



Guidebook Series

How to support SME Policy
from Structural Funds

Regional implementation of the SBA

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Regional implementation of the SBA

A guide for policy makers, stakeholders and managing authorities, especially at regional level, who want to implement the measures and recommendations of the Small Business Act at their level.

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Although the guidebook was prepared under the guidance of the relevant units in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, the views expressed in this guidebook do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the European Commission.

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This guidebook, which was written in 2014 in German, has been translated into several European languages. The various language versions are available from the following address:
<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/regional-sme-policies>.

This guidebook has been prepared with the intention of providing information and suggestions on how EU structural Funds can be used to assist in the implementation of the SBA at the level of the regions of Europe. Specific requests to use EU Structural Funds will always be assessed under the rules in force on the date and in the country of application.

This guidebook is part of a series in which the following titles have been published so far:

1. Building Entrepreneurial Mindsets and Skills in the EU
2. Using standards to support growth, competitiveness and innovation
3. Facilitating Transfer of Business
4. The Smart Guide to Service Innovation
5. Regional implementation of the SBA
6. How to use structural funds for SME & Entrepreneurship Policy
7. Supporting the internationalisation of SMEs
8. Public Procurement as a Driver of Innovation in SMEs and Public Services

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Foreword



The 23 million small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe are the main pillars of the European economy. These companies are usually very closely associated with the regions in which they operate. The regions thus benefit directly from economically strong SMEs through more employment, a healthier economy and increased social integration.

The Small Business Act for Europe defines a series of principles for creating an environment in which entrepreneurs and SMEs can flourish. To that end, all levels of government must work together: in order to successfully promote entrepreneurship, it is essential that the principles of the SBA are implemented not only at national level, but also at regional and local level.

The aim of this guidebook is to provide the European regions with suggestions on how they might encourage the implementation of the Small Business Act at regional level. It should be noted that there is no panacea, no blueprint of the precise contribution that each region should make. Each region needs to set its own priorities and develop its own measures, based on an honest analysis of the situation on the ground. Not all the actions in the Small Business Act can be implemented by each region. A great deal needs to be resolved at national level. Nonetheless, the SBA provides regions with a variety of approaches for focusing their regional economic policy on the needs of SMEs.

This guidebook presents examples of six regions that are strongly aligning their economic policies towards small and medium-sized enterprises, and that are using a variety of measures to implement the principles of the Small Business Act on the ground. Three of these regions are winners of the European Entrepreneurial Region award, which the Committee of the Regions launched to facilitate the implementation of the SBA at regional level.

We know that many other regions have also developed a specific SME policy based on the 'Think Small First' principle and are supporting 'their' companies. We therefore wish to intensify our exchange of information with regional authorities, so that we can learn from other best practices in the implementation of SBA in those regions and then pass on this knowledge to all regions.

We strongly recommend this guidebook to all policymakers and actors in the regions, and hope that it will inspire them to take concrete measures on the ground and will thus help advance the Small Business Act in the regions.

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Introduction

1.1. What is the Small Business Act?

Small and medium-sized enterprises are the mainstay of the European economy. However, these companies often face enormous bureaucratic hurdles. The Small Business Act for Europe, adopted in June 2008, thus for the first time reflects the political will of the Commission to recognise the central role of small business and to codify it in a coherent framework for the EU and its Member States.

It aims to improve the fundamental approach to entrepreneurship in our society and to anchor the 'Think Small First' principle in European politics and administration. The slogan 'Think Small First' should become the guiding principle for all political and administrative decisions in the EU and in the Member States.

The SBA should also help companies to grow stronger and more quickly. European SMEs should receive better, more targeted support and encouragement, so that in the long term they can maximise their potential for creating sustainable growth and more jobs.

The Small Business Act for Europe applies to all companies that are economically independent, have fewer than 250 employees and an annual turnover of less than EUR 50 million and/or a balance sheet total of less than EUR 43 million. The importance of these approximately 23 million SMEs for the European economy is enormous: they represent 99.8% of all enterprises in the EU and provide 67.1% of all jobs in the private sector.

The SBA includes a variety of measures the EU intends to use to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) – from facilitating financing, better access to public procurement procedures, through to encouraging start-ups by women.

In addition to its own actions, the European Commission has also put forward suggestions as to how Member States can implement the ten principles of the SBA.

In 2011, the European Commission issued a review of the progress made in the first two years of the SBA. It also proposed new measures to

respond to the economic crisis, as well as new ways of improving acceptance and implementation. In addition, the measures should be more consistent with the Europe 2020 strategy.

Overall, by 2011 there had already been some progress, both at EU level and in Member States. For instance, the business environment had been improved through the transposition of several directives into national law. Access to finance had been facilitated by the CIP programme. It had been made easier for SMEs to access markets.

The Commission will request information about the measures taken by Member States and will report annually to the Council on the implementation of the SBA.

This publication will describe the approaches that are available to the regions of Europe to enable them to actively participate in the implementation of the SBA alongside the measures taken at national level. Best practices from various regions will illustrate the possibilities that exist and the steps that regional authorities can take.

1.2. Why is it desirable to have an SME policy at regional level?

The approximately 23 million SMEs in the EU account for 99.8% of all companies. Nine out of ten SMEs are actually micro-enterprises with fewer than 10 employees. The main pillars of the European economy are therefore companies that employ just two people on average.

SMEs are the main driving force for economic growth, innovation, employment and social integration in the regions. These in turn benefit from a dynamic SME sector, among other things as a result of greater economic dynamism, more jobs and a positive environment that stimulates entrepreneurship thanks to role models. Given their links to their own region, SMEs display a high level of loyalty to their location and are involved in the region within many areas of society.

What is an SME?

'SME' stands for small and medium-sized enterprises – as defined in EU law (EU recommendation 2003/361).

The main factors determining whether a company is an SME are:

1. **number of employees** and
2. either **turnover** or **balance sheet total**.

The following ceilings apply to the figures for individual firms only. A firm that is part of a larger grouping may need to include employee/turnover/balance sheet data from that grouping too.

