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Vulnerable persons

54. Calls on the Commission to lay down mandatory common standards for identifying vulnerable persons, particularly victims of torture or human trafficking, people requiring special medical treatment, pregnant women and minors;

55. Considers that no vulnerable person, given their particular circumstances, should be placed in detention as that would have serious repercussions for their wellbeing;

56. Urges the Member States to provide specialist assistance to vulnerable persons and victims of torture and trafficking, particularly psychological assistance, to ensure their protection; calls for all staff having contact with vulnerable persons, including the officials responsible for asylum applications and the police, to receive specialist training;

Dublin System

57. Is concerned at the increased number of people detained under the Dublin System and at the near-routine use of detention measures by certain Member States; expects people not to be placed in detention if the Member State has not demonstrated a risk of their absconding;

58. Regrets that certain Member States limit the access of persons under the Dublin System to reception standards; calls on the Commission to establish clearly that the Reception Directive also applies to such persons, in order to ensure that they are able to exercise their full rights;

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59. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, and the governments and parliaments of the Member States.

Enhancing the role of European SMEs in international trade

P6_TA(2009)0048

European Parliament resolution of 5 February 2009 on enhancing the role of European SMEs in international trade (2008/2205(INI))

(2010/C 67 E/12)

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the European Charter for Small Enterprises, adopted by the European Council at its meeting in Santa Maria da Feira on 19 and 20 June 2000,
- having regard to the Presidency conclusions on the Lisbon Strategy adopted by the European Council in Lisbon on 23 and 24 March 2000,
- having regard to Commission Recommendation 2003/361/EC of 6 May 2003 concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 21 January 2003 entitled 'Thinking small in an enlarging Europe' (COM(2003)0026),

(¹) OJ L 124, 20.5.2003, p. 36.

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- having regard to the Commission communication of 10 November 2005 entitled 'Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme – Modern SME policy for growth and employment' (COM(2005)0551),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 October 2006 entitled 'Global Europe: Competing in the world – A contribution to the EU's growth and jobs strategy' (COM(2006)0567),
- having regard to its resolution of 22 May 2007 on Global Europe – external aspects of competitiveness ⁽¹⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 4 October 2007 entitled 'Small and medium-sized enterprises – Key for delivering more growth and jobs. A mid-term review of modern SME policy' (COM(2007)0592),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 18 April 2007 entitled 'Global Europe: A stronger partnership to deliver market access for European exporters' (COM(2007)0183),
- having regard to the report on the public consultation on the EU market access strategy, presented by the Commission (DG Trade) on 28 February 2007,
- having regard to the Final Report of the Expert Group on Supporting the Internationalisation of SMEs, published by the Commission (DG Enterprise and Industry, Promotion of SME competitiveness) in December 2007 ⁽²⁾,
- having regard to the Commission communication of 25 June 2008 entitled 'Think Small First – Small Business Act for Europe' (COM(2008)0394),
- having regard to the Commission communication of 6 December 2006 entitled 'Global Europe: Europe's trade defence instruments in a changing global economy – A Green Paper for public consultation' (COM(2006)0763),
- having regard to its resolution of 28 September 2006 on the EU's economic and trade relations with India ⁽³⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 25 October 2006 on the annual report from the Commission to the European Parliament on third country anti-dumping, anti-subsidy and safeguard action against the Community (2004) ⁽⁴⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 4 April 2006 on the assessment of the Doha Round following the WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong ⁽⁵⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 12 October 2006 on economic and trade relations between the EU and Mercosur with a view to the conclusion of an Interregional Association Agreement ⁽⁶⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 1 June 2006 on EU-US transatlantic economic relations ⁽⁷⁾,
- having regard to its resolution of 13 October 2005 on prospects for trade relations between the EU and China ⁽⁸⁾,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 102 E, 24.4.2008, p. 128.

⁽²⁾ http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/internationalisation/report_internat.pdf

⁽³⁾ OJ C 306 E, 15.12.2006, p. 400.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 313 E, 20.12.2006, p. 276.

⁽⁵⁾ OJ C 293 E, 2.12.2006, p. 155.

⁽⁶⁾ OJ C 308 E, 16.12.2006, p. 182.

