

Procedure file

Basic information		
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2012/2114(INI)	Procedure completed
Financing EU SMEs' trade and investment: facilitated access to credit in support of internationalisation		
Subject		
3.45.02 Small and medium-sized enterprises (SME), craft industries		
3.45.03 Financial management of undertakings, business loans, accounting		
6.20 Common commercial policy in general		

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	INTA International Trade		29/02/2012
		ECR ZAHRADIL Jan	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		PPE CORREA ZAMORA María Auxiliadora	
		S&D BALZANI Francesca	
		Verts/ALE ANDERSDOTTER Amelia	
	Committee for opinion	Rapporteur for opinion	Appointed
	ECON Economic and Monetary Affairs	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
	REGI Regional Development	The committee decided not to give an opinion.	
European Commission	Commission DG	Commissioner	
	Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs	TAJANI Antonio	

Key events			
14/06/2012	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
06/11/2012	Vote in committee		
12/11/2012	Committee report tabled for plenary	A7-0367/2012	Summary
10/12/2012	Debate in Parliament		
11/12/2012	Results of vote in Parliament		
11/12/2012	Decision by Parliament	T7-0469/2012	Summary
11/12/2012	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2012/2114(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Initiative
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	INTA/7/09002

Documentation gateway					
Committee draft report		PE492.903	06/08/2012	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee		PE496.561	04/10/2012	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading		A7-0367/2012	12/11/2012	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0469/2012	11/12/2012	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary		SP(2013)175	13/05/2013	EC	

Financing EU SMEs' trade and investment: facilitated access to credit in support of internationalisation

The Committee on International Trade adopted the own-initiative report by Jan ZAHRADIL (ECR, CZ) on financing EU EMEs trade and investment: facilitated access to credit in support of internationalisation.

Members call on the Commission and, where appropriate, Member States to foster the participation of SMEs, and where relevant micro-enterprises, in global markets by implementing appropriate measures for their internationalisation:

- easier access to capital and regularly updated information on business opportunities abroad, and
- efficient trade defence instruments (TDIs) aimed at ensuring their rightful protection against unfair dumping and subsidies in order to safeguard fair competition with third countries.

Access to information: the report underlines the need to improve enterprise-level data collection in order to raise awareness of the needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), share best practice and provide them with better targeted support at both national and EU level.

Members insist on the need:

- first of all, for a mapping exercise to identify existing and missing support programmes and to encourage Member States authorities to create similar single online databases of national and regional sources of finance;
- to evaluate the available market for growing internationalisation and further promote SME development within the internal market;
- to create a network, as part of a digital platform, bringing together national SME helpdesks, chambers of commerce, Export Credit Agencies (ECAs), business associations and the Commission, in order to provide enterprises in the EU, especially exporters and importers, with precise, timely and reader-friendly information on a one-stop-shop basis, so that they can fully benefit from the Unions new common commercial policy.

Access to capital: the report stresses that recurrent difficulties in accessing capital are one of the key reasons preventing SMEs internationalisation; calls on the national governments to support SMEs by means of officially supported export credits, without distorting intra-EU competition, and also to earmark sufficient funding for SMEs (e.g. special loans, cofinancing and venture capital), so as to help overcome disinvestment and deleveraging by banks.

Such funding should be provided to SMEs that are already exporting and which can present a viable business plan for improving or consolidating their existing market share and creating jobs, especially for young people.

The report makes the following suggestions:

- help SMEs by exploring the possibility of creating, among other things, investment funds for SMEs in which any European citizen could invest savings;
- define a holistic strategy for trade finance, aimed at fostering internationalisation of SMEs, is urgently needed. There is therefore a need to identify promising niche markets and foster their development;
- study the European business angel market and similar markets worldwide in order to learn from and build up the capacity of business angel network managers in the EU;

- establish an EU export-import facility (EU EXIM) for SMEs which would provide them with additional support via export credit organisations and based on best national practices;
- introduce regulatory and legislative measures to improve SMEs access to guarantees, as for example, i) reducing barriers to property registration (e.g. by establishing credit bureaux); ii) lowering enforcement costs for lenders and raising the overall quality of financial information concerning SMEs, in order to enhance their creditworthiness in the eyes of lenders;
- provide SMEs with financial and technical assistance focused on market research, project and export finance advice, legal counselling (e.g. on escape clauses or penalties for late payment or default), customs and tax obligations, the fight against counterfeiting, and company presentations at trade fairs and business networking events;
- focus on closing the credit gap for micro-enterprises;
- increased public-private partnerships in the provision of seed money and venture capital to MSMEs in the EU.

The report formulates a certain number of recommendations regarding practical actions, such as :

- the Member States to adopt single enterprise helpdesks at the local level, run in cooperation with EU businesses, so that SMEs can receive information, in their own language and for immediate use, regarding export/import opportunities, existing barriers to trade (both tariffs and NTBs), investment protection, dispute settlement provisions and competitors, and gain a knowledge and understanding of cultural and human practices in third markets;
- a network to be set up between SMEs and large European companies to enable SMEs to reap the benefits of these companies expertise and export and innovation capacities;
- foster cooperation between European SMEs and third-country enterprises.

The Commission and the Member States are invited to: i) promote exchanges between the heads of EU and third-country SMEs along the lines of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme; ii) make European SMEs more aware of trade agreements that are being negotiated and international investment opportunities open to SMEs; iii) involve SMEs in the establishment of international standards (e.g. ISO); iv) improve the defence of intellectual property rights in all relevant multilateral organisations (WTO, World Health Organisation, World Intellectual Property Organisation).