Company category	Employees	Turnover	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ EUR 50 m	≤ EUR 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ EUR 10 m	≤ EUR 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ EUR 2 m	≤ EUR 2 m

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/sme-definition/index_en.htm

It therefore makes sense for regions to pay particular attention to the development of medium-sized, small and micro-enterprises in the region and to pursue an SME and economic policy geared to their specific strengths, to particular regional circumstances and to economic, technological and demographic change processes.

It has proven to be the case that a region's development in recent years has been determined not so much by attracting large industrial enterprises to the region, but rather by developing the region's internal potential. Maintaining and developing existing companies in the region, promoting start-ups and, increasingly, business succession are becoming ever more important and must be the focus of regional activities in future. Promoting innovations, new processes, products and services that emanate from companies or start-ups in the region will benefit the entire region and its inhabitants in the form of dynamic, sustainable development and increased prosperity.

SMEs themselves, however, must also face up to the challenges of this continuous process of innovation. In recent years, the business environment for SMEs has changed: shorter product cycles, greater time pressure in the launch of new products, increased cost pressures, continuous training of employees, as well as difficulties in finding sufficient numbers of skilled workers.

This means that a modern regional economic and SME policy is faced with new tasks. Whereas in the past a regional policy would concentrate mainly on providing suitable infrastructure (transportation, industrial and commercial premises), investment aid to enterprises and location marketing, the following aspects are now gaining in importance:

- creating a regional environment in which there are positive conditions for companies by means of synergies and added value in cooperation and regional governance processes that the individual actors alone cannot achieve;
- creating tailor-made infrastructure with centres for start-ups, innovation and technology;
- developing innovation-oriented funding instruments for research, operational R&D, knowledge and technology transfer and science parks;
- promoting the formation of networks and clusters;
- supporting business start-ups with targeted instruments for the start-up and growth phase as well as for individual industries;
- supporting lifelong learning and training in SMEs;
- developing systemic thinking and acting in regional innovation policy (promoting co-operation between actors from the worlds of business, politics and science, and other actors such as transfer institutions, networks and clusters).

The Commission provides suggestions for all these points based on the principles and actions in the Small Business Act, and encourages the regions to implement them to the extent that they can.

1.3. How can the guidebook help with the implementation of the SBA at regional level?

The Treaty of Lisbon considers territorial cohesion to be an important objective of the EU and has also strengthened the role of the regions in the Union. They play a crucial role in achieving the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, and thus for overcoming the economic crisis. Regional smart specialisation and innovation strategies, the implementation of the structural funds in the regions, the introduction and implementation of regulations and laws and communication between the regional administrations and the companies all have an influence on the growth and development of SMEs. And a wide and stable base of SMEs is very important for a healthy economic structure, and therefore for the lasting prosperity of each region.

Consequently, the regions play an important role in translating the principles of the SBA into

a business-oriented form of implementation. There is much that can be done at regional level that is impossible – or at least much more difficult – to implement at national level.

This guidebook is therefore designed to provide the responsible officials in the regions of Europe with very specific suggestions and support for the implementation of the Small Business Act, and thus for an SME-oriented economic and regional policy that responds appropriately to the various challenges and opportunities and contributes to the coherence of the regions of Europe.

An analysis of the principles described in the Small Business Act will show which of the individual actions can also be implemented at regional level.

In Chapter 2.1. and in Annex 6.2., we shall give an assessment of which actions should be implemented by the regions under which institutional conditions (centralised and decentralised state structure).

The examples from several regions of Europe will demonstrate how regional administrations can promote the idea of the SBA, which principles have priority in the regions and what they can implement themselves.

This guidebook should therefore stimulate an exchange of information between the regions with regard to best practices and regional policies. The regions are encouraged to get in contact with their national SME Envoys in order to support regional implementation. However, the guidebook can also assist the national SME Envoy in bringing the SBA to regional level.

Last but not least, the guidebook aims to improve direct communication between the European Commission and the regions with regard to the SBA. It describes best practices, adapted to the relevant conditions, that strengthen the start-up environment and the growth conditions for SMEs in the regions. With the European Investment and Structural Funds, the Commission provides the regions with the necessary tools for implementing the SBA.

At the same time, the Commission wishes to receive feedback from the regions via the EU SME Envoy on their implementation efforts, on their successes, but especially on the obstacles they face, so that together they can discuss the best way of achieving a Europe-wide SME policy and the implementation of the SBA.¹

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2

The SBA at regional level

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2.1. How can the SBA be implemented at regional level?

The regions play a key role in implementing the SBA. Not all principles and actions can be implemented exclusively at national level by the Member States.

Local authorities are often closer to the companies and have better information on the regional economic structure, the needs of SMEs and their support requirements.

The regions can adopt an active role according to the institutional and legal arrangements in each Member State, for example in education and training, in promoting entrepreneurship, in providing advice and financial support for small business and in SME-friendly administration.

Some European regions have undertaken, on their own initiative, to support and to implement the Small Business Act at regional level. These initiatives are important for the rapid and effective implementation of the principles and actions in the SBA.

Regions have various options for implementing the SBA. The measures described under the ten

principles of the SBA offer a wide range of options for implementing the individual points for which the regions are responsible within a structured framework.

2.2. Which actions in the SBA can be implemented at regional level?

In its communications on the Small Business Act in 2008 and 2011, the European Commission made a distinction between actions to be implemented by the Commission itself and those actions for which the Member States are invited to play a part.

This guidebook will focus solely on those actions which are to be implemented at Member State level. These are then reviewed to see which ones can be implemented in the regions, to determine where regions can support national efforts and where implementation at national government level is required.

Regions can play an active role independently of a centralised or decentralised state structure where there is no national legislation involved and where they themselves are legally authorised to do so.

The regions have particular opportunities in the area of creating a business-friendly environment and taking the 'Think Small First' principle into account in all statutory regulations and administrative decisions.