⁽⁷⁾ OJ C 298 E, 8.12.2006, p. 235.

⁽⁸⁾ OJ C 233 E, 28.9.2006, p. 103.

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- having regard to its resolution of 6 September 2005 on textiles and clothing after 2005 ⁽¹⁾,
 - having regard to the Commission staff working document of 14 November 2006 – Accompanying document to the Communication from the Commission – Economic reforms and competitiveness: key messages from the European Competitiveness Report 2006 (SEC(2006)1467),
 - having regard to the Presidency conclusions adopted by the European Council in Brussels on 23 and 24 March 2006 (7775/1/2006),
 - having regard to its resolution of 15 March 2006 on the input to the Spring 2006 European Council in relation to the Lisbon Strategy ⁽²⁾,
 - having regard to the declaration adopted by consensus on 2 December 2006 at the annual session of the Parliamentary Conference on the WTO,
 - having regard to its resolution of 24 April 2008 entitled ‘Towards a reform of the World Trade Organisation’ ⁽³⁾,
 - having regard to its resolution of 6 July 2006 on origin marking ⁽⁴⁾,
 - having regard to the General Affairs and External Relations Council conclusions of 12 February 2007 concerning the WTO’s Agreement on Government Procurement and SMEs,
 - having regard to Rule 45 of its Rules of Procedure,
 - having regard to the report of the Committee on International Trade and the opinions of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy and the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (A6-0001/2009),
- A. whereas the EU SMEs, defined as enterprises with fewer than 250 employees and a turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, account for 23 million enterprises (99% of the total) and 75 million jobs (70%) in the European Union,
- B. whereas more than 96 % of SMEs in the European Union have fewer than 50 employees and less than EUR 10 million in annual turnover which limits their ability to export goods and services outside their national borders, due to the high fixed costs linked to international trade;
- C. whereas their international performance is therefore structurally weak, although 8% of SMEs in the European Union export goods outside their national borders and almost 3% of SMEs view the export of goods outside the European Union as a priority; whereas by contrast the top ten EU companies account for 96% of EU exports and foreign direct investment,
- D. whereas the forecasted economic growth in third countries is expected to be higher than in the internal market, which will create new opportunities for exporting SMEs,
- E. whereas SMEs will face more intense competition inside the European Union by competitors from third countries,

⁽¹⁾ OJ C 193 E, 17.8.2006, p. 110.

⁽²⁾ OJ C 291 E, 30.11.2006, p. 321.

⁽³⁾ Texts adopted, P6_TA(2008)0180.

⁽⁴⁾ OJ C 303 E, 13.12.2006, p. 881.

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- F. whereas the best means of ensuring opportunities for SMEs in the globalised economy is through open markets and fair competition,
- G. whereas internationalised companies have demonstrated a greater capacity for innovation; whereas internationalisation and innovation are key drivers of competitiveness and growth, which are crucial for the achievement of the Lisbon Strategy goals as regards growth and jobs,
- H. whereas internationalisation generates growth and competitiveness, helping businesses expand and thus increasing employment, and whereas SMEs create 80% of new jobs in the European Union,
- I. whereas SMEs have to cope with specific problems when embarking on the process of internationalisation, such as their lack of international experience, the difficulty of gaining access to finance, the shortage of experienced human resources, and a very complex international normative framework and these burdens dissuade them from making the necessary structural changes in order to be able to benefit from internationalisation,
- J. whereas SMEs engaged in international trade have a role to play in reshaping the EU economic landscape so as to become the next-generation of large companies that the European Union needs in order to achieve the objective of 3% of GDP being spent on Research and Development,
- K. whereas EU SMEs have a key interest in markets that are closest geographically and culturally, namely in regions bordering the European Union such as the Mediterranean and the Western Balkans,
- L. whereas competitiveness also depends on the ability to guarantee SMEs adequate protection against unfair trading practices; whereas manufacturing production in the European Union is an important sector for economic growth and employment,