Lastly, the report calls for the Union to develop an ambitious common industrial policy based on fostering research and innovation that benefits from innovative financing arrangements, such as project bonds, and supports the development of SMEs, via access to public procurement.

Financing EU SMEs' trade and investment: facilitated access to credit in support of internationalisation

The European Parliament adopted by 577 votes to 38, with 55 abstentions, a resolution on financing EU SMEs trade and investment: facilitated access to credit in support of internationalisation.

Members recall that a considerable number of European SMEs are engaged in international export activities (25 % of the total), and whereas only 13 % of European SMEs conduct activities in markets outside the EU and only 4 % of internationally inactive SMEs have specific plans to start up international activities in the foreseeable future. Moreover, certain SMEs are incapable of internationalisation due to their business profiles and size.

In a context in which European SMEs are particularly affected by the global economic and financial crisis, Parliament calls on the Commission and, where appropriate, Member States to foster the participation of SMEs, and where relevant micro-enterprises, in global markets by implementing appropriate measures for their internationalisation:

- easier access to capital and regularly updated information on business opportunities abroad, and
- efficient trade defence instruments (TDIs) aimed at ensuring their rightful protection against unfair dumping and subsidies in order to safeguard fair competition with third countries.

Access to information: the resolution underlines the need to improve enterprise-level data collection in order to raise awareness of the needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), share best practice and provide them with better targeted support at both national and EU level.

Members insist on the need:

- for a mapping exercise to identify existing and missing support programmes and to encourage Member States authorities to create similar single online databases of national and regional sources of finance;
- to evaluate the available market for growing internationalisation and further promote SME development within the internal market;
- to create a network, as part of a digital platform, bringing together national SME helpdesks, chambers of commerce, Export Credit Agencies (ECAs), business associations and the Commission, in order to provide enterprises in the EU, especially exporters and importers, with precise, timely and reader-friendly information on a one-stop-shop basis, so that they can fully benefit from the Unions new common commercial policy.

Access to capital: the resolution stresses that recurrent difficulties in accessing capital are one of the key reasons preventing SMEs internationalisation. It calls on the national governments to support SMEs by means of officially supported export credits, without distorting intra-EU competition, and also to earmark sufficient funding for SMEs (e.g. special loans, cofinancing and venture capital), so as to help overcome disinvestment and deleveraging by banks. Such funding should be provided to SMEs that are already exporting and which can present a viable business plan for improving or consolidating their existing market share and creating jobs, especially for young people.

Parliament suggests the following:

- helping SMEs by exploring the possibility of creating, among other things, investment funds for SMEs in which any European citizen could invest savings;
- defining a holistic strategy for trade finance, aimed at fostering internationalisation of SMEs, is urgently needed. There is therefore a need to identify promising niche markets and foster their development;
- studying the European business angel market and similar markets worldwide in order to learn from and build up the capacity of

- business angel network managers in the EU;
- establishing an EU export-import facility (EU EXIM) for SMEs which would provide them with additional support via export credit organisations and based on best national practices;
- introducing regulatory and legislative measures to improve SMEs access to guarantees, as for example, i) reducing barriers to property registration (e.g. by establishing credit bureaux); ii) lowering enforcement costs for lenders and raising the overall quality of financial information concerning SMEs, in order to enhance their creditworthiness in the eyes of lenders;
- providing SMEs with financial and technical assistance focused on market research, project and export finance advice, legal counselling (e.g. on escape clauses or penalties for late payment or default), customs and tax obligations, the fight against counterfeiting, and company presentations at trade fairs and business networking events;
- focusing on closing the credit gap for micro-enterprises;
- increased public-private partnerships in the provision of seed money and venture capital to MSMEs in the EU.

The resolution formulates a certain number of recommendations regarding practical actions, such as:

- the establishment of single enterprise helpdesks at the local level, run in cooperation with EU businesses, so that SMEs can receive information, in their own language and for immediate use, regarding export/import opportunities, existing barriers to trade (both tariffs and NTBs), investment protection, dispute settlement provisions and competitors, and gain a knowledge and understanding of cultural and human practices in third markets;
- a network to be set up between SMEs and large European companies to enable SMEs to reap the benefits of these companies expertise and export and innovation capacities;
- foster cooperation between European SMEs and third-country enterprises.

Members consider that the effective protection of SMEs against unfair trading practices by EU partner states is just as important as helping SMEs wishing to internationalise.

The Commission and the Member States are invited to: i) promote exchanges between the heads of EU and third-country SMEs along the lines of the Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs programme; ii) make European SMEs more aware of trade agreements that are being negotiated and international investment opportunities open to SMEs; iii) involve SMEs in the establishment of international standards (e.g. ISO); iv) improve the defence of intellectual property rights in all relevant multilateral organisations (WTO, World Health Organisation, World Intellectual Property Organisation).

Lastly, Parliament calls for the Union to (i) fully exploit the investment opportunities for EU SMEs stemming from the European Neighbourhood Policy, with particular focus on cross-border investment in the countries of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean partnerships and (ii) develop an ambitious common industrial policy based on fostering research and innovation that benefits from innovative financing arrangements, such as project bonds, and supports the development of SMEs, via access to public procurement.