

The Craft and Small Enterprises, Keys to Growth and Employment in Europe



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The European Commission adopted on 26 October 1995 a Communication¹ on the results of the Second European Conference on the Craft Sector and Small and Medium-sized Enterprises, held in Berlin on 26 and 27 September 1994². The Communication also covers the follow-up given to this conference and a series of recommendations from the Member States.

The Communication, entitled 'The Craft and Small Enterprises, Keys to Growth and Employment in Europe', is the response to a request from the Council and provides a basis for discussions aimed at producing a certain number of priority measures.

This report is accompanied by two annexes:

- Annex 1, which includes the conclusions of the participants at the Berlin conference, is addressed to the Commission, to the other institutions of the European Union, and to the Member States;
- Annex 2, in which the Commission meets the Council's request to present an initial report on the actions carried out since the Berlin Conference.

Based on these proposals, the Commission has accepted **ten measures** which it feels to be of particular priority. Just how these measures are to be implemented will be specified in the third pluriannual programme in favour of SMEs and the craft sector (1997- 2000). The Commission likewise identified five topics for which **recommendations** have been made to the Member States with regard to implementing the results of the Berlin Conference.

¹ COM(95) 502 final — Communication from the Commission: The Craft and Small Enterprises, Keys to Growth and Employment in Europe — Annex 1: List of proposals from representatives of the crafts sector and small enterprises — Annex 2: answers from the European Community.

² See EURO INFO special issue — 76/95 — January 1995.

1. **Administrative simplification:** Continue the action already undertaken, take into account as much as possible in new European legislation the situation and the limited resources of SMEs, increase the transparency of programmes, simplify the procedures for taking part in Community programmes.
2. **Integration of SMEs in the Internal Market:** Improve the participation in the matter of standards, support the relevant national organisations of SMEs networking to create systems of certification, follow-up measures to the EUROMANAGEMENT Action.
3. **Support of cross-border trade services:** As a strengthening of the on-going pilot action operated by the Commission, support for the creation of cross-border development offices for the intra-Community borders.
4. **Transnational cooperation:** Strengthen the transnational cooperation of SMEs, supported by organisations which help companies get in touch with each other.
5. **Improving international competitiveness:** Initiate and implement the cooperation with organisations and companies in Central and Eastern Europe and in the Mediterranean countries, support of a small number of actions to facilitate the participation in trade shows in third countries.
6. **Vocational training and perfecting of skills:** Training of intermediaries on European issues, support for the construction of European networks of female heads of businesses and their training in order to improve their understanding of the challenges offered by the Internal Market, support for the creation of a European network of placement of young craftsmen to facilitate internships for further training in SMEs in other Member States.
7. **Common development of qualifications:** Encouragement of the launch by CEDEFOP of work on the common development of qualifications in order to facilitate the European recognition of diplomas and the elaboration of European diplomas.
8. **Integration of SMEs into the Information Society:** Permitting professional organisations to help SMEs to take better advantage of the numerous possibilities offered by new information technologies.
9. **Improvement of the access to financing:** Development of mutual guarantee schemes, stimulate bank-enterprise cooperation.
10. **Improving the knowledge, visibility and way in which SMEs are represented:** Support for the setting up of a European academy which will be the place of information, exchange of views for the sector, co-finance competitions among young European craftsmen, establishment of a European prize of craftsmanship, improvement of the economic role of the sector, give a more important role to craft- and small businesses in the administrative committees of Community programmes including a more systematic consultation of intermediate organisations.

Possible Recommendations

The Commission is aware of the major differences at national level in the organisation, traditions, regulations and the way in which craft industries and SMEs are represented. Several recommendations can nevertheless be formulated, which at this stage will primarily concern improvements to the exchanges of best practices:

1. Within the framework of certain community policies, including regional policies, recognise the role and responsibility of organisations representing the craft sector and small enterprises in providing training, support and links with local, regional and national consultative bodies.
2. Promote the introduction of apprenticeship schemes and sandwich courses.
3. Create favourable conditions for small businesses and craft firms for strengthening the spirit of enterprise creation, in particular by developing a pedagogic method and a new approach to include the spirit of business creation into the educational systems, from primary school through university.
4. Creation of a positive environment for consulting new entrepreneurs and recently created enterprises, in particular through exchanges of experiences on the minimum educational needs (especially in the field of finance and management) to improve the chances of survival for newly established craft firms.
5. Recommendation to European and national standardisation authorities to introduce a business assessment form procedure for SMEs in the field of standardisation.

