

## MEPs urged to deliver a 2014-20 EU budget fit for SMEs

Speaking at today's European Parliament SME Intergroup conference on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), EUROCHAMBRES urged MEPs to use their co-decision leverage to ensure that significantly more of the post 2014 EU budget is allocated to growth-enhancing and SME-related measures.

Ben Butters, Director of EU Affairs at EUROCHAMBRES, said: *"In terms of direct resources, the MFF represents the last chance for the EU institutions in their efforts to deliver the Europe 2020 growth strategy. To be fit for this purpose, the package has to be fit for SMEs – the principle source of innovation, job creation and growth – in terms both of allocations and procedures. The Commission's proposal does not go far enough in ensuring this, so we now look to MEPs to come forward with a 2014-20 EU budget that, unlike its predecessors, is genuinely SME-friendly."*

EUROCHAMBRES made the following recommendations in relation to each of the three key MFF elements tackled during the conference:

- **COSME (programme for the competitiveness of enterprises and SMEs):** Chambers fully endorse the focus of the MFF's only SME-specific programme on access to markets, access to finance and reducing regulatory burdens, but call for a significant increase in the current budget allocation from the 0.2% proposed by the Commission. More specifically in the area of access to finance, Chambers call for an increase from the proposed coverage limit of EUR 150,000 in the Loan Guarantee Facility within the COSME debt platform, which represents a negligible amount if applied to specific operations, such as business transfer.
- **Horizon 2020:** The dedicated SME financial instrument within Horizon 2020 is welcomed by Chambers, as is the fact that it embraces all types and stages of innovation. Its success though will be determined by its accessibility to smaller businesses, so EUROCHAMBRES calls on the Commission to continue working closely with Chambers and other intermediaries to develop a user-friendly application procedure. EUROCHAMBRES also advocates an increase in the amount of the overall programme envisaged for SMEs from the current 15% to at least 20%.
- **Structural Policy:** Chambers generally endorse the proposed requirement on member states to implement the Small Business Act and SME test as a pre-condition for the release of structural funds. However, EUROCHAMBRES recognises that delivering this effectively is a delicate balancing act and invites the Commission to monitor its impact carefully, since any sanctions applied perversely risk affecting SMEs and other end users the hardest.

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