One of the most important objectives of the SBA is **creating an environment for entrepreneurship** in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and young people's interest in self-employment is awakened. Many regions focus their activities on this area and have put promoting entrepreneurship at the centre of their strategy. Best practices from projects in Catalonia, County Kerry in Ireland and Portugal are described in this guidebook.

Establishing communication structures 'on an equal footing' and regularly exchanging information between regional administrations and companies or their representatives form an important basis for all activities. Possible instruments for doing this include an SME Parliament such as in Wallonia, an SME Advisory Board such as in Baden-Württemberg or discussion platforms such as the Chamber of Commerce 2.0 in Lombardy.

For some regions, however, this may also involve providing on-the-ground support to networks that are already up and running and to structures that are already established. It is precisely these structures that often make legal and administrative regulations unnecessary and avoid costs for SMEs.

At regional level, but also jointly with national authorities, partners can develop strategies for mentoring measures and support measures that contribute to an increase in the number of business start-ups by women and migrants.

Support for business transfers and successions is becoming increasingly important. Examples of support in the search for business successors can be found in Brandenburg (see 4.4.) and Baden-Württemberg (succession planning facilitators).

When it comes to the principle of ensuring that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy are given a **second chance**, there are fewer opportunities at regional level. Legal

provisions on the duration of legal proceedings are generally adopted at national level.

If funding decisions are taken at regional level, the regions can ensure that entrepreneurs brave enough to start up another company are given the same treatment as the first-time start-up entrepreneurs.

Information campaigns designed to generate a positive attitude among the public in terms of giving entrepreneurs a second chance will primarily be most effective at national level. Regions can, however, participate in these campaigns with their own activities or initiate smaller regional campaigns.

Another possibility available to regions for supporting companies is to ensure that entrepreneurs do not need a second chance because they have been given help in good time should they have encountered any difficulties. One example of this is the Early Warning Project from Denmark (see 4.2.)

In the implementation of the '**Think Small First**' principle, regions mainly have opportunities to take action with regard to reducing the administrative burden on SMEs. Examples of this include the 'Red Tape MOT' in Baden-Württemberg, the online administrative burden calculator in Estonia (see 4.1.) and the 'Become an entrepreneur with one click' platform in Sardinia (see 4.3.).

The assistance of both national and regional bodies has been enlisted following the Commission's suggestion that the Member States should make **public authorities aware of the needs of SMEs**. The regions have opportunities to contribute to the implementation of this principle, as for example Lombardy is doing with the LombardiaLab.

In many regions, there is already a single point of contact for supporting service companies when it comes to submitting applications to the authorities and obtaining permits. Regions may also appoint contacts to whom SMEs can report regulations they consider to be disproportionate or an obstacle to their activities. An example of this is the SME Alarm and the Red Tape MOT in Baden-Württemberg.

Regional and local government are major contracting authorities. They therefore have many direct opportunities for designing **public procurement** processes in an SME-friendly manner below the thresholds and for **facilitating the participation of SMEs**. For example, it would be in accordance with the SBA for regional authorities, within the possibilities offered by the national legal framework, to divide contracts into lots, to enable even small businesses to submit a tender.

Another way of introducing small businesses to large clients is to arrange presentations of the services of regional SMEs to large enterprises that are not subject to public procurement law, in order to make them aware of what these SMEs have to offer. An example of a partnership between large and small enterprises can be found in Southern Denmark.

Free access to public procurement processes without fees or subscriptions may lower the threshold for the participation of SMEs in public tenders. Examples of online portals where any interested companies can register and monitor all public tenders include the Public Procurement Marketplace in Brandenburg and the Public Procurement Platform in North Rhine-Westphalia.

Difficulty in **accessing finance** is one of the main obstacles to growth for SMEs. This relates not just to funding from the European cohesion policy, but also to the provision of venture capital, loans and quasi-equity financing.

Regions that are responsible themselves for shaping the programming of the Structural Funds have many opportunities for focusing this funding on support for SMEs. Besides grants for investment in production or energy and resource efficiency, internationalisation and training, financial instruments should also increasingly be used in the funding period 2014–2020.

The EIB and the EIF programmes offer regions further means for developing financial instruments for SMEs and making them available in the region.

The regions also have important tools available to them for supporting companies with one of

the main principles of the SBA – the **internationalisation** of SMEs.

In addition to the Enterprise Europe Network, which helps SMEs to access information and contacts abroad, the ERDF and ESF Structural Funds also play an important role. As with the access to financing, the regions that are responsible for programming these funds have a large number of options for developing programmes and projects to achieve these goals.

Examples of measures for internationalisation include Go International from Austria (see 4.6.), Implantis from Rhône-Alpes (see 4.8.) and the Start Exporting programme from Catalonia.

For more information on how regions can support internationalisation, please see guidebook No 7 in this series (Supporting the internationalisation of SMEs).

Small businesses are often not aware of how they can gain a competitive advantage by investing in **environmentally efficient processes**. Information campaigns at regional level and providing advice can enable SMEs to make the most of these business opportunities. Regions also have the option of using the Structural Funds for particularly environmentally friendly investments and environmentally friendly products and processes, by means of special programmes for energy and resource efficiency or incentive schemes.

Other areas of the SBA in which the regions can also support SMEs include **upgrading skills** and **innovation** and **facilitating access to knowledge**.

One example of upgrading skills in SMEs is business coaching in Southern Denmark.

The regions have already introduced a number of projects that focus on the ability of SMEs to innovate. Contributions are being made to this area by the regional Smart Specialisation Strategies, by regional cluster policies and support measures, such as innovation vouchers, and by support for operational R&D projects, as well as by joint projects between enterprises and research institutions.

In the further measures contained in the SBA review, the regions have opportunities for implementing improvements for SMEs in various fields.

For instance, they can improve the dialogue between SMEs and banks. In Southern Denmark, there is both a finance check and a consultant for the regions' SMEs who can assist SMEs in their efforts to obtain financing.

In Brandenburg, there is an annual Equity Conference, organised by the federal state's economic development bank, the Investitionsbank des Landes Brandenburg, which brings together companies and banks in a dialogue about the importance of equity capital for growth and innovation.

