Small and medium-sized enterprises SMEs in the European Union: 3rd multiannual programme 1997-2000

1996/0087(CNS) - 20/03/1996 - Legislative proposal

OBJECTIVE: The proposal for a Council decision aims to establish a third action programme for SMEs in the European Union for a period of four years (1997-2000). SUBSTANCE: The third multi-annual programme for SMEs has the following priority objectives: 1. To simplify and improve the administrative and regulatory business environment: - to ensure consideration of the interests of SMEs in the various Community initiatives and policies (regional policy, research, environmental protection); - to simplify and improve Community legislation (to reduce the administrative burden and the cost of adjusting to legislation); - to increase transparency and the spread of best practices on simplifying and improving the administrative and regulatory environment (transfer of businesses, retention of title); - to improve the framework for trans-national operations of SMEs (settlement procedures for trans-national disputes, promotion of appropriate legal structures); 2. To improve the financial environment for enterprises: - to improve access to loan financing; - to reduce late payment problems (regular monitoring of the Commission's 1995 recommendation); - to facilitate the development of specific financial instruments (factoring and credit insurance); - to stimulate the development of European capital markets for fast-growing SMEs (including EASDAQ); 3. To help SMEs to Europeanize and internationalize their strategies through better information services: - to improve information of SMEs, in particular through Euro Info-Centres (EICs) which the Commission wishes to transform into 'first-stop shops', directing each request to the relevant service provider; - to provide pro-active information in particular on the markets and the introduction of the single currency; - to improve the promotion of SME policy actions (information campaigns); - to promote cooperation through business search networks (improving the BC-NET and BRE); - to promote direct contacts through partnership programmes (Europartenariat and Interprise programmes); - to develop sub-contracting partnerships; - to promote access to new markets and the internationalization of SMEs (pilot projects and innovative approaches); 4. To enhance SME competitiveness and improve their access to research, innovation and training: - to increase the innovative potential of SMEs and facilitate their access to the information society; - to stimulate managerial training; - to adapt to environmental requirements; 5. Promoting of entrepreneurship and special target groups; - business culture and entrepreneurship (exchange of best practice); - craft and small enterprises; - enterprises in commerce and distributive trades; - women and young entrepreneurs; enterprises owned by minorities. In addition, the aim is to improve public information and consultation on policy to promote businesses (improve statistics, data-bases etc...).