

**Question for written answer E-002349/2021
to the Commission**

Rule 138

Angelika Niebler (PPE), Christian Ehler (PPE)

Subject: Involving SMEs in implementation of the Commission's connectivity initiative

The Commission's space-based connectivity initiative aims to install a third satellite infrastructure alongside Galileo and Copernicus which will operate as a secure, comprehensive communication system.

On 16 September 2020 the Commission published a call for tenders for a feasibility study to include the design, development and launch of the communication system (DEFIS/2020/OP/0008). It is regrettable that micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) are not involved in carrying out the study. Calls for tenders must ensure that MSMEs are not indirectly put at a disadvantage by individual criteria. Criterion T1 of the call for tenders in question contains the condition that applicants must have undertaken at least five projects or programmes each with a contract value of at least EUR 100 million. The criterion cannot be applied proportionally according to the size of the enterprise.

1. Were applications for this tender received from MSMEs which satisfied the criteria, and did the Commission consider how MSMEs could be involved in carrying out the study?
2. How will the Commission involve MSMEs in future stages of this connectivity initiative, and how does it ensure that MSMEs are not put at a disadvantage by tender criteria?
3. Does the Commission agree that Europe must thoroughly reform its space market in order to be more in line with global developments and thus be more competitive?