Basic information

1995/2274(COS) COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)	Procedure completed
The craft industry and small enterprises: keys to growth and employment in Europe, 2nd conference in Berlin **Subject** 3.45.02 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), craft industries	

Key players

European Parliament

Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs, Industrial Policy	TORRES MARQUES Helena (PSE)	31/01/1996

Council of the European Union

Council configuration	Meetings	Date
Industry	1913	1996-03-28

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
26/10/1995	Non-legislative basic document published	COM(1995)0502	Summary
17/11/1995	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
28/03/1996	Debate in Council		
20/03/1997	Vote in committee		Summary
20/03/1997	Committee report tabled for plenary	A4-0104/1997	
23/04/1997	Debate in Parliament		
24/04/1997	End of procedure in Parliament		
19/05/1997	Final act published in Official Journal		

Technical information

Procedure reference	1995/2274(COS)
Procedure type	COS - Procedure on a strategy paper (historic)
Procedure subtype	Commission strategy paper
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 148

Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ECON/4/07240

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type	Committee	Reference	Date	Summary
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A4-0104/1997 OJ C 132 28.04.1997, p. 0006	20/03/1997	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T4-0208/1997 OJ C 150 19.05.1997, p. 0016-0044	24/04/1997	Summary

European Commission

Document type	Reference	Date	Summary
Non-legislative basic document	COM(1995)0502	26/10/1995	Summary

The craft industry and small enterprises: keys to growth and employment in Europe, 2nd conference in Berlin

1995/2274(COS) - 26/10/1995 - Non-legislative basic document

OBJECTIVE: the purpose of this report is to analyze the results of the second European Conference on the Craft Industry and Small Enterprises (Berlin, 26-27 September 1994) so that priority actions can be planned and recommendations made to Member States with a view to taking greater account of this sector, which is particular important in generating employment. CONTENT: the Berlin Conference on the Craft Industry and Small Enterprises gave some 1,300 delegates from the sector the chance to meet and highlight the problems faced by the European craft industry. A list of 144 proposed basic guidelines was drawn up during the conference, reflecting the concerns of the sector at both national and European level. Having taken due account of these proposals, the Commission has attempted to define a global strategy of actions encompassing the following elements: - continuing administrative simplification, taking maximum account of the specific situation of SMEs in new legislation. This sector also needs to be given better access to Community programmes; - the integration of SMEs in the internal market, mainly by increasing the involvement of this sector in standardization work and supporting the networking of representative associations in order to take greater account of the demands of small enterprises with regard to certification; - support for the cross-border provision of services, by creating cross-border development agencies responsible for giving the sector information and advice; - transnational cooperation, by stepping up transnational cooperation between craftsmen in order to facilitate contacts between enterprises (organizing trade fairs etc.); - improving international competitiveness, mainly by stepping up projects with the Central and Eastern European Countries and Mediterranean countries; - training and further training projects for the managers of the sector and other apprentices not covered by current Community programmes, mainly by planning training modules on European issues for representative associations and supporting the creation of European networks of female bosses and young craftsmen in order to facilitate training in enterprises in other Member States; - jointly-designed qualifications, by defining ways of recognizing craft diplomas and designing European diplomas in consultation with professional associations and Member States; - integrating SMEs into the information society, by allowing small enterprises to benefit from the potential offered by new technologies; - improving access to financing for the craft industry and SMEs, mainly by developing mutual guarantee schemes and facilitating cooperation between banks and enterprises; - improving the knowledge, visibility and representativity of the craft industry at European level, by supporting the launch of various initiatives, such as the European Academy of Craft Industries and SMEs, cofinancing European competitions for young craftsmen, organizing European arts prizes etc. Apart from defining these various actions, the Commission also attempts to define a series of recommendations for Member States and national and European standardization committees. It identifies 5 main recommendations: - within the framework of certain Community policies, including regional policies: to recognize the role and responsibility of associations representing the craft industry and small enterprises in training, support and involvement in local, regional and national consultation bodies; - to promote the introduction of apprenticeship and work experience; - to create favourable conditions for small enterprises and craft enterprises by developing teaching and a new approach to the spirit of enterprise in educational systems; - to improve the advice available to enterprise creators and newly-formed enterprises, mainly through minimum prior training (basically in financial administration and management); - to recommend that national and European standardization bodies introduce an SME impact assessment procedure in the field of standardization (as already used at European level).

The craft industry and small enterprises: keys to growth and employment in Europe, 2nd conference in Berlin

1995/2274(COS) - 24/04/1997 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Adopting the report by Mrs Helena TORRES MARQUES (PSE, P), the European Parliament approved the Commission communication on the role of SMEs in generating growth and employment but deplored the fact that, despite general recognition of the role played by this sector, incoherence prevailed in the implementation of policies and programmes designed for SMEs. Regretting in particular that the Council had not decided to adopt the regulation on loan guarantees to promote employment (ELISE), it highlighted the fact that small enterprises face a disproportionately heavy administrative burden and called for everything to be done to reduce the costs inherent in this burden. Efforts also needed to be made to simplify regulations without eroding environmental and health standards. The European Parliament also considered that a network of organizations representing craft industries and SMEs needed to be set up in order to identify the needs of these enterprises with regard to certification or standardization. Parliament also considered that programmes devoted to SMEs, especially Community programmes, needed to be better geared to their requirements. SMEs therefore needed to be redefined on the basis of the number of employees (fewer than 10 for micro-enterprises, between 10 and 50 for small enterprises, between 50 and 250 for medium-sized enterprises), the level of tied sales, turnover and the balance sheet. It called on the Commission to ensure that SMEs had better access to various programmes designed for them and to carry out a study into the level of participation in Community programmes. Parliament also emphasized teaching and training, which should be geared towards promoting the spirit of initiative and enterprise; at present a sort of cowardice prevailed in this area. Children of school age needed to be taught how to set up in business and schools should foster the qualities needed to do so and tell children what support they can rely on. Similarly, the Commission and the Member States were urged to revive the interest of young people in a career in the craft industries. Parliament also observed that most SMEs fold as the result of late payments and called for a proposal for a directive to deal with this situation. Efforts also needed to be made to give financial support for environmentally-friendly SMEs and SMEs interested in the information society. Parliament also emphasized the importance of interregional and local SME interfaces and called for action in this area, including action to promote local women's initiatives. Welcoming the results of the round table organized by the SMEs and the banks, it called for mutual guarantee schemes to be introduced and for schemes whereby banks guaranteed SME funding. Measures to reduce VAT where also urgently required. Finally, Parliament emphasized the precarious position of women working in small and medium- sized enterprises and called for initiatives to increase the numbers of better qualified women working in this sector.