One approach that every region can adopt is to support the formation of SME networks, so that they can submit joint tenders or tap into export markets as a network. Examples of these can be found in all regions.

The programming of the funding period 2014–2020 gives the regions the necessary leverage to implement other measures contained in the SBA, e.g. encouraging SMEs to employ specialists in innovation. One instrument for this is the funding of innovation assistants in SMEs, which has already been introduced in many regions of Germany and Austria.

2.3. Regional SME Envoys

EU Member States have undertaken to appoint an SME Envoy at national level. The Envoy's task is to act as an interface to small business and its specific interests. The main purpose of this position is to create a direct link between the Commission, the SMEs and their representatives.

In addition to the national envoy, the regions should also create the post of regional SME Envoy, who will have a strong position within the regional government and will support and monitor the implementation of regional plans.

To achieve this, however, it is not necessary to establish new structures in the regions. The use of existing structures will

reinforce the legitimacy of the Envoy and his/her ability to act on behalf of SMEs and to positively influence the actions of the regional administration.

The SME Envoy will enable the interests and needs of SMEs to be better identified. Thus, this knowledge can be brought to the relevant departments at an earlier stage, and they can then take appropriate and effective measures. The SME Envoy should pay particular attention to supporting the craft sector, small enterprises and individual entrepreneurs.

Interview with the SME Envoy from France, Mr Pascal Faure, on his duties and the cooperation with the regions and enterprises

The implementation of the Small Business Act involves government at several levels: European, national, with the Member State, and regional, with the local authorities and devolved administration of the Member State in that region. This system of government allows for an active dialogue between all stakeholders.

The regional level in France enables government to be closer to the companies themselves and promotes the emergence of ideas, comparative analyses and innovative approaches.

Therefore, the government has decided that the actual implementation of new regulations that affect companies should be preceded by an 'SME test' throughout the national territory, currently being conducted in the regions in the form of an experiment. Similarly, the government has launched the third phase of the competitive clusters policy, which involves coordination between the national and regional levels. Finally, to overcome SMEs' difficulties in accessing finance, the public investment bank, Bpifrance, created in 2013, aims to provide companies with direct access to all the tools required for their development by means of unique regional points of contact that are as close as possible to their needs.

1. What are your duties as the national SME Envoy?

The SME Envoy's role is to provide an interface with the world of SMEs so that their interests and specific needs are taken into account. He or she disseminates and promotes the application of good practices in entrepreneurship and SME policy. He or she provides regular information to SMEs and their representatives, the professional and trade organisations, on new legislative initiatives and ongoing programmes that are likely to be of interest to them. Finally, he or she reinforces relationships with organisations that represent SMEs by contacting them prior to each meeting of the SME Envoys, to obtain their views and opinions on the items on the agenda.

2. How important it is for you to exchange ideas with other SME Envoys and to work together in the network?

The network of SME Envoys encourages the exchange of national best practices. The informal nature of the meetings allows us to share information and discuss the implementation of reforms for promoting a favourable environment for SMEs.

3. What role, in your view, do the regions play in France in the implementation of the SBA? With which principles would you expect the regions to adopt a more active role?

The Regional Councils play an essential role in terms of economic development. In this respect, they preside over the Regional Steering Committees of Bpifrance in order to direct the various financial instruments

designed to facilitate access to credit, to provide liquidity and capital and to guarantee the risks taken by the enterprise's banking and financial partners. The State is also present in the regions: its decentralised departments are one-stop points of contact that can take a strategic and comprehensive view of the issues of competitiveness and provide enterprises with significant added value.

4. How is the dialogue between SMEs and the regions organised in France?

Regional committees have been established. They meet regularly with professional associations and bring together all the actors involved in the region's economic development, including the State in the region. For example, to organise sectoral policy, there are 60 specific regional committees that are allocated according to the priority topics and the issues for the region, and that work in conjunction with the strategic sectoral committees of branches at national level.

5. How do you inform French SMEs about what the SME Envoy does and what you have to offer?

The French organisations that represent SMEs are regularly consulted by the General Directorate for Competitiveness, Industry and Services in preparatory meetings prior to the meetings of the SME Envoys.

But there are also some SME Envoys at regional level, e.g. in Wallonia and Baden-Württemberg. SME Envoys in the regions have a similar role to the envoys at national level. Their work is directed both internally at the regional administration and externally at the SMEs and the public.

Proposals for the duties of a regional SME Envoy are listed in the following table:

Internal duties	External duties
Improving communication with higher administrative levels	Conducting dialogue with SME Envoys
Monitoring national and regional provisions for their impact on SMEs	Information and communication with the wider community
Implementing the 'Think Small First' principle in the region	Providing a focal point for complaints and suggestions from SMEs and responding to these
Formulating new proposals and recommendations for improving the political environment for SMEs	Collecting feedback from the SME business community on issues of particular interest to them, e.g. access to funding
Evaluating the implementation of the SBA principles in the region	Facilitating access by SMEs to information on programmes and initiatives
Reducing administrative burdens (SME test)	
Identifying and communicating best practices from the region, the Member State and other regions of Europe	
Building bridges between the regional administration and the higher-level administration	
Looking after regional SME interests at the European level	
Networking between the regional administration and the administrations of other regions	
Organising the sharing of experiences	

2.4. How can regions create a governance system?

Regional governance is a non-hierarchical management tool and an extension of government action. It describes the collaboration between actors (individuals, groups, associations, companies, administrations) on an equal footing in certain fields of practice, e.g. the regional economic and SME policy, and is characterised by voluntary and independent cooperation aimed at resolving jointly identified problems and achieving jointly defined goals.

Regional governance does not replace government action, but rather extends it to include other actors, especially actors in civil society. In particular, regions can use this tool in areas where the challenges faced by a region can no longer be addressed using a traditional approach.

However, regional governance itself also needs to be managed and to be anchored in the region. The processes do not appear and run by themselves; they must be encouraged and actively shaped. Cooperation, communication and honest feedback from all actors are of crucial importance in this regard.

