DRAFT OPINION

of the Committee on Transport and Tourism

for the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy

on a new strategy for European SMEs
(2020/0000(INI))

Rapporteur for opinion: João Ferreira
SUGGESTIONS

The Committee on Transport and Tourism 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 micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the transport and tourism sectors are being most affected by the COVID-19 outbreak owing to the enforcement of mobility restrictions;

B. whereas, following the COVID-19 outbreak, inequality between Member States in terms of the support they are able to give their SMEs is likely to exacerbate distortions of competition on the single market between SMEs from different countries;

C. whereas many SMEs in the transport sectors, such as those providing taxi and tourism services, have been seriously affected by unfair competition from multinational companies, so-called digital platforms that have managed to circumvent certain legal obligations imposed on other companies, thereby contributing to social dumping, workplace deregulation and the insolvency of many businesses;

1. Notes that the COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated the importance for the economy and for business of SMEs operating in the transport sector, bearing in mind that uninterrupted freight transport has been essential to ensure the functioning of supply chains for various types of goods, as has the transport of workers in key sectors; stresses that SMEs in the tourism sector are facing unprecedented difficulties including a serious liquidity crisis due to the pandemic; stresses the importance of state intervention to shore up SMEs in difficulty, ensuring job retention, the protection of earnings and respect for workers' rights; underlines the need to step up support for SMEs in these sectors at EU level and address the enormous inequalities resulting from different levels of national support; calls on the Commission to monitor developments and assess the possibility of emergency support in addition to measures already announced, including funding and capitalisation, until tourist and transport flows have returned to their previous levels;

2. Considers that the objectives of the 'SME Strategy for a Sustainable and Digital Europe’ should be fully matched by financial and other resources to enable Member States to promote SME transition towards sustainability and digitisation, which is of particular importance for the least developed countries and regions in the context of cohesion policy; stresses that such objectives cannot be contradictory and must, on the contrary, accompany measures to safeguard employment with rights and improve working conditions in the various sectors of activity;

3. Recognises that a number of states and cities are able to prohibit or closely regulate the activity of so-called digital platforms; underlines the urgent need for regulation of these platforms on a broader basis to prevent unfair competition and ensure respect for workers' rights and user safety; underlines at the same time the need for specific measures to modernise taxi services.