

**SME Intergroup breakfast discussion
2014 European Parliament elections panel
Wednesday 9 April 2014
08:00 - 09:30**

Questions to the panel - MEPs Othmar Karas (EPP-ED, Edit Herczog (S&D), Jürgen Creutzmann (ALDE), Reinhard Bütikofer (Greens/European Free Alliance):

Opening question:

- Do you consider that the European Parliament has sufficiently taken into account the needs of SMEs during the current legislative term and has the SME Intergroup fulfilled its role effectively?

Conditions:

1. What are the next steps foreseen in order to reduce regulatory burdens on businesses, especially SMEs, in Europe and how can the European Parliament play a reinforced role?
2. After 5 years of implementation of the Small Business Act (SBA), what's your assessment of its impact on European SMEs and what are the main policy challenges that the future EU SME policy should address to improve its efficiency in terms of governance and measures?
3. The recently negotiated Horizon 2020 SME Instrument has potential to deliver growth through innovation. Can the European Parliament play a part in boosting business participation in research and innovation and how can we reach a 50% company participation in Horizon 2020?

Markets:

1. Commissioner Barnier adopted a proactive approach with no less than 74 initiatives promoted within the Single Market Acts I & II, a large proportion of which were supported and adopted by the European Parliament. What approach should be taken for the new term to further improve the single market for the next 5 years? (Legislation, standardisation, implementation, enforcement...)
2. The EU is taking a more active stance in supporting SME internationalisation, with different initiatives being taken both inside the EU and in third markets. How can the European Parliament help ensure more coherence in this process?
3. Open markets and cutting red tape in cross-border trade are key to enabling SMEs to seize the opportunities third-country markets offer. How does the European Parliament ensure that the needs of SMEs are systematically taken into account in the shaping of the EU's trade policy and negotiations?

Resources:

1. While inter-institutional discussions on the 2030 targets go on, the price of energy continues to undermine the competitiveness of Europe's SMEs on the global market. What would you do to reverse this worrying trend and how can the new European Parliament contribute?
2. There are a number of ongoing initiatives on access to finance at EU and national levels. Do you think that these actions are efficient and sufficient and what can the EP do in the next term to further facilitate SMEs' access to both debt and equity financing?
3. During the negotiations on Erasmus+, the European Parliament was reluctant to boost the allocation for vocational education and training, trying to keep its budget at only 21% of the overall Erasmus+ budget. Having in mind the strong demand for medium-level skills in the future, how can the EP become an actor of change and seriously boost vocational education and training?

Closing question:

- What would be your priority areas for action to stimulate the recovery and growth of the real economy for the new term and how might the role of the SME Intergroup contribute to their delivery?