The multilateral framework and the WTO

1. Stresses the need for the WTO system to ensure that it takes greater account of the role of SMEs and their interests; points out that SMEs need a clear and functional international normative framework;
2. Calls on the Commission, in the context of the WTO negotiations, to provide for specific simplified rules for SMEs within free trade areas and for special clauses relating to the requirements of SMEs;
3. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to review their priorities at multilateral level by promoting the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers and to foster international trade through appropriate measures to simplify and harmonise standards;
4. Considers that the international trade system should be made less onerous for SMEs and that consideration should be given to setting up a rapid and low-cost system of international arbitration courts to enable SMEs to avoid the delays and problems which a legal dispute with customs or trade authorities would entail in certain third countries;

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5. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to endeavour actively to reach a multilateral global agreement on 'trade facilitation', inter alia, to enable EU SMEs to benefit fully from globalisation and the opening of third country markets;
6. Supports, in particular, the adoption of a firm stance in the negotiations on trade facilitation procedures, in order to lower the costs of customs procedures which can account for up to 15% of the value of the goods traded, through transparent and simplified procedures, harmonised international standards, effective recording of the origin of goods, and updated customs controls;
7. Emphasises the importance of the conclusion of the negotiations on all chapters of the Doha Development Round to SMEs;

The Global Europe communication

8. Supports the Commission's efforts to provide the European Union with a global strategy covering all external aspects of European competitiveness and helping to ensure that the Lisbon strategy objectives are fully achieved, but notes with regret the absence of any specific initiatives in favour of SMEs, which provide two thirds of employment in the European Union; calls on the Commission and the Council to remedy this shortcoming without delay and to set ambitious and, at the same time, realistic objectives to safeguard the interests of SMEs and make the necessary means and resources available; notes the importance of an effective Trade Barriers Regulation as a complementary instrument to that end;
9. Considers that reciprocal trade liberalisation is necessary for SMEs and, in view of that, feels that the Commission should come up with an explicit response to the export difficulties faced by EU SMEs, explaining which national or European instruments the European Union could use to help SMEs improve their performance in global markets;

Reform of trade defence instruments (TDIs)

10. Welcomes the Commission's decision to withdraw the proposals for reform of the TDIs contained in the above-mentioned Green Paper for public consultation;
11. Takes the view that the Commission's reforms would not only have failed to enhance the external competitiveness of EU industry but would have caused further serious damage to those EU industrial sectors jeopardised by foreign products illegally subsidised or unduly favoured by dumping practices; stresses that the Trade Defence Instrument system (TDI system) must continue to be a quasi-judicial procedure, based on objective and factual assessments, in order to provide for predictability and legal certainty;
12. Considers that in the absence of internationally recognised rules on competition, the European TDI system is the best response to ensure a level playing field for all actors and takes the view that EU companies, especially SMEs, need an effective mechanism to combat unfair commercial practices;
13. Emphasises that the TDI system serves to protect the interests of producers and employees against impairment caused by dumping or illegal subsidies; given the importance of TDIs, calls on the Commission to increase the transparency, predictability and accessibility of the investigations in particular for SMEs, and to accelerate and simplify procedures;

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14. Recommends that the Commission and Member States introduce information and training measures for SMEs in order to encourage them to make use of TDIs; considers that the Commission, whilst adopting a neutral position, should provide targeted assistance to SMEs throughout all the different stages of trade defence investigations; in this respect considers it necessary to improve the services offered by the SME TDI helpdesk;

15. Regrets that only a limited number of investigations have concerned industrial sectors with a high concentration of SMEs; calls on the Commission to take every possible step, without delay, to rectify the current practice with a view to upholding the rights of SMEs more effectively and guaranteeing them easier access to safeguards under TDIs;

16. Considers, in this connection, that the 'proportion of total Community production' concept in the Trade Barriers Regulation ⁽¹⁾ already offers possibilities for SMEs to initiate complaints, but nonetheless asks the Commission to ensure that professional associations with a high SME representation should be allowed to validly represent them before the Commission without changing the current threshold;

17. Calls on the Commission to react quickly and in an appropriate manner to third countries that make arbitrary use of TDIs, particularly when these measures affect EU SMEs;

Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and origin markings

18. Emphasises that SMEs need effective IPR protection as a precondition for developing new technologies, in order to enable them to undertake international activities; points out, therefore, that a simple and efficient IPR system is a key tool for promoting the internationalisation of SMEs;