The Commission's aim is therefore to encourage the Member States and the European Union to act, to unite all efforts and to encourage the development and competitiveness of European enterprises — in particular craft and small enterprises — in order to meet the challenge of growth in the creation of employment.

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The 15 Are Unanimous: SMEs Must be Helped

At the 'Industry Council' held in Brussels on 6 and 7 November 1995, Commissioner Christos PAPOUTSIS, responsible for enterprise policy, presented to the 15 the outlines of the Communication that the Commission intends to submit to the European Council in Madrid (15 and 16 December 1995) on a 'European Union Strategy in Favour of SMEs'. The Fifteen and the Commission identified six major priorities for developing an EU strategy to promote SMEs: strengthening SMEs' access to the internal market; encouraging their internationalisation; improving sources of financing; strengthening their participation in research programmes; improving the training of personnel and the administrative environment. Based on these findings, and without prejudice to any future deliberations in the Council, the Ministers held a long debate in an atmosphere of general consensus on the policy to be carried out in favour of SMEs. SMEs must be supported and it must be emphasised that they remain the driving force of the economy as they constitute an enormous source of employment. During the Council meeting, Commissioner PAPOUTSIS also presented to the Fifteen a communication on the feasibility of creating a European capital market for young, rapidly growing enterprises. A communication adopted by the Commission on 27 October 1995 led to a series of policy conclusions from the Council with regard to SME access to financial markets (see page 4).

At the proposal of the Spanish Presidency, the Council also adopted a resolution on 'small and medium-sized industrial enterprises and technological innovation which identifies a series of five measures aimed at facilitating SME access to technological innovation:

- improve SME access to information and advice;
- encourage industrial cooperation between technologically advanced and traditional enterprises, and between large enterprises and SMEs, including subcontractors;
- increase the real participation of SMEs in research and development programmes and encourage training measures in new technologies for SME management and staff;
- utilise + develop networks in which industrial SMEs participate by integrating service industries;
- use financial formulas such as risk capital, loans and research grants in a more targeted way.

The Council also adopted conclusions on 'industrial competitiveness and services to enterprises', and invited the Commission to propose in 1996 a communication on the future of services to enterprises in the European Union, and on the timeliness of developing policy on the subject. Commissioner PAPOUTSIS also underscored the importance of these services during the creation and first years of activity of an SME in his opening remarks at the Forum on helping the creation and development of young enterprises, held in Madrid on 16 and 17 November.

Parallel with this session of the 'Industry Council', the Commission published on 6 November a communication on the follow-up it would like to give to the second European Conference on Craft and Small Enterprises which was held in Berlin on 26 and 27 September 1994 (see page 1).

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Toward the Creation of a European Capital Market for Smaller Entrepreneurially Managed Growing Companies

At the proposal of Commissioner Christos PAPOUTSIS, responsible for enterprise policy, the European Commission adopted on 27 October 1995 a communication³ on the technical creation of a pan-European capital market aimed at encouraging capital uptake for rapidly growing European small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) with prospects for international development, thus improving their access to long term equity capital. The creation of one or several such markets at the European Union level is essential. It will help provide sufficient liquidity and will avoid the limitations which slow down the development of secondary markets at the national level.

The Commission communication points out a major weakness in the current financial structure: the lack of a European equivalent to the electronic stock market run by the National Association of Securities Dealers Automatic Quotation (NASDAQ) in the United States. Each year NASDAQ provides some 400 smaller companies with ready access to long-term equity capital through the medium of offering shares to the public. A recent report shows that while companies listed on NASDAQ only comprised 0,04% of all US companies, they have created almost 16%, or 300,000 of all new jobs since January 1990.

