Press release | 30.11.2011

Research, innovation and SMEs

Broad welcome to Horizon 2020 and SME frameworks; vigilance needed to avoid greenwashing

The European Commission today presented Horizon 2020, the EU's framework for research and innovation from 2014-20, as well as the EU SMEs and Competiveness programme. The Greens gave a broad welcome to the Horizon 2020 proposals, notably its increased budget and apparently greater focus on the green economy. The group expressed concern about the level of funding for SMEs under the proposals.

Commenting on the Horizon 2020 proposals, Green research spokesperson **Philippe Lamberts** said:

"Ensuring Europe's role as a leader in the green economy will be crucial for our future, and we welcome the proposals to prioritise research and innovation on meeting the challenges of this century. Investing in resource- and energy efficiency will be key to our economic future and we need to be vigilant to ensure Horizon 2020 actually delivers this - and is not simply greenwashing. To this end, the Greens remain concerned that EU funding could be used to subsidise backward-looking technologies like nuclear energy or carbon capture and storage. It is important to look beyond technological solutions and foster social and business model innovation as well.

"The proposals need refinement to ensure broader stakeholder participation and improved governance, so that NGOs, SMEs and smaller research bodies can access the framework. Funding must go to those who need it most, rather than favouring larger players via ill-defined public-private partnerships. Furthermore, data access and intellectual property rights management should ensure that public sector investments result in real returns for the citizens and society as a whole."

Commenting on the SME instruments, Green industry spokesperson **Reinhard Bütikofer** added:

"These proposals appear to be better tailored to the reality and needs of SMEs than in the past. However, the relationship between the two programmes still needs to be further clarified.

"The apparent reduction in funding for SMEs is a cause for concern however. Funds directly earmarked for activities related to SMEs have been reduced by 50% under Horizon 2020. Even if Horizon 2020 succeeds in its pledge to allocate at least 15% of its "Industrial leadership" and "Societal challenges" funds to SMEs, this could result in an overall reduction of funds for SMEs compared to the past framework which is unacceptable considering the role of SMEs in the European economy.

"We also want to once again voice our disappointment about the dismantling and merging into Horizon 2020 of the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme, an instrument that has proven very successful for SMEs in the past. The Commission needs to provide further guarantees that the Eco-Innovation and Intelligent Energy Europe programmes will be functioning and upgraded in Horizon 2020."

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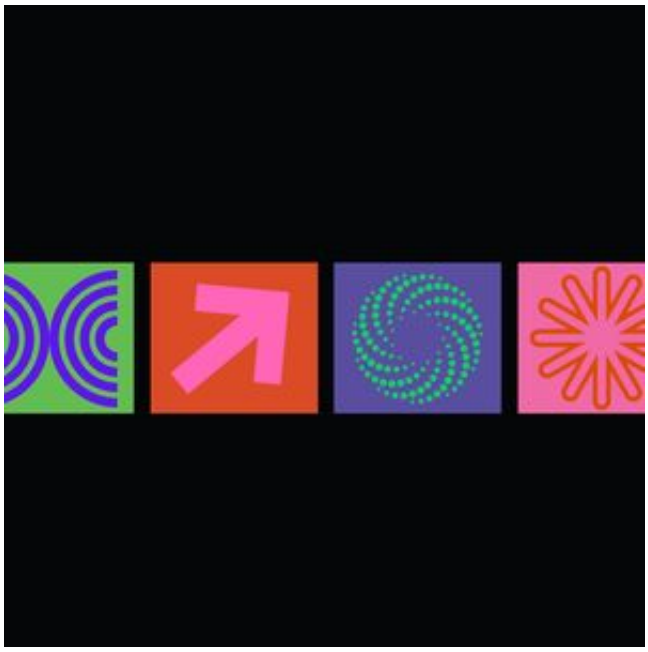
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