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COSME programme

A step in the right direction but efforts still needed

The European Parliament has endorsed the COSME programme on 21 November 2013, which aims to strengthen the competitiveness and sustainability of EU enterprises, particularly SMEs. The new programme will help address the competitiveness and sustainability of EU enterprises, promote entrepreneurship and improve access to finance and to markets.

While the Greens would have preferred sustainability to play a more central role, the Group is still happy that the programme maintains it as an objective. The report rightly emphasises that access to skills, including managerial skills and knowledge (and not only access to finance), are critical factors for SMEs. The Greens also welcome the initiative to involve stakeholders in the drafting of the work-programme, including NGOs and labour organisations. The Greens succeeded in ensuring greater support for start-ups.

"We managed to help green the COSME programme by ensuring that sustainability efforts - such as energy and resource efficiency - continue to play a key role", said **Reinhard Bütikofer**, Greens/EFA MEP responsible for this file.

"Innovative financing instruments, such as crowdfunding, we were also able to advance in spite of initial opposition from other political groups", he continued. The EP has also increased the share of the budget of the programme from 55 to 60%.

The Greens regret, however, that the Council has weakened the initiative of the Commission in the field of industrial policy to "promoting coordination of Member states activities". It is important to note that on one hand, EU economy Ministers call on the Commission to act on steel industry, for instance, but on the other, are reluctant to give the Commission the instruments to develop and implement concrete activities. According to the Greens, this is a contradiction in terms. Unfortunately, the overall budget within the MFF is not ambitious and overall the SME funding remains the same as in the previous programmes (FP7+CIP), although the Council claims support to SME is a priority.

"The cuts in the EU budget cast a long shadow. They regrettably reduce the support to SMEs in their competitiveness and innovation efforts during this crisis", said **Mr. Bütikofer**, industrial policy spokesperson of the Greens/EFA Group.

Despite its shortcomings, the Greens voted in favour of the new COSME programme as it will be important to provide access to finance to European SMEs.

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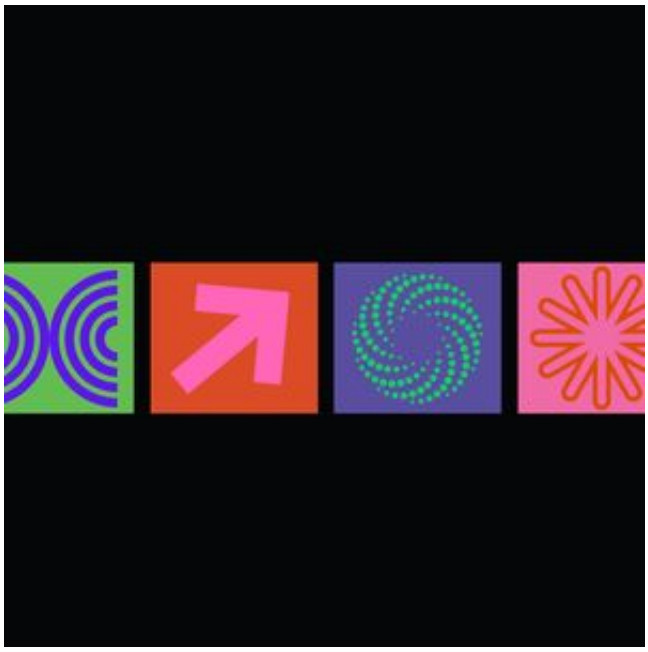
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Responsible MEPs



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