Approaches to regional governance processes include:

- developing the EU's aid policy in the direction of regional cooperation;
- integrating regional initiatives within the European multilevel system;
- location competition between regions;
- actively shaping demographic change (e.g. in terms of securing skilled labour).

Companies as actors in regional governance processes

Whether or not companies participate in regional governance processes depends to a large extent on how they judge the benefits of this cooperation. In general, their participation should not demand an excessive amount of time. It also depends, however, on how firmly the company is anchored in the region. The greater the company's affinity, the more willing it will be to get involved. For companies with senior management located outside the region to whom the managerial personnel within the region report, the degree of involvement may be less intense.

Regional governance is based on two basic concepts: the functional and the territorial approach.

The functional approach is generally applicable in relation to issues of regional development. The actors tend to be specialists who think in terms of processes and attempt to solve problems. The selection of cooperation partners depends on whether they are relevant for the task in hand.

The territorial approach is based on a defined region. In this case, the central role is played by actors from politics and administration who seek out representative actors from the region as partners.

The examples from the regions show that a territorial approach tends to be adopted with regard to SME policy and the implementation of the SBA in the regions. The partners of the regional administration in implementing the SBA in the regions are often business organisations, chambers of commerce and craft associations and other economic and social partners.

Creating and establishing a regional governance system requires a number of aspects to be considered, from defining goals and selecting partners to monitoring and evaluating the implemented measures.

Regions that wish to set up a regional governance process for the implementing the SBA should consider the following steps:

2.4.1. Defining the public interest and the goals of the regional governance process (what does the region wish to achieve?)

The first step is to identify and define the goal that the region wishes to achieve. To that end, the goals need to be delimited and defined operationally, so that the network can work at a concrete level, operational and achievable goals can be formulated and the right partners can be selected.

The goal of 'implementing the SBA in the region' would be too general and too broad. Not all the principles and actions in the SBA can be implemented at regional level. The network partners should therefore focus on the principles that are most important for the region and that can be implemented under the responsibility of the region. The regional development or innovation strategy may assist in selecting these principles.

2.4.2. Identifying partners (what must the region do, and with whom can it achieve this?)

Clear goals make it easier to identify the right partners. These are the actors who will have an impact on achieving the goals and who can make a contribution.

For the regional implementation of the SBA, these are essentially the business organisations and the SMEs themselves, in addition to other administrations and regional business development agencies as well. Depending on the goal that has been set, other economic and social partners or networks can be added, e.g. the Enterprise Europe Network or educational and research institutions.

Together with its economic partners, Wallonia has set up an SME Parliament that meets regularly and not only informs companies about the implementation of the SBA, but can also have a say in it.

In Baden-Württemberg, an SME Advisory Board has been launched that acts as an advisory body for the regional administration and represents the interests of SMEs in the federal state.

2.4.3. Developing a mission statement (how should the region do it?)

A joint mission statement that all the partners in the network can support helps the partners to feel that their concerns are being met, to have a positive attitude and thus be motivated to work within the network. The mission statement should set common goals, define what each partner in the network can contribute, what the partners can expect and what they will receive for their services. It is important to achieve a balance of interests.

In the implementation of the SBA, it is essential to have regular communication 'on an equal footing' between all those involved. The way the priority principles of the SBA will be implemented in the region needs to be defined, as well as which individual measures and projects will contribute to this and who is going to implement them.

Not all the actions suggested by the SBA need to be implemented by the regional administration. In campaigns or actions to promote entrepreneurship or the 'second chance', business associations may also play an important role, for example.

2.4.4. Structure of the network organisation (what resources must the region deploy?)

The structure and organisation of the network can also be defined at the same time as the joint mission statement.

The goals and the tasks that the network has set itself will form the basis for allocating each task and the rules of procedure that will be adopted.

Details that need to be clarified include the frequency of meetings, setting up working groups, internal communication in the network, external communication, monitoring and assessing the success of one's own work.

This has consequences for resource planning, internal information flow, etc., including for the individual partners.

2.4.5. Managing the network

Managing a regional governance network requires specific management structures that are not the same as those in traditional administration. The structure can be virtual or based in one of the partners' offices. Under some circumstances, a new, separate organisation may also be required.

Two levels are necessary for coordination:

1. the political level for taking joint decisions in the network, and
2. the technical level for preparing decisions.

At the political level, the partners must be appropriately represented by politicians, senior figures in the administration and the representatives of companies and associations. This level must adopt rules for decision making, aimed at ensuring the legitimacy of the decisions and the continuity of communication.

Decisions must be prepared by the technical level. This can be undertaken and financed by one of the partners. It is better, however, for the financing to be provided by all the partners in the network, as this increases acceptance of the persons preparing the decisions and their important task.

2.4.6. Monitoring implementation (what is working and what isn't?)

Monitoring of the regional governance network and the implemented measures and projects should be planned from the outset in the definition of goals as an essential element of network management. This can take the form of an internal assessment within the network or of an evaluation by external experts.

2.4.7. Duties of the regional SME Envoy in the regional governance process

Regional SME Envoys can play an important role in creating and managing regional governance processes in the field of SME policy. As they have been appointed by the regional administration or government, they will have the position and authority required to speak to regional partners, to unite them behind a common goal and to ensure that the network reaches the necessary level of effectiveness.

The partners in a regional governance network may also have conflicting interests and different perspectives on an issue. Managing the discussion processes is a major challenge. In this area, a great deal depends on the personal commitment of the SME Envoy to act as a driving force behind the process, to motivate the other partners and to reinforce the sense of teamwork, as well as to overcome any hurdles by means of solution-oriented and practical suggestions.

Anchoring the process in the regional administration also makes it possible to provide the necessary resources for the technical management and preparation of decisions.

In managing the regional governance process, it is very important that a dialogue process is set up on an equal footing, where all the partners can make a recognised contribution that is also credibly implemented by the administration. To do this, the creativity of everyone involved must be encouraged and pragmatic solutions must be found, even if they depart from the usual ways of doing things.

