

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

2008/2205(INI)

15.12.2008

OPINION

of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

for the Committee on International Trade

on enhancing the role of European SMEs in international trade
(2008/2205(INI))

Rapporteur: Daniel Caspary

PA_NonLeg

SUGGESTIONS

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

1. Observes that there are highly competitive European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are world leaders in highly specialised niche markets and are therefore a driving force in advancing the Lisbon Strategy;
2. Calls on the Commission and Member States to strengthen their policies to support the international development of their SMEs and to adopt tools to help improve financing, competencies and information in relation to access to the markets of third countries;
3. Points out that only 8% of all SMEs are involved in cross-border activities, which curtails their potential for growth; believes that Member States should cooperate in harmonising administrative requirements that affect intra-Community activities;
4. Notes the importance of skilled and trained entrepreneurs in facing the challenges of international business; calls therefore on the Commission and the Member States to increase the provision of training programmes for entrepreneurs on the globalised business environment (such as the Enterprise Europe Network or "Gateway to China" scheme); calls for increased cooperation between SMEs and universities in order to improve research and innovation; calls on the Commission to consider the creation of a special EU exchange programme for young entrepreneurs based on the Erasmus / Leonardo da Vinci programmes;
5. Stresses the need for SMEs to obtain access to financial resources for international activities; calls therefore on the Commission and on Member States to promote specific loans and other products for international activities of SMEs by the European Investment Bank and other financial institutions;
6. Recognises that existing trade defence instruments such as anti-subsidy and anti-dumping measures need to be better adapted to SMEs; considers that in emergency situations it should be possible to take temporary "protective" measures;
7. Notes the need to examine how payment periods for SMEs could be shortened in order to ensure payment potential and capital requirement; calls therefore on the Commission to propose appropriate measures in this area;
8. Points out that standardisation can lead to innovation and competitiveness by facilitating access to markets and by enabling operability; encourages the Commission to increase the promotion of European standards internationally;
9. Notes the important role of SMEs in climate change technology transfer and the importance of the active participation of SMEs in development aid;
10. Emphasises that SMEs need effective intellectual property rights protection as a

precondition for developing new technologies, in order to enable them to undertake international activities; points out therefore that a simple and efficient intellectual property rights system is a key tool for promoting internationalisation of SMEs;

11. Welcomes the Commission's proposal, in its Communication of 25 June 2008 entitled "Think Small First": A "Small Business Act" for Europe, to encourage and support SMEs to benefit from the growth of markets; considers the creation of European Business Centres in selected markets as a useful instrument, provided that duplication of existing structures is avoided; supports the establishment of Market Access Teams in key export markets, which should, in particular, focus on market barriers facing SMEs; calls on the Commission to update these instruments regularly by taking into account the needs of SMEs and to review them in 2012;
12. Calls on the Commission to step up its efforts to facilitate the fight against counterfeiting, in order to protect European businesses, with a special focus on SMEs and defending the interests and the health of the general public;
13. Calls on the Commission to report to Parliament on a regular basis on the state of play regarding the internationalisation of European SMEs;
14. Welcomes the organisation of a "European SME Week" in May 2009 and proposes that this event be used to provide information for SMEs on how to develop their export activities outside the EU.

RESULT OF FINAL VOTE IN COMMITTEE

Date adopted	11.12.2008
Result of final vote	+: 30 -: 0 0: 0
Members present for the final vote	John Attard-Montalto, Jan Březina, Jorgo Chatzimarkakis, Dragoş Florin David, Den Dover, Nicole Fontaine, Adam Gierek, Norbert Glante, Fiona Hall, Erna Hennicot-Schoepges, Reino Paasilinna, Vladimír Remek, Teresa Riera Madurell, Britta Thomsen, Catherine Trautmann, Claude Turmes, Nikolaos Vakalis
Substitute(s) present for the final vote	Etelka Barsi-Pataky, Ivo Belet, Manuel António dos Santos, Neena Gill, Edit Herczog, Vladimir Urutchev, Lambert van Nistelrooij
Substitute(s) under Rule 178(2) present for the final vote	Louis Grech, Aurelio Juri, Sepp Kusstatscher, Eva Lichtenberger, Rosa Miguélez Ramos, María Sornosa Martínez