

A strong European policy to support Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs 2015-2020

Public consultation on the Small Business Act (SBA)

Fields marked with * are mandatory.

Introduction & background

Since its adoption in 2008, the Small Business Act (SBA) has proven its worth as a policy tool in support of the small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Various initiatives have been taken at both EU and national level to improve the environment in which these businesses operate and help them grow.

It is now time to reflect on what can be done in the years that lie ahead to make life easier for SMEs.

The Commission has drafted a consultation document including the on-going measures and the new proposals (see the link below).

This consultation is designed to collect feedback on the new initiatives set out in the consultation document.

Please read it before you complete the questionnaire.

[Consultation document](#)

1 - About you

1.1 - Are you replying as/on behalf of:*

- An EU citizen
- An individual company
- A national business organization
- A European business organization
- A national authority
- A regional authority
- Other

1.1b Are you registered on the Transparency Register?*

- Yes
- No

1.2 - Please give your name/ the name of the company/organization/authority*

International Credit Insurance & Surety Association

1.3 - Please give your e-mail address

rudolf.leenhouts@icisa.org

1.4 - Your country*

- Austria
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Hungary
- Ireland
- Italy
- Croatia
- Latvia
- Lithuania
- Luxembourg
- Malta
- Netherlands
- Poland
- Portugal
- Romania
- Slovakia
- Slovenia
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom
- Other

1.5 - How do you want your contribution to appear on the Commission's website?*

- Under the name supplied** (I consent to the publication of all information in my contribution, and I declare that none of it is subject to any copyright restrictions that would prevent publication.)
- Anonymously** (I consent to the publication of all information in my contribution except my name/the name of my organisation, and I declare that none of it is subject to any copyright restrictions that would prevent publication.)
- I do not want my contribution to appear - please keep it confidential** (It will not be published, but used internally within the Commission.)

2 - Reducing the administrative burden

2.1 How important is a new EU regulation on regulatory simplification, designed to ensure the following in all EU countries?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Setting up a company at a maximum cost of €100 & within 3 days* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Obtaining the licenses needed within 1 month* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Making the application of the "SME Test" or an equivalent system mandatory in all EU countries* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Ensuring that national laws provide for a discharge within 3 years at most for entrepreneurs who have gone bankrupt* | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> |

2.2 - An EU-wide campaign to cut red tape for SMEs is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

2.3 - Explore the possibility of lowering the transaction costs/fees for SMEs to facilitate their access to industrial and intellectual property is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

2.4 - Improving consultation at an early stage of SMEs (and the organizations representing them) about burdensome legislation, focusing on implementation procedures at EU and national level, is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

2.5 - Encouraging EU countries to simplify tax procedures for new companies in their start-up phase to reduce administrative burdens and help them develop faster is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

2.6 - Identifying and addressing bottlenecks in national legislation which impede SMEs to grow is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

2.7 Any further suggestions or comments?

1,500 character(s) maximum

Although very much in favour of regulatory simplification, ICISA has strong doubts that the objective of ensuring that national laws provide for a discharge within 3 years, at most, for entrepreneurs who have gone bankrupt, would have the right effect. Trade credit insurers might hesitate to provide insurance coverage for goods or services produced or provided by entrepreneurs because they see that the recovery possibilities in case of a bankruptcy diminish considerably. This could lead to higher premium rates or no cover at all causing just the opposite of what the SBA envisages i.e. supporting SMEs and entrepreneurs. ICISA understands why the Commission would like to limit the period for a discharge, however it feels that 3 years is too short.

3 - Access to finance

3.1 - Strengthening the venture capital market in Europe (through legislation and by other means), so as to attract private institutional investors back to the markets, is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

3.2 - Mobilising all the funds allocated to the financial instruments under COSME so that at least 220 000 SMEs in the EU benefit from improved access to finance (EU-supported venture capital funds, guarantees and counter-guarantees) is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

3.3 How important are the following initiatives in developing alternative sources of finance?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|---|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Removing obstacles to crowd-funding & raising awareness about its risks and benefits and how SMEs can access it (through information, events, forums for those potentially interested, etc.)* | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Further developing & spreading mezzanine financing (hybrid, i.e. debt/equity, form of financing) by sharing best practices & setting up discussion forums on the subject* | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Disseminating good practices in the field of supply chain finance through awareness-raising activities* | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

3.4 - Helping to revive EU securitisation markets through appropriate legislation is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

3.5 - Increase cooperation with financial institutions to raise awareness of EU financial instruments for SMEs by signing agreements with relevant EU and national associations is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

3.6 Any further suggestions or comments?

1,500 character(s) maximum

Banks are more likely to extend finance when credit insurance coverage is in place and look more favourably on clients using credit insurance. A company can improve its access to finance by posting its trade receivables as collateral. If these receivables are protected by trade credit insurance the company may obtain bank financing at improved terms according to a recent publication from Swiss Re .

Securitisation of insured trade receivables could also alleviate SME funding constraints and these securitised obligations would not weigh on a bank's capital requirements if sold to non-bank investors. This instrument gives both access to finance for SMEs and serves as a risk mitigating instrument for banks .