The European Union clearly has need of a similar incentive for job creation, but to be successful, any such similar market in Europe must also maintain an equally high level of liquidity in its transactions and produce a sufficient volume of work on research and quality analysis with regard to the companies listed. There is general agreement within the financial community that only those markets operating on a pan-European scale would be able to offer these characteristics.

The European Commission has already tested the feasibility of the creation of a capital market at the European level by supporting a report prepared by the private sector. The positive results of this study have given birth to two pan-European initiatives: EASDAQ (European Association of Securities Dealers Automatic Quotation) modelled after NASDAQ, and a French initiative launched with Belgian participation under the name of 'Nouveau Marché'. These two initiatives are expected to be operational sometime in 1996.

Given the agenda and the framework for liberalisation established by Community legislation in the area of stocks, important opportunities are expected to result from the proposed electronic markets to the benefit of very small rapidly-growing enterprises and investors and financial market operators, no matter where they are located.

These initiatives are designed to complement those already in existence at a national level, and consist entirely of commercial enterprises. But that does not mean that neither the Commission nor the Member States should remain on the sidelines of this movement. If they do so, they run a great risk of weakening the underlying political objective of the entire operation, which is to improve access to long-term equity capital for smaller rapidly growing enterprises, amongst which are to be found the future giants of trade and industry. This is all the more true for companies active in high technology fields.

The 'Industry Council' adopted on 6 November 1995 its conclusions on the feasibility of the creation of a European Capital Market for smaller entrepreneurially managed growing companies. The Council invites the Commission in particular to 'study the conclusions of its communication in depth and to present at the next Industry Council a report on ways of overcoming the obstacles currently existing in Member States — in particular those which impede the mobilisation of institutional and private investment capital — in order to allow the creation of European secondary capital markets for SMEs which take into account the systems and experience already in existence at the national level'.

In addition, the Council 'urges the Commission to cooperate with the Member States in overcoming the difficulties impeding the realisation of cross-border transfers of stocks by facilitating a progressive movement toward the future operation of a pan-European capital market such as EASDAQ (European Association of Security Dealers Automated Quotation).'

For further information: EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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³ COM(95)498

INTERPRISE:

Encouraging Partnerships between Industries and/or Services in Europe

The INTERPRISE programme is designed to support local, regional and national actions aimed at stimulating direct contacts (ie personalised meetings) between heads of enterprises with a view towards establishing cooperation agreements between small and medium-sized enterprises. The projects must include at least three regions from three European Union countries and may, in certain instances, also be extended to regions from non-member countries. A specific action — MED-INTERPRISE — has been set up within the framework of MED-INVEST for third countries from the Mediterranean basin.

MED-INTERPRISE SYRIA: 3rd through 7th December 1995

Within the framework of the programme for Euro-Mediterranean economic cooperation MED-INVEST, which oversees the organisation of MED-PARTENARIAT and MED-INTERPRISE in Mediterranean third countries, Syria will host a meeting between 43 European SMEs and dozens of Syrian SMEs from December 3rd through 7th. This event, which will take place at Damascus and Aleppo, is being organised on the European side by GOM Vlaams Brabant for Belgium, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Versailles Val d'Oise-Yvelines for France and Nah- und Mittelostverein e.V. of Hamburg for Germany.

For additional information, please contact the main organiser:

GOM Vlaams Brabant — Mr Roger HANON — Toekomststraat 36.38 — B-1800 VILVOORDE —
Tel: +32-2/251.51.71 — Fax: +32-2/252.45.94
European Commission — DG XXIII/B2 — Partenariat Sector — rue de la Loi, 200 (AN80) — B- 1049
Brussels — Fax: +32-2/295.17.40

Each project originates from a local initiative sponsored by such organisations as chambers of commerce and industry, local, regional or national development agencies, European Business and Innovation Centres (BIC), Euro Info Centres, BC-Net/BRE, research centres, or private consultants. Each project must be submitted to the Commission at least nine months before the date of the event and must involve at least 15 to 20 enterprises from each region. The European Commission can provide as much as 50% of the event's total budget, up to a maximum of 50,000 ECU.