2.5. European investment and structural funds for the implementation of the SBA

Cohesion policy is the EU's central investment instrument in the programming period 2014–2020 to achieve the Europe 2020 goals, namely creating growth and jobs, combating climate change and energy dependence, as well as reducing poverty and social exclusion. The role of SMEs in creating growth and jobs is also recognised, and funds will therefore be targeted at key priorities such as support for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Achieving the goals will require a concentrated and focused use of resources with a clear definition of the objectives. Cohesion policy thus concentrates on a smaller number of thematic objectives – eleven in total (see table).

The EU's regional policy is essentially financed by three Funds, the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund. The Cohesion Fund finances trans-European transport networks

and environmental, energy and transportation projects in those Member States with a gross national income per capita of less than 90% of the EU average. This Fund is not relevant for regional SME policy, so we shall restrict ourselves here to briefly looking at the ERDF and the ESF.

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)

The ERDF aims to strengthen economic, social and territorial cohesion in the European Union by correcting imbalances between regions.

Depending on the category of region (less developed regions: 50%, transition regions: 60% and more developed regions: 80%), investments under the ERDF will be concentrated on four key priorities: innovation and research, the digital agenda, support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the low-carbon economy.

The European Social Fund (ESF)

The ESF is the European Union's main financial instrument for investing in education, training and employment. The objective of the ESF is to contribute to economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU. At least 20% of the available ESF funds in each Member State will be allocated to the thematic objective of 'promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination'.

Within the framework of the ESF, the Youth Employment Initiative helps to combat youth unemployment in EU regions with high rates of unemployment among young people.

European Territorial Co-operation (ETC)

European Territorial Co-operation (ETC) is an important goal of EU cohesion policy. Under the ERDF, ETC promotes cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation in accordance with the 11 thematic objectives.

Concepts for a regional SME policy can be developed and modelled within the transnational cooperation programmes in particular. The INTERREG Europe programme gives regions the opportunity to share their experiences and to draw up action plans to implement measures.

Thematic concentration and the SBA

Cohesion policy will focus on 11 thematic objectives. One of the objectives directly concerns the competitiveness of SMEs, while most of the other thematic objectives also have an SME component.

The thematic objectives that may be suitable for implementing the SBA can be seen in the following overview.

Thematic objective (TO)	SBA principles	Possible measures (see individual files)
TO 1: Strengthening research, technological development and innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurship 3. Think Small First 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 8. Upgrading of skills 9. Opportunities in environmental challenges 10. Internationalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting innovation actors (especially SMEs) through advisory and support services, direct investments and financial instruments that help access private sources of finance Cooperation between actors (including SMEs) regarding innovation Investment in innovation by SMEs Social innovations
TO 2: Enhancing access to and use and quality of ICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurship 3. Think Small First 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 8. Upgrading of skills 10. Internationalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing ICT products and services, ICT applications for e-government, e-commerce, e-learning, e-inclusion and e-health
TO 3: Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurial environment 2. Second chance 3. Think Small First 4. Administration for SMEs 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 8. Upgrading of skills 9. Opportunities in environmental challenges 10. Internationalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promoting entrepreneurship and start-ups, incubators, new business models for SMEs, internationalisation, supporting investment and advanced capacities for product and service development, supporting the capacity of SMEs to engage in growth and innovation processes
TO 4: Support the shift to a low-carbon economy in all sectors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurship 3. Think Small First 4. Administration for SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 8. Upgrading of skills 9. Opportunities in environmental challenges 10. Internationalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Production and distribution of energy derived from renewable sources, promoting energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy in SMEs, research and innovation in low-carbon technologies

TO 5: Promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 9. Opportunities in environmental challenges 10. Internationalisation 	Supporting investment for adaptation to climate change and investment to address specific risks
TO 6: Protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Think Small First 4. Administration for SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 8. Upgrading of skills 9. Opportunities in environmental challenges 10. Internationalisation 	Supporting investment in the waste sector and water sector, conservation of natural and cultural heritage, promoting biodiversity, promoting environmental protection technology and resource efficiency, promoting the shift towards a resource-efficient economy, ecological innovation
TO 7: Promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6. Financing 7. Single Market 9. Opportunities in environmental challenges 10. Internationalisation 	Developing and improving environmentally friendly transport systems, improving energy efficiency through the development of intelligent systems, e.g. for energy distribution and storage
TO 8: Promoting sustainable, high-quality employment and supporting labour mobility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurial environment 2. Second chance 3. Think Small First 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 6. Financing 7. Single Market 8. Upgrading of skills 	Supporting self-employment, business creation and micro-enterprises, developing endogenous potential, supporting local employment initiatives
TO 9: Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty and discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurial environment 2. Second chance 3. Think Small First 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 6. Financing 8. Upgrading of skills 	Investing in health and social infrastructure, community-based services, supporting social entrepreneurship
TO 10: Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Entrepreneurial environment 2. Second chance 3. Think Small First 5. Tools adapted to SMEs 8. Upgrading of skills 	Upgrading employee skills, continuous development, vocational training
TO 11: Enhancing the institutional capacity of public administrations and stakeholders and efficient public administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Think Small First 4. Administration for SMEs 5. SME-friendly public procurement and aid 	Cooperation between administrations and institutions, e.g. in the business sector

It is clear that regions have a variety of options for implementing the SBA with the assistance of the Structural Funds. In the programming or implementation of the Operational

Programmes, the administrative authorities should ensure that the objectives and measures have been defined in an SME-friendly manner.

3

Example regions with existing programmes for the implementation of the Small Business Act

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A number of regions in several Member States have developed strategies and programmes for improving conditions for SMEs. These regions operate in very different economic contexts. However, what the regions all have in common is the political vision to create the preconditions for enhancing entrepreneurship and strengthening their SMEs. Some regions have based their strategy directly on the principles of the SBA, and then subsequently brought it into line with their own requirements.