19. Draws attention to the significant increase in recent years in infringements of IPR affecting EU SMEs, and to the fact that counterfeiting does not just affect large industrial companies but also SMEs that have managed to create high quality competitive products and suffer severe consequences from counterfeiting that in some cases can threaten their very existence;

20. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to commit themselves with renewed vigour to preventing and combating counterfeiting by means of appropriate internal policies and international initiatives, at both multilateral (e.g. the Anti Counterfeiting Trade Agreement) and bilateral (new economic cooperation agreements with third countries) level, taking due account of the impact of counterfeiting on SMEs; underlines that for SMEs the protection of geographical indications and of patent rights is equally if not more important than the protection of trademarks and copyrights; asks the Commission and the Member States to ensure that the high standards of data protection in the European Union are not violated by these measures;

21. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to encourage SMEs to make use of instruments, such as patents, in order to secure their know-how and protect themselves against copying and counterfeiting;

22. Calls on the Commission and the Member States also to monitor and react in the event of IPR infringements and to call on their own trading partners to comply more strictly with the TRIPS agreement and their national intellectual property protection standards;

⁽¹⁾ Council Regulation (EC) No 3286/94 of 22 December 1994 laying down Community procedures in the field of the common commercial policy in order to ensure the exercise of the Community's rights under international trade rules, in particular those established under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (OJ L 349, 31.12.1994, p. 71).

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23. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the control of imports by the customs authorities in order to ensure a more effective level of protection against products which infringe IPR held by EU companies;

24. Regrets the delayed introduction of the Community origin marking system for certain products from non-European countries (such as textiles and footwear) ⁽¹⁾ and expresses concern at this clear infringement of the rights of EU consumers; calls on the Commission and the Member States to remove as a matter of urgency the obstacles which have so far stood in the way of the entry into force of this legislation and to promote the European origin of such products, often seen by consumers as a guarantee of quality, safety and respect for high production standards;

Third-country market access strategy

25. Points out that facilitating access to international markets for SMEs can contribute to creating new jobs, protecting and adding value to existing jobs, safeguarding and exchanging know how and specific features of EU industry and giving Member States a guarantee of solid and lasting economic growth;

26. Welcomes the Commission's current efforts to provide access for SME's to third country markets; calls on the Commission and Member States to ensure the successful functioning of EU Market Access Teams in third countries, especially in the emerging economies, with the involvement of the relevant professional organisations;

27. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to improve the provision of information on third-country markets and to establish, among other things, sections devoted to SMEs, and to rationalise the Market Access Database thereby ensuring easier access especially for SME operators;

28. Calls on the Commission to simplify the Market Access Database in order to make consultation thereof more accessible to SMEs; calls also on the Commission to initiate measures to publicise such databases;

29. Considers that the Market Access Teams set up by the Commission third country delegations should be strengthened and that a desk specifically responsible for monitoring SME-related issues and made up of specialists on company matters should be set up within them;

30. Supports the creation in the key Indian and Chinese markets of European Business Centres, which work together with national chambers of commerce and business representatives to help SMEs find partners with the relevant skills in order to be able to enter these local markets;

31. Considers that the success of the market access strategy also requires support in terms of information and greater powers of influence for national chambers of commerce outside the European Union; supports the bilateral programmes promoting specific access for SMEs to third-country markets, given the success of AI Invest (Latin America), Medinvest (Mediterranean) and Proinvest (ACP countries);

32. Points out that standardisation can lead to innovation and competitiveness by facilitating access to markets and by enabling interoperability; encourages the Commission to increase the promotion of European standards internationally;

⁽¹⁾ Proposal for Council Regulation on the indication of the country of origin of certain products imported from third countries (COM(2005)0661).

