

Enterprise policy: multiannual programme MAP 2001-2005

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The committee adopted the report by Elizabeth MONTFORT (UEN, F) amending, under the consultation procedure, the proposal on a multiannual programme for enterprise and entrepreneurship. The report emphasised the significant contribution of SMEs, micro-enterprises and the craft sector in terms of competitiveness, research and innovation and also their crucial role in job creation. One of the programme's priorities should therefore be to eliminate the longstanding obstacles to the development of such enterprises. In particular, the committee felt that, in order to create a favourable climate for businesses, the obstacles hindering completion of the internal market should be systematically removed and red tape kept to a minimum. EU action to assist SMEs should take into account the objectives laid down in the Charter for Small Enterprises adopted at the Feira European Council. Cooperation should be stepped up between Member States in such areas as social and tax policies, and the approaching enlargement of the EU should also be taken into account. The committee urged the Commission and the Member States to encourage industry sectors to adopt 'best practice' networks. Where possible, the sharing of pre-competitive research in new product and process technologies should also be stepped up. The report stressed the need to ensure the continuity of significant funding in favour of employment and therefore urged the Commission to concentrate further initiatives on measures to integrate SMEs into the information society in order to strengthen their competitiveness in an international environment. The committee was unhappy with the funding for the programme which, it felt, was not sufficient to develop a real enterprise policy in the EU.