

**Question for written answer E-013150/2013
to the Commission**

Rule 117

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Subject: Changes to de minimis aid and impact on small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe

The second draft of the Regulation¹ on the application of Articles 107 and 108 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union to de minimis aid contains new definitions for a 'single undertaking' and new preconditions for qualification as an 'undertaking in difficulty'. At the same time, the annual report² on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the EU reports considerable variations in SME performance, with SMEs in Austria and Germany exceeding their 2008 levels of gross added value and employment and SMEs experiencing anaemic performance in four other Member States and failing to bounce back to their 2008 levels in twenty other Member States. At the same time, the report³ on access to finance of SMEs by the European Central Bank concludes that financing conditions for SMEs in Europe continue to differ significantly from one European state to another and are more difficult than those of larger companies.

In view of the above, will the Commission say:

1. Does it consider that the changes being considered in the Regulation will help to iron out imbalances in the performance and financing of European SMEs? Does it have a study and evaluations at its disposal?
2. How does this Regulation tie in with the need for financing for SMEs, especially in the Member States in which SMEs are feeling the impact of austerity and fiscal adjustment?
3. What are its comments on the fact that, based on the proposed preconditions to qualification of an undertaking as an 'undertaking in difficulty', basically the overwhelming majority of Greek undertakings are excluded from financing, at a time when the real economy is in dire need?

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2013_second_de_minimis/index_en.html

² http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/files/supporting-documents/2012/annual-report_en.pdf

³ <http://www.ecb.europa.eu/press/pr/date/2013/html/pr130426.en.html>