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

1996/0087(CNS) - 09/12/1996 - Final act

OBJECTIVE : to adopt for a period of four years (1997-2000) a third action programme for SMEs in the European Union. COMMUNITY MEASURE : Council Decision 97/15/EC on a Third Multiannual Programme for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the European Union. SUBSTANCE : The Third Multiannual Programme for SMEs (1997-2000) has the following objectives: 1. To simplify and improve the administrative and regulatory business environment: ensuring consideration of the interests of SMEs in the various Community initiatives and policies (regional policy, research, environmental protection); simplification of legislation; transparency; spread of best practice; improvement of the framework for transnational operations of SMEs; 2. To improve the financial environment for enterprises: access to loans and risk capital; reducing late payment problems; development of specific financial instruments; stimulating the development of capital markets for fast-growing SMEs; 3. To help SMEs to internationalize their strategies through better information and cooperation networks: access by SMEs to the information society; Euro-Info Centres; business search networks; partnership programmes; subcontracting partnerships; access to new markets and internationalization of SMEs; 4. To enhance SME competitiveness and improve access to research, innovation and training: increasing the innovative potential of SMEs; managerial training; adaptation to environmental requirements; 5. To promote entrepreneurship and support special target groups: business culture and entrepreneurship; craft and small enterprises; enterprises in commerce and distributive trades; women; young entrepreneurs; enterprises owned by minorities; 6. Policy development and improvement of knowledge about SMEs. The financial reference for implementation of the programme totals ECU 127 million for the whole of the period. DATE OF ENTRY INTO FORCE : from 1 January 1997 to 31 December 2000.