In other regions, the SBA is not necessarily in the foreground. In these places, a policy in line with the needs and interests of SMEs has been in operation for some time, thus contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the SBA.

For this guidebook, we have selected six example regions that are making special efforts to implement a policy of 'Think Small First'. Three of them – Wallonia, Southern Denmark and Helsinki-Uusimaa – are 'European Entrepreneurial Regions'.

We shall discuss the regional context and the priorities of the regional SME policy. Finally, some best practices are described that are

intended to serve as an inspiration for other regions.

All regions set priorities that have been derived from the respective regional conditions. Strengthening entrepreneurship, access to finance, improving the innovative capacity of SMEs and supporting their internationalisation are the most important themes of the regional strategies.

3.1. Wallonia

Wallonia is the southernmost of the three Belgian regions. With an area of 16 844 km², it covers around 55% of the Belgian territory, while its 3.5 million inhabitants represent just over a third of the population. The capital of Wallonia is Namur, the largest city is Charleroi and the real cultural and economic centre is Liège. The region is autonomous and has both its own parliament and its own government with extensive powers.

Small and medium-sized enterprises make up 99% of Walloon industry - 78% are micro-enterprises, 17% are small enterprises and 4%

are medium-sized enterprises. The region has a very good level of education and a high rate of exports in excess of 50%.

Implementation and monitoring

In August 2005, the Walloon government adopted priorities for the future of Wallonia – dubbed a new Marshall Plan. In 2010, as part of the ‘Marshall Plan 2’ and with reference to the European SBA, the following four core areas were defined to support SMEs in the region:

- entrepreneurship;
- internationalisation;
- financing;
- innovation.

To ensure a smooth implementation of the SBA, the Wallonia region initiated a dynamic dialogue and a series of measures, all of which converge on the Walloon SME Envoy, Daniel Collet. Mr Collet is Head of the Department of Competitiveness and Innovation in the Walloon government and was appointed regional SME Envoy in 2011 in accordance with the European Commission’s recommendation.

His role is to:

- improve communication with the federal level and with the national SME Envoy and continuously inform the federal level of the measures being taken in Wallonia;
- evaluate the implementation of the European SBA at regular intervals and make appropriate adjustments together with the public and the private actors involved;
- formulate new proposals and recommendations for improving the policy environment for SMEs in Wallonia.

A **steering committee** has been set up to facilitate the implementation of the SBA in the region and to maximise synergies in the collaboration between the Walloon SME Envoy and the relevant actors. The committee, chaired by the Walloon SME Envoy, is responsible for implementing and evaluating the SBA in the region. A comprehensive report is drawn up once a year in that regard. This primarily gives an overview of the situation for SMEs in

Wallonia and evaluates the implementation of the measures taken, based on the ten SBA principles specified by the European Commission. It also includes a report by the SME Parliament, which then serves as the basis for the SBA report and the data sheet for the European Commission.

An **SBA expert group** was also set up and an SME Parliament convened. The **SME Parliament** was launched in 2011 to advise the managers of Walloon SMEs on the implementation of the SBA. (Details in Good Practices)

Current state of implementation

The region of Wallonia has systematically reviewed all the Commission’s recommendations on the implementation of the SBA and determined that it is able to implement 41 of the 69 recommendations. The 2012 report showed that 65% of these recommendations have already been fully implemented and 35% have been partially implemented. The region has been particularly successful in the four core areas of entrepreneurship, internationalisation, financing and innovation. The area of public administration has also been successfully restructured in order to respond to the needs of SMEs. Thus far, the region is relatively weak in the area of second chances.

Goals for 2013–2014

The region has already set itself clear goals for the coming years in order to follow up on the implementation of the SBA. In particular, it wants to be active in four core areas:

1. Entrepreneurship

- Promoting a positive image of entrepreneurs
- Strengthening entrepreneurship in higher education
- Preparing an initial evaluation of the Walloon Centre for Firms in Difficulty

2. Access to finance

- Improving communication with respect to financing opportunities for SMEs
- Creating a platform for improving relations between companies and investors

3. Innovation

- Creating an 'SME portfolio'
- Continuing to develop non-technological innovation tools (Creative Wallonia)

4. Internationalisation

- Continuing to simplify administration
- Supporting export-oriented SMEs
- Increasing the number of exporting SMEs

Examples of the implementation of the SBA in the region

The Walloon SME Parliament

In 2011, the Walloon Minister of Economy, together with the Walloon Enterprise Union and the Walloon Small Business Union, founded the SME Parliament. The Parliament consists of four committees and holds an annual plenary session, which is attended by some 300 entrepreneurs, the minister responsible for SMEs and the European SME Envoy. The aim of the Walloon SME Parliament is to ask entrepreneurs directly about their needs (financing, innovation, internationalisation, entrepreneurship) and to involve them in the implementation of the SBA. In this way, businesses are not only kept up to date on the progress of the implementation, they can also play a part in determining its future. The annual plenary session always takes place in Wallonia during European SME Week.

The SME Parliament works on two different levels: four committees prepare the plenary session and work on specific topics, while in the plenary session all members are invited to express their opinions on the implementation of the SBA in Wallonia. Based on the vote in the SME Parliament, the Walloon SME Envoy, Mr Daniel Collet, defines the priorities and concrete measures for the coming year, in collaboration with the Walloon Economic and Social Committee (CESW) and various public institutions. A team is initially assembled for the implementation of each measure, supported by an SME Steering Committee composed of representatives from the ministries (civil servants, agencies, etc.) and public interest groups. The progress of the project is reviewed on a regular basis and, prior to each new session of the

SME Parliament, the organisers compile a report summarising the implementation status of the measures adopted previously

Transeo – European Association for SME Transfer

In order to bring together buyers and sellers of SMEs, the Walloon Financing and Guarantee Company (SOWALFIN) established a special subsidiary in 2006 for the transfer of SMEs and micro-enterprises: the Walloon Business Acquisition and Transfer Company (SOWACCESS).