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European Small Business Act, competitiveness and international trade

33. Welcomes the Commission's Small Business Act initiative as an important opportunity to gear all EU policies effectively towards SMEs; considers it necessary, in this connection, to fully involve the Member States and EU Institutions to ensure that the 'Think small first' principle is applied;

34. Notes that there are very competitive EU SMEs, which are world leaders in highly specialised niche markets and are therefore a driving force in advancing the Lisbon Strategy;

35. Considers that the internationalisation of SMEs is a primary objective of trade policy and should constitute a cornerstone of the European Small Business Act, which will act as a stable, homogeneous, binding and global framework for the Commission's policies for SMEs;

36. Considers that, in order to foster their presence on third country markets, SMEs should have dedicated employees specifically dealing with internationalisation which is rarely the case; calls on the Commission and Member States, in order to overcome this obstacle, to promote the establishment of service consortia to support SMEs in the process of internationalisation;

37. Encourages the strengthening of all SME innovation and start up policies; supports the creation of European centres of competitiveness open to SMEs that may reach a critical mass required to survive in the face of international competition; also supports the extension and the updating of programmes giving SMEs access to international development finance as well as all measures aimed at reducing their fixed operational costs; points out that the single European patent and the European Company Statute should be adopted as quickly as possible to promote the transition to extra-Community trade;

38. Regards political and financial support to foster product and process innovation, improving access to finance and fiscal aspects, as well as research cooperation and technology transfer, as key elements in increasing the productivity of SMEs, which is at the base of any successful internationalisation strategy for SMEs;

39. Considers that internal market policies should focus on improving the situation of EU SMEs by creating an SME-friendly business environment and by ensuring that SMEs can benefit fully from the opportunities offered by the internal market; considers further that, where relevant, these policies should also enhance the international role of SMEs;

40. Calls on the Commission to consider how the internal market can further help EU businesses to compete internationally;

41. Welcomes the contract awarded and signed by the Commission to carry out a study on the internationalisation of SMEs; is of the opinion that the study will provide a detailed overview of the state of internationalisation of EU SMEs; calls on the Commission to take effective measures to facilitate the performance of SMEs in the globalised world;

42. Notes the importance of skilled and trained entrepreneurs in facing the challenges of international business; calls therefore on the Commission and the Member States to increase the provision of training programmes for entrepreneurs on the globalised business environment (such as the Enterprise Europe Network or 'Gateway to China' scheme); calls for increased cooperation between SMEs and universities in order to improve research and innovation; calls on the Commission to consider the creation of a special EU exchange programme for young entrepreneurs based on the Erasmus / Leonardo da Vinci programmes;

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43. Welcomes the organisation of a 'European SME Week' in May 2009 and proposes that this event be used to provide information for SMEs on how to develop their export activities outside the European Union;

Free-trade agreements

44. Calls on the Commission to pay closer attention to assessing the impact which the new generation of free-trade agreements negotiated with third countries can have on EU SMEs and to take account of this assessment at the negotiation phase;

45. Takes the view that the Commission should aim to conclude free-trade agreements or other trade agreements that are favourable to the European economy as a whole and to SMEs in particular or that provide for trade concessions at similar level, other than with regard to the least developed countries;

46. Stresses the importance of promoting economic and trade relations between the European Union and third countries that are members of the Central European Free Trade Agreement and calls on the Commission to pay special attention to SMEs in its trade relations with such countries;

47. Recommends that the Commission guarantees permanent monitoring of these agreements and intervenes without delay in the event of failure to comply with the obligations taken on by the partners;

48. Stresses the importance of geographically closer markets for SMEs and calls on the Commission to pay special attention to SMEs in trade relations with such countries; welcomes, in this context, the reference to the Mediterranean Business Development Initiative contained in the Paris Summit Declaration of 13 July 2008 on the Union for the Mediterranean;

49. Notes the important role of SMEs in climate change technology transfer and the importance of the active participation of SMEs in development aid;

Tenders

50. Recalls that public tenders are one of the most promising economic sectors for the European economy and for SMEs in particular; expresses concern at the persisting restrictions in many third countries, which refuse to guarantee EU companies similar access to their tender procedures or which apply standards that, in many cases, lack transparency and fairness;

51. Takes the view that EU SMEs should have the same level of advantages and possibilities as regards public tenders in the main industrialised countries (including the United States, Canada and Japan) as they enjoy inside the European Union; calls on the Commission therefore to guarantee that EU SMEs will have better access to public procurement markets in third countries and enjoy fair conditions of competition in the sectors concerned by the tenders, if necessary by applying the principle of reciprocity;

52. Considers that informed and effective action needs to be taken by the European Union to secure equal rights for EU companies, and particularly SMEs;

