

# 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

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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

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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\*

Cefic (European Chemical Industry Council)

1.3 - Please give your e-mail address

alj@cefic.be

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- I do not want my contribution to appear - please keep it confidential** (It will not be published, but used internally within the Commission.)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

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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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining the licenses needed within 1 month*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input 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*

### Reducing the Administrative Burden

1. The EU chemical industry requires an appropriate, affordable, clear and consistent legal framework that supports competitiveness and innovation. Excessive regulatory burden in the EU puts the chemical industry at a disadvantage vis-à-vis competitors overseas and is a threat for the 1.2 million jobs it directly provides within 29000 companies, 96% classified as SMEs.

2. Without reducing the level of protection, the complexity and costs of doing business in Europe relative to our competitors should be reduced.

3. EU Institutions and Member State authorities should take responsibility for reducing the overall regulatory burden. Such effort of regulatory efficiency should not be limited to the reduction of the administrative burden, which is a limited subset of the overall compliance costs of companies.

4. Cefic welcomes the EU Commission's commitment to reduce the regulatory burden through its policy for Smart Regulation. The Commission REFIT Programme should set sectoral regulatory burden reduction targets in particular burdensome areas. The setting of quantitative targets of burden reduction in the chemicals sector may be considered once the on-going Fitness Check on Chemicals Legislation and Cumulative Cost Assessment on the chemicals industry are completed.

## 3 - Access to finance

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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

Access to finance

The European Commission should carry out any necessary action to widely promote the new financial instruments for the period 2014-2020, in particular COSME, Horizon 2020 and the Structural Funds while more efforts are needed to strengthen the venture capital market and to develop new sources of financing to facilitate growth, in collaboration with the European Investment Bank (e.g. crowd- and mezzanine funding).

## 4 - Promoting market access for SMEs

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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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Strengthening links between various EU support programmes & initiatives (EEN, IPR Helpdesk, EU SME Centres, etc.)*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 Commission should upgrade the Enterprise Europe Network to strengthen cooperation with stakeholders and to provide a new strategy on SMEs internationalization. It should be mentioned that 96% of the European Chemicals industries are SMEs. About 25% of EU production is destined to export markets and therefore Cefic is an ardent supporter of multilateral trade liberalization. Cefic supports all free trade agreements since the vast majority of growth (90%) will be outside the EU and the opening up the world markets is of crucial importance. Cefic is also supportive for the negotiations with USA and Japan since these agreements are expected to boost trade and economic growth. Companies will benefit from the elimination of import duties, generating annual savings of 1.5 billion €, of which roughly a third relates to intra-company trade. Moreover, access to US energy markets will result in increased competition in oil and gas markets and can thus, in combination with EU action, contribute to narrowing the gap between US and EU energy prices. The European Chemicals Industry has no ambition to see regulatory standards reduced on either side of the Atlantic. However, enhanced regulatory cooperation can create opportunities to reduce regulatory costs for both authorities and companies. Cefic calls for full tariff elimination with no exceptions and for simple and flexible set of rules of origin in order to maximise the uptake of preferential tariffs (in particular for sme's).

## 5 - Releasing entrepreneurial & innovation potential for growth

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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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Supporting an EU-wide matching platform for universities/business schools focusing on business transfer*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5.9 Any further suggestions or comments?

*1,500 character(s) maximum*

Releasing entrepreneurial & innovation potential for growth

Innovation in the chemicals sector not only provides Europe with raw materials and consumer products, it also leads to the development of advanced materials and process technologies that enable more flexible production with more efficient use of energy, feedstock and water. Furthermore, it contributes to improving recyclability and increases the use of renewable feedstock. The chemicals sector - one of the few European industries that still retains world leadership, stands ready to play a leading role in the development and implementation of major EU innovation programmes such as: Sustainable Process Industries for Resource & Energy efficiency (SPIRE), European Innovation Partnership on Raw Materials, European Innovation Partnership on Water, EU High Level Group on Key Enabling Technologies (KETs), and the European Technology Platform for Sustainable Chemistry (SusChem). In this context, SMEs should be further supported to innovate and grow in the European Union, notably in sectors linked to smart specialization strategies and key enabling technologies under the Horizon 2020 Programme.

## 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 checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A dual system in vocational training*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
A better image of skilled crafts & technical jobs in SMEs*	<input checked="" type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

6.2 Any further suggestions or comments?

*1,500 character(s) maximum*

Education is a significant factor in innovation performance, offering a fundamental basis for the creation of new knowledge and the appropriate application of this knowledge for the benefit of society. The chemical industry is already organizing summer schools, working with schools and Universities and organizing specific teacher training to boost sector-specific skills. They aim to share best practice in science education at schools, introduce action days in schools, improve the education of teachers in the chemical sciences, distribute information to young people about career opportunities in research and innovation, improve co-ordination between the various ongoing activities in Europe, raise the general level of educational attainment, foster innovation and an entrepreneurial spirit, and position chemistry as an enabling activity, offering a positive view of the chemical sciences to the general public and to young people in particular. However, these initiatives are usually locally organized. A broader and more systematic approach is required to expand the impact of these activities across Europe. Better exploitation of innovation projects through development of learning resources (which are easy to integrate in existing curricula and use in life long learning initiatives) based on the innovation outcome of successful projects should be supported. Finally, European Union should systematically promote training schemes for skilled works directly involving SMEs and

## Contact

✉ [entr-sba@ec.europa.eu](mailto:entr-sba@ec.europa.eu)

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