In December 2010, together with two partners from the Netherlands (MKBase) and France (CRA), SOWACCESS set up Transeo, the European Association for SME Transfer. Transeo connects experts from the private, public and academic sectors who are interested in the sale or acquisition of small and medium-sized enterprises in Europe. The association aims to promote collaboration and the exchange of best practices among European experts and to make the European SME transfer market more professional.

Transeo represents the interests of its members at a political level, organises local, national and international conferences on the subject of SME transfers and provides information and networking for its members on the association's online platform. It is also possible for members to participate actively in the various working groups. At present, Transeo has 41 members from 15 countries.

www.transeo-association.eu

For further information on the implementation of the SBA in Wallonia, please see www.economiewallonie.be

3.2. Catalonia

Catalonia is located in north-east Spain, is one of the country's 17 autonomous regions and has 7.6 million inhabitants. Its capital city is Barcelona. Catalonia is Spain's most economically powerful region and is highly industrialised. In 2012, the region achieved a GDP of around EUR 207.76 billion, with a per capita income of approximately EUR 27 442. Representing 99.9% of the region's companies, SMEs form the basis of the Catalan economy. Some 590 629 companies are based in Catalonia, of which 588 908

are SMEs. SMEs employ 76% of the workforce and account for around 67.6% of the region's GDP. The most important branch of the Catalan economy is the service industry, while the construction, chemical, pharmaceutical, automotive and textile industries are also significant.

In contrast to many other European regions, the Catalans have a strong entrepreneurial spirit – the region rose from eighth place in 2000 to second place in 2008 in a Europe-wide comparison. Catalonia is characterised by a varied and flexible production structure and has a strong entrepreneurial tradition, supported by professional associations. Catalonia is, however, deeply in debt and struggling with a low level of productivity growth. The reasons for this are mainly to be found in the structure of Catalan companies – almost all the SMEs in Catalonia are micro-enterprises. In addition, there is insufficient exchange of information between business and science, and there is no future-oriented innovation policy.

On account of its comprehensive strategy for supporting SMEs, Catalonia was named one of the European Entrepreneurial Regions for 2012 by the Committee of the Regions. The region subsequently drew up a follow-up plan for supporting its SMEs.

Action Plan 2012–2014

The Action Plan 2012–2014, drafted by the Directorate-General for Industry and Trade, is a key instrument for promoting the region's economic recovery.

The goal is to establish a dynamic, strong and competitive service and industrial sector. The government is focusing mainly on the areas of innovation, internationalisation and investment. The plan is aimed primarily at the small and medium-sized enterprises that dominate the Catalan economy.

On the one hand, continuity and reliability are important for enabling successful companies to set up strategic projects and to guarantee planning security. This includes creating the right incentives, support for clustering and programmes for improving company management.

On the other hand, modifying and developing the underlying conditions are important in order to make growth possible. This applies in particular to the following three areas:

Innovation: Catalonia currently invests around 0.9% of GDP in research and development. The goal is to invest 3% of GDP in research by 2020, and thus massively increase the efficiency and effectiveness of Catalan companies.

Internationalisation: Catalonia currently has over 40 000 exporting companies, of which only 13 500 export on a regular basis. The number of regular exporters in the region has been stagnating for years. The aim is to add 1 500 new exporters to this figure in 2014 and to further the internationalisation of the region. To support the export industry, the government is working with experts who can advise the companies.

Incentives for investment: Catalonia has a long tradition as a recipient of foreign investment. In the context of global competition, however, it has become much more difficult to attract investors. The aim is to improve the attractiveness of the region and to achieve a 5% increase in foreign investment by 2020.

All the initiatives have the overriding goal of promoting entrepreneurship, entrepreneurial spirit and growth in the region. Simplifying the administrative burden and supporting vocational training will also be critical for the success of Catalan companies and will need to be encouraged further.

The plan is based on the following **mission statement**:

Initiative: the government's job is to support and assist companies in transition, but the initiative must come from the companies themselves. In accordance with this principle, the government wishes to encourage companies to become active and to play a role in managing the transition themselves.

Prioritisation: public funds must be used in a targeted manner. Projects that benefit the economy as a whole will be supported in particular.

Coherence: the Catalan SME policy must be harmonised with the Spanish and European

policies, while nonetheless responding to the special production structure in Catalonia.

Public-private partnerships: cooperation between the administration, companies, universities, training centres, associations, trade unions and the financial sector is a prerequisite for a successful economy and must be encouraged.

Monitoring

To review the success of the implemented measures and initiatives, working groups were set up within the Catalan Industrial Policy Council (CPI) that are responsible for regularly monitoring the SBA in Catalonia. These working groups consist of business associations, trade unions and the public sector. The working groups have developed specific indicators for all measures listed in the SME plan, so as to make it possible to better evaluate their implementation. In addition, in 2010 the Catalan Ministry of Innovation, Universities and Enterprise set up a department to monitor implementation and to coordinate the EER communication strategy.

Plans for the future

On 28 May 2013, the government adopted a further **SME programme** designed to support the Action Plan. It sets the goals for the coming years and focuses on the following seven key areas:

1. Identifying the barriers and problems that restrict the competitiveness of SMEs, and making the most of the potential for growth that arises. In particular, the sharing of examples of best practice should be encouraged.
2. Monitoring the intended removal of red tape and the actual effects of the improved regulatory environment on the activities of SMEs.
3. Working closely with business organisations to make SMEs aware of the changed legal and economic conditions.
4. Promoting the internationalisation of regional SMEs to improve their competitiveness.
5. Special support for dynamic business projects with subsidies specifically created for this purpose.

6. Promoting cooperation and the mutual exchange of information between companies through establishing business networks.
7. Diversification, innovation and internationalisation should become the watchwords of Catalan SMEs.

European subsidies are a key element in the implementation of the planned SME programme. During the funding period 2007–2013, Catalonia received EUR 865 million from the European Commission. Due to the realignment of the funding programmes for the period 2014–2020, Catalonia has initiated a process of restructuring and strategy development.

Examples of the implementation of the SBA in the region

Barcelona Entrepreneurship Centre

The