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53. Calls on the Commission to submit realistic and constructive proposals with a view to future renegotiation and strengthening of the WTO Agreement on Government Procurement;
54. Considers that public procurement should be a key chapter in all bilateral and regional trade negotiations undertaken by the European Union, with a view to opening up public procurement markets on a balanced basis;
55. Welcomes the Commission proposal contained in the Communication on Global Europe to apply targeted restrictions to European tenders for countries which do not offer access to their public markets; calls on the Commission to inform the Parliament of the results obtained to-date and the initiatives it intends to take to improve EU SMEs access to third country tenders;

Agricultural products and geographical indications

56. Recalls the importance of access to agricultural markets for EU SMEs in the sector and calls on the Commission, in the context of the future multilateral and bilateral trade negotiations, not to give up the remaining tariff safeguards enjoyed by the sector and instead to guarantee that the most competitive and well-known European agricultural products are not unduly penalised by anti-competitive practices introduced by other WTO members; considers that substantial progress on geographical indications is indispensable for a balanced outcome on agriculture within the framework of the Doha Round negotiations;
57. Supports Commission initiatives to establish a clearer and more balanced international reference framework on geographical indications; considers it unacceptable that the geographical designations and indications of many agri-foodstuffs are too often used to the detriment, in particular, of EU SMEs; urges the Commission and the Member States to take resolute action vis-à-vis countries which use such non-tariff barriers unduly to protect their own markets;
58. Supports the establishment of an international multilateral register of geographical indications enabling SMEs to protect their own geographical indications in a simple and economical manner; considers that the list of protected geographical indications should be supplemented and extended to all EU products which, by their nature or place or method of production, provide EU SMEs with a 'comparative advantage' over similar products from third countries;
59. Urges the other WTO members to ensure full access for EU products protected by geographical indications and, where appropriate, to withdraw from the market any national products which use such designations without being entitled to do so or at least to allow full access for EU protected geographical indications and protected designations of origin already in use or which have become generic designations;

Supporting the internationalisation of SMEs

60. Considers that national or regional support programmes for the internationalisation of SMEs are a very useful tool producing good results; asks that they continue to be co-financed using European Regional Development Fund funds and that more financial resources be allocated to transnational cooperation projects developed by sectoral associations, with the aim of supporting the export and internationalisation capability of SMEs, jointly opening up new markets and developing common marketing strategies in third countries;

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61. Stresses the need to improve access to finance, and especially to micro-credit, for SMEs; believes that Community instruments such as the European Investment Fund, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and the 'Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises' (JEREMIE) can help develop a better framework for access to finance for SMEs with internationalisation plans;

62. Considers that the creation of joint ventures or other partnership agreements between SMEs should be fostered as a strategy for penetrating new markets, developing direct investment projects in third countries and taking part in invitations to tender; calls on the Commission to mobilise resources, especially through the 'European territorial cooperation' objective, in order to promote transnational cooperation among SMEs in the European Union;

Final considerations

63. Takes the view that the development and internationalisation of EU SMEs calls for special attention and support in the formulation of EU trade policy;

64. Calls on the Commission and on Member States to fully support SMEs in the current financial crisis by ensuring that credit is continuously made available to them to enhance their development;

65. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to cooperate amongst themselves with a view to establishing a coherent and wide-ranging policy enabling EU SMEs to develop in a harmonious manner and at a higher growth rate and gain access to new markets and, more generally, to expand their export activities and internationalisation;

66. Calls on the Commission and the Member States to ensure the development of EU SMEs through appropriate political and financial support as regards their modernisation and training for their management and workers; stresses, in this connection, the importance of ongoing training for SME operators and the establishment of conditions conducive to pursuing such activities; considers it essential that the European Union takes on full responsibility for upholding this wealth of knowledge, tradition and know-how which SMEs have built up and put to good use;

67. Considers that more effective coordination should be guaranteed within the Community and between the Commission, the Member States and other parties concerned; asks to be informed in good time of any future initiative relating to the external competitiveness of SMEs and to be closely involved in any future initiative which the European Union may undertake;

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68. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the governments and parliaments of the WTO members and the WTO.
