# Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: small and medium-sized enterprises SMEs policy for growth and employment

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Pillar del CASTILLO VERA (EPP-ED, ES) in response to the Commission communication entitled "Time to move up a gear - The new partnership for growth and jobs".

MEPs stressed that, if the EU is to compete in a global market, it must promote a knowledge-based society, foster entrepreneurship amongst Europeans (from the earliest stages of education) and remove obstacles to business creation. They highlighted the crucial role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which provide around 75 million jobs in the EU, and said that they should be given "comprehensive support".

The report "commends the aims of the EU Market Access Strategy and calls for the EU to do more to promote its database amongst the SME community and to keep it up-to-date". It also called for the authorities to create common 'one-stop information shops' for businesses and to encourage e-government. Other recommendations included establishing SME clusters around technology parks, public laboratories and universities in order to create dynamic environments in Europe, able to exploit scientific knowledge and to create knowledge-based jobs.

The committee also wanted to see improved regulation and proposals, including tax incentives, to facilitate the launch of new businesses. Given the ageing population (over the next ten years over a third of European entrepreneurs are expected to retire), MEPs advocated cutting red tape to facilitate the transfer of family businesses to third parties or employees, thus preserving jobs and capital. In a similar vein, the Commission and Member States were urged "to respect the principle of proportionality and flexibility when considering EU employment legislation", since "non-wage costs are one of the major obstacles facing one-person enterprises and preventing them from employing additional workers". Lastly, the report called on Member States "to raise the profile of entrepreneurship and individual responsibility, rewarding effort, encouraging the social value of risk-taking and entrepreneurship".