OPINION

of the Committee on Budgets

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on green growth opportunities for SMEs (2014/2209(INI))

Rapporteur: Liadh Ní Riada
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Budgets calls on the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy, as the committee responsible, to incorporate the following suggestions into its motion for a resolution:

A. whereas it is essential that energy and resource efficiency be at the basis of European industrial renewal if European industry is to maintain its smart, sustainable, inclusive and competitive growth in the future;

B. whereas SMEs that comply with environmental standards will increase their business opportunities and will be more able to resist the cost pressure arising from increased resource costs;

C. whereas SMEs are Europe’s economic backbone, greatly contributing to economic and social cohesion in the Member States, making up around 99 % of all European businesses and providing around 75 million jobs;

D. whereas access to finance continues to be one of the most significant challenges facing the creation, survival and growth of SMEs, micro-enterprises, social enterprises and cooperatives; whereas easing SME access to finance is crucial for the adoption of greener technology and for investment in sustainable business practices; whereas the private sector has an important role to play in developing alternative ways of financing;

E. whereas account must be taken of the potential of the EU budget, as an investment-driven budget, to facilitate European SMEs’ access to funding through the reduction of bureaucracy and through dedicated financial tools and the increase of funding for LEOs (local enterprise offices); whereas the development of user-friendly procedures for the various forms of support should be enhanced;

F. whereas the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI) could be a major source of funding for SMEs in addition to the use of opportunities already provided under the EU budget;

1. Stresses the added value of the EU budget in helping SMEs, micro-enterprises, social enterprises and cooperatives to gain access to funding and international markets, in particular through the COSME programme and under Horizon 2020 and the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF); stresses the need for a clear and uniform EU-wide interpretation by national regulators and open public procurement rules;

2. Notes that EU programmes do not significantly contribute to eco-innovation and the circular economy and that the Commission, therefore, needs to focus better funding from COSME and Horizon 2020 towards the development of eco-innovative solutions by and for SMEs and to support financing for the improvement of product design and processes performance, building on the successful experiences in the past MFF; considers, in particular, that the SME instrument under Horizon 2020 needs to be fully implemented;

3. Notes that the Commission is putting a lot of emphasis on venture capital in order to
improve access finance for SMEs; this is certainly necessary, but will only benefit a small number of SMEs;

4. Urges the Member States and the EU to provide greater support to community-based SMEs and social enterprises and in particular those that contribute to improving their energy efficiency and to the effective use of resources and renewable energy systems;

5. Stresses the need to incentivise research and investments in new and advanced technology that enables development towards sustainable growth and the creation of green jobs, through policy frameworks at both Member State and EU level; underlines the fact that coherence between EU legislation needs to be improved in order to strengthen synergies and legal certainty;

6. Highlights the need to ensure coordination and complementarity between financial instruments in the EU budget, in particular under the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF), the EU Programme for Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and the LIFE programme;

7. Encourages Member States to support green SMEs, micro-enterprises, social enterprises and cooperatives, which would create sustainable jobs, including for young people, in particular through better regulation, reducing the excessive administrative burden, providing tax benefits and adopting specific social welfare measures for small entrepreneurs, and to improve their access to funding via the EU programmes;

8. Takes note of the new European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI); stresses that SMEs and micro-enterprises, including green and innovative ones, should be important beneficiaries of this fund, given that resource efficiency can be considered a high risk investment and that bank loans still constitute the main source of funding for SMEs; highlights the potential that resource efficiency holds for economic growth and the fact that this presents a number of business opportunities for SMEs.
RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

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<th>Date adopted</th>
<th>1.4.2015</th>
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| Result of final vote | +: 32  
|                      | -: 1  
|                      | 0: 1  |
| Members present for the final vote | Jean Arthuis, Richard Ashworth, Reimer Böge, Lefteris Christoforou, Jean-Paul Denanot, Gérard Deprez, José Manuel Fernandes, Eider Gardiazabal Rubial, Jens Geier, Ingeborg Gräßle, Iris Hoffmann, Carlos Iturgaiz, Bernd Kölmel, Vladimír Maňka, Ernest Maragall, Clare Moody, Siegfried Mureșan, Victor Negrescu, Liadh Ní Riada, Jan Olbrycht, Urmas Paet, Paul Rübig, Petri Sarvamaa, Paul Tang, Indrek Tarand, Isabelle Thomas, Inese Vaidere, Marco Valli, Daniele Viotti, Marco Zanni |
| Substitutes present for the final vote | Michal Marusik, Andrey Novakov, Derek Vaughan, Tomáš Zdechovský |