ICISA looks forward to collaborating with the European Commission and other European and national stakeholders to make the advantages of trade credit insurance better known to SMEs and to working towards the inclusion of trade credit insurance alongside other instruments when access to finance for SMEs is discussed.

ICISA members continue designing policies which alleviate the administrative burden in such a way that SMEs can manage their policies with ease. Thanks to new developments in IT, policy holders can access on-line buyer monitoring, collection services, follow-up on claims-handling procedures and premium payments.

4 - Promoting market access for SMEs

4.1 How important are the following initiatives in improving access to the EU single market for SMEs?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Upgrading the Enterprise Europe Network by developing local cooperation with SMEs stakeholders & providing new services* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Setting up a European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre to inform & advise SMEs & provide support on this field* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Helping some 100 less-advanced cluster organizations to develop customised support services for SMEs through twinning schemes with advanced cluster organizations - by 2020* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4.2 Developing an integrated Commission strategy to help SMEs do business outside the EU (to increase the percentage of such firms up to 20% by 2020)*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

4.2a How important are the following proposals, which could be included in the Commission's strategy to help SMEs do business outside the EU?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|--|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Providing added value & complementing the national & regional assistance provided by defining the geographic scope of measures clearly* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Strengthening links between various EU support programmes & initiatives (EEN, IPR Helpdesk, EU SME Centres, etc.)* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Showcasing successful EU SMEs operating on global markets & increasing awareness among SMEs of EU-financed initiatives in this field* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Encouraging SMEs to expand business outside the EU through Missions for Growth & cooperation within international clusters* | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Supporting an international environment that is more conducive to doing business for SMEs by establishing & following up SME dialogues with key EU trade partners* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4.3 Exploring the option of targeting policy measures on mid-range companies (firms with over 249 employees) to help them expand their international business is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

4.4 Any further suggestions or comments?

1,500 character(s) maximum

The members of ICISA have extensive experience and expertise in supporting their policy holders when doing business outside of their home markets. As previously mentioned, around 60% of the portfolios of the members of ICISA in terms of number of policies are SMEs. These SME policy holders profit from the unparalleled knowledge of trade credit insurers regarding markets all around the world. "In effect, the trade credit insurers act as the credit departments and political risk departments for companies selling goods or services in global markets ". This results in considerable cost savings and increased revenues for SMEs as credit insurers do part of the work. SMEs which want to start working with trade credit insurance can immediately profit from this expert knowledge while saving costs at the same time.

5 - Releasing entrepreneurial & innovation potential for growth

5.1 - Scaling up the "Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs Programme" from 800 to 10 000 exchanges a year by 2020 is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

5.2 - An EU-wide Early Warning Platform for stakeholders and experts to provide counselling to business in difficulties and help viable companies surmount the crisis, save jobs and avoid bankruptcy is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

5.3 - Setting targets for all EU countries to integrate entrepreneurship into secondary school curricula as a key subject by 2018 is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

5.4 - Ensuring that the on-line platform for women entrepreneurs (to be launched in 2015)

becomes a recognised and used one-stop shop involving local, national & EU stakeholders is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

5.5 - Consulting entrepreneurs throughout Europe to collect ideas for new initiatives to promote

entrepreneurship and youth start-ups is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

5.6 - Supporting EU countries and regions to develop models for start-up and growth centres and

promoting these models is*

- Very useful
- Useful
- Not very useful
- Not useful at all

5.7 How important are the following initiatives in facilitating the transfer of business?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|--|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Urging EU countries to put in place national action plans on business transfers and have a one-stop shop on transfer or a transfer of business element in existing one-stop shops by 2017* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Developing and spreading "Quality Standards" for online markets for business transfers & encouraging the linkages between already existing cross-border matching platforms* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Facilitating EU-wide networking to encourage exchanges between researchers & practitioners; setting up a European Mentors Network for Transfers* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Supporting an EU-wide matching platform for universities/business schools focusing on business transfer* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5.8 How important are the following measures in supporting the Commission's new clusters strategy?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Promoting and supporting business management innovative models, also through initiatives aimed at developing new managerial skills for SMEs* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Bringing together cluster policy-makers in a European Cluster Growth Policy Platform, to share policy experience & develop a shared methodology for cluster policy* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Setting up a regular dialogue on emerging industries with SME communities and business support & clusters practitioners | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5.9 Any further suggestions or comments?

1,500 character(s) maximum

6 - Boosting skills development

6.1 How important is to launch a Commission initiative, comprising employment, education & enterprise dimensions, to overcome the shortage of skilled labour by promoting the following measures?

| | Very important | Important | Less important | Not important at all |
|---|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Training schemes for skilled workers directly involving SMEs from the concerned sector* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A dual system in vocational training* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| A better image of skilled crafts & technical jobs in SMEs* | <input type="radio"/> | <input checked="" type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

6.2 Any further suggestions or comments?

1,500 character(s) maximum

Trade credit insurance can help to alleviate the finance needs for SMEs and support them in accessing markets beyond their own borders. ICISA is therefore looking forward to a constructive dialogue with the European Commission and all other stakeholders to analyse more in-depth how trade credit insurance can support SME finance as well as to working towards the inclusion of trade credit insurance alongside other instruments when access to finance for SMEs is discussed.

Contact

✉ entr-sba@ec.europa.eu
