU) 2019/1023 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on preventive restructuring frameworks, on discharge of debt and disqualifications, and on measures to increase the efficiency of procedures concerning restructuring, insolvency and discharge of debt, OJ L 172, 26.6.2019, p. 18.

SME Test, including the use of appropriate tools to facilitate SMEs' input, the regular revision of impact assessments and differentiation between the different size classes of SMEs;

13. Calls for the consistent application of the 'Think Small First' principle in internal deliberations when strengthening SME input mechanisms, explaining the rationale for disregarding their input if duly justified; acknowledges the importance of SME panel consultations and regrets the fact that their use is restricted by a lack of resources;
14. Calls for the identification of a single referring interlocutor within the Commission to provide clear guidance and support to SMEs; urges the establishment of a single digital gateway serving as a one-stop shop, consolidating all relevant financial and non-financial support, forms and information for SMEs;
15. Encourages the Member States to share best practices and develop complementary procedures at national level, particularly those that benefit micro and small businesses;
16. Supports measures aimed at increasing SME participation in public procurement, including simplified tendering processes and increasing the use of digital tools for cross-border procurement;
17. Urges the Commission to pursue an ambitious approach to simplification, aiming for a 'one in, one out' approach in legislation; encourages the Commission and the Member States to streamline procedures and implement the 'once-only' and 'digital by default' principles, facilitating administrative processes for SMEs;
18. Urges the removal of barriers to cross-border business operations and intra-EU investments in order to establish a fully-fledged single market for all economic activities;
19. Stresses the importance of providing simplified requirements and buffer periods to SMEs in the legislative proposals to facilitate compliance; calls for systematic engagement between the Commission and Parliament in the drafting of secondary legislation, thus ensuring responsiveness to the needs of SMEs;
20. Supports the development of the Recovery and Resilience Scoreboard to create a monitoring system capable of tracing SMEs as beneficiaries and adopting reactive solutions to emerging or unforeseen issues; stresses the importance of collecting granular data to evaluate SMEs in specific sectors;
21. Highlights the necessity of including an SMEs perspective in the VAT in the Digital Age package; calls for the development of tailored guidelines for SMEs to support their modest access to the benefits of the single market;
22. Urges the Commission to publish a dedicated toolbox outlining measures and instruments available to the Member States to support SMEs during the energy crisis; encourages the Member States to share best practices, particularly regarding fiscal incentives that mitigate the impact of inflation and disruptions in value chains on SMEs;
23. Emphasises the importance of skilling, upskilling and reskilling employees of SMEs,

particularly within the framework of the 2023 European Year of Skills; urges the implementation of fiscal incentives and tax deductions to enable SMEs to maintain a skilled workforce; underlines that tools, such as the Pact for Skills, digital crash courses, the network of sustainability advisors and the digital innovation hubs, should prioritise technical assistance to SMEs and the training of their employees; calls for the European Social Fund Plus, the Just Transition Fund and the European Skills Agenda to adequately address the specific needs of SMEs;

24. Highlights the need to reduce administrative burdens and simplify the recruitment of skilled non-EU nationals for SMEs, including by exploring the possibility of enabling industry or business associations to act as certified employers on behalf of their SME members;
25. Calls for the implementation of tax incentives and favourable policies to support the transmission of family businesses and foster the entrepreneurial spirit of the next generation; urges a thorough assessment of the implementation of the Insolvency Directive; encourages the inclusion of business transfer promotion measures in the SME relief package, such as the facilitation of an EU-wide business transfer barometer;
26. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.