The following INTERPRISE events will take place during the next few months:

INTERPRISE ENVIRONMENTAL TECHNOLOGY 1995

Meetings: 4 — 6 December 1995 at UTRECHT (The Netherlands)

Countries involved: The Netherlands, Austria, Norway

Sectors: environment

Organisation: NMC — NATINAAL MILIEUCENTRUM — M. LEVER — Zaagmolenlaan, 4 — NL-3440 AEWERDEN — Tel: +31-3480/32900 — Fax: +31- 3480/31123.

INTERPRISE UMWELT UND ENERGIE

Meetings: 5 — 6 February 1996 at ERFURT (Germany)

Countries involved: Germany, Austria, France, Italy, Israel

Sectors: environment and energy

Organisation: EIC ERFURT HELABA LANDESBANK HESSEN-THÜRINGEN — Mrs Sabine JAENICHEN — Bahnhofstrasse 4A — D-99084 ERFURT — Tel: +49-361/5624798 — Fax: +49-361/6657233.

AGROSUD 1996

Meetings: 22 — 23 February 1996 at CARCASSONNE (France)

Countries involved: France, Spain and Italy

Sectors: agri-foodstuffs

Organisation: Agence de développement économique de l'AUDE — Miss ETTORI — 57, rue d'Alsace — BP 143 — F-11000 CARCASSONNE — Tel: +33/68.11.42.02 — Fax: +33/68.11.42.29

- For further information on a specific INTERPRISE event, please contact the organiser.
- For information on the INTERPRISE programme itself:
European Commission
DG XXIII/B2 — INTERPRISE
rue de la Loi, 200 (AN80) — B-1049 Brussels — Fax: +32-2/295.17.40

MED-INTERPRISE BETHLEHEM: 23 — 24 February 1996

A MED-INTERPRISE event will take place in Bethlehem under the auspices of the MED-INVEST programme on 23-24 February 1996. MED-INTERPRISE is an extension of the 'INTERPRISE' formula to Mediterranean third countries. Its objective is to organise direct, personalised meetings between small and medium-sized enterprises from different Member States of the European Union and SMEs from the host region of Cisjordan and the Gaza Strip, with a view toward possible cooperation. This is the first time that a MED- INTERPRISE event will be held in this region. The profiles and cooperation offers of some 100 Palestinian companies in the sectors of textile and clothing, construction materials, infrastructure, and food and beverage will be published in a catalogue which will then be distributed throughout the participating Member States (Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom). This event is also open to any other interested companies.

For further information: The European Palestinian Chamber of Commerce
Mr Hanna SINIORA
19, Nablus Road — PO BOX 20185 — EAST JERUSALEM
Tel: +972-2/273.293 — Fax: +972-2/894.975

European Commission
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EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRES: Now Operating in 19 Third Countries

EURO INFO CENTRES (EIC) provides SMEs with information on policies and Community programmes and provides rapid, reliable and specialised help for them through the network of more than 210 EIC offices distributed throughout Europe. As a result of the interest expressed by numerous third countries, EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRES (EICC) have been established primarily in the countries which make up EFTA, Central and Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean Basin. The Correspondence Centres have been set up to:

- disseminate Community information to enterprises in third countries;
- collect and distribute useful information for European enterprises over the network;
- answer questions of a general, legal, administrative and statistical nature as posed by third-country enterprises about the European Union;
- answer questions of a general, legal, administrative and statistical nature which European Union enterprises pose about third-country enterprises (over the EIC network).

In setting up a Correspondence Centre and in choosing the host organisation, the European Community is particularly careful to ensure that EU enterprises will have access to the same information and the same support and consultancy services concerning the third countries as those which are offered by the European Union to third-country enterprises. As with EICs, each Correspondence Centre is free to develop a sub-network according to its own needs and means in order to provide the widest dissemination of information and services possible.

EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRES are currently in operation in the following third countries: Switzerland, Bulgaria, Roumania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovenia, Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Morocco, Malta, Tunisia and Turkey⁴. Four new Correspondence Centres have recently been opened in the following countries:

- **ESTONIA:** EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRE — Estonian Chamber of Commerce and Industry — Toom-Kooli, 17 — EE-001 TALLINN — ESTONIA — Tel: +372- 2/44.80.79 — Fax: +372-2/44.36.56.
- **HUNGARY:** EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRE — Hungarian Investment and Trade Development Agency — Andras HIRSCHLER — Dorottya U.4 — H-1051 BUDAPEST — HUNGARY — Tel: +361-1181712/0061 — Fax: +361-1186198.

⁴ See addresses in EURO INFO no. 80 — 4/95.

- **LEBANON:** EURO INFO CENTRE DE CORRESPONDANCE — Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie — Mr ATTIE — Sanayeh — BP 111801 — BEYROUTH — LEBANON — Tel: +961-1/35.33.90 — Fax: +961-1/86.58.02.
- **GAZA** EURO INFO CORRESPONDENCE CENTRE — Development Resource Centre (DRC) — Mrs Cornelia FRANK — PO BOX 23 — GAZA — Gaza Strip (via ISRAEL) — Tel: +972-7/86.98.87 — Fax: +972-7/82.18.20.

A Forum on Tourism in Europe

At the request of Commissioner PAPOUTSIS, DG XXIII is organising a Forum on Tourism in Europe which will be held in Brussels on 8 December 1995. The inaugural session of the Forum will feature very high level presentations on the policy orientations of the various EU institutions with regard to future Community measures in favour of tourism.

Tourism (6% of employment and 5.5% of GNP of the European Union) offers excellent opportunities in the area of growth and employment. Three Working Groups will tackle questions relating to the competitiveness of the European tourist industry, the satisfaction of tourists' needs, and the development of balanced and sustainable tourism. This Forum, which will bring together experts, tourism professionals and key figures in the field of tourism, will bring to a close the consultations undertaken by the Commission with the publication in April 1995 of its 'Green Paper on the Role of the European Union in Matters of Tourism'.

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FOR YOUR INFORMATION

EURO INFO CENTRES:

An Information Campaign Focusing on STANDARDISATION

What is the reasoning behind the harmonisation of standards and technical regulations? What is the 'new approach'? What are the advantages of the 'CE' mark? What are the responsibilities of European standardisation organisations? Where can the rules on toy and machine safety be found? These are just a few of the questions to be answered by the EURO INFO CENTRES which, established throughout the European Union and countries of the EEA, have undertaken to organise a vast national and regional information campaign on STANDARDISATION. This information campaign will be directed first and foremost toward small and medium-sized enterprises as these often encounter difficulties in obtaining the facts on standardisation. The campaign will be organised on a decentralised basis and will offer specific events designed to meet the particular needs and characteristics of businessmen from every country.

For information on participating in the specific events to be organised in your country or region, contact the EURO INFO CENTRE responsible for coordinating and implementing the campaign in your country:

- **AUSTRIA:** Heinz KOGLER — Wiedner Hauptstrasse, 63 — Postfach 150 — 1045 WIEN — Tel: +43-1/501.05.43.56 — Fax: +43-1/50.20.62.97.
- **BELGIUM:** Christian LÉBOULLE Le Vertbois — rue du Vertbois, 13A — 4000 LIEGE — Tel: +32-41/20.11.11 — Fax: +32-41/20.11.13.
- **BELGIUM:** Walter BORMS — Lange Steenstraat, 10 — 8500 KORTRIJK — Tel: +32- 56/22.41.23 — Fax: +32-56/22.96.94.
- **GERMANY:** Sabine JÄHNICHEN — Bahnhofstrasse, 4a — 99004 ERFURT — Tel: +49-361/562.47.98 — Fax: +49-361/665.72.33.
- **DENMARK:** Jan STIISKJAER — Gregersensvej — Postbox 141 — 2630 TAASTRUP — Tel: +45-43.50.49.52 — Fax: +45-43/71.63.60
- **SPAIN:** Enrique VELASCO — Alameda de Recalde 50 — 48008 BILBAO — tel: +34- 4/410.46.64 — Fax: +34-4/443.41.45.
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