

## EUR 8 billion FP7 call: how much for SMEs?

On the day that the next set of calls under the 7<sup>th</sup> EU Research and Technological Framework Programme (FP7) were announced, EUROCHAMBRES urged the European Commission to address the issue of SME participation. To date, only 13.7% of the FP7 budget has gone to SMEs, an alarmingly low figure given smaller businesses' economic predominance.

SMEs must secure a larger proportion of the new EUR 8 billion round of research funding if this public money is to stimulate innovation and contribute to Europe's economic recovery. Chambers fear that this will not be the case under the procedures in place for FP7, which heavily favour established actors in the research field.

EUROCHAMBRES' Secretary General Arnaldo Abruzzini explained: *"If FP7 is to contribute to jobs and growth as it rightly sets out to do, the research it stimulates must result in commercially viable innovation. Smaller businesses are a crucial source of innovative opportunities and solutions. Unfortunately, rather than being in the driving seat for FP7, they have more often been passengers or even left on the side of the road."*

EUROCHAMBRES has warmly welcomed the inclusion of an 'SME instrument' in Horizon 2020, set to replace FP7 for the period 2014-2020. But this SME instrument should be reinforced by increasing the allocation of the funding from 15% to at least 20% and by defining it as a distinct sub-programme, ensuring that the budget is ring-fenced for SMEs.

It is also vital that SME participation in such complex programmes is managed in a way that reflects their needs and limitations compared to large corporations and research institutes. This could be achieved through a public-private-partnership approach to administering the SME instrument, building on the capacity of intermediaries like Chambers to reach and serve smaller businesses.

Mr Abruzzini commented: *"We applaud Commissioner Geoghegan-Quinn for recognising the importance of SMEs in her Horizon 2020 proposal. We believe though that to really ensure that it delivers, the SME instrument must be distinct from the rest of the programme, not just in terms of its budget, but also in the way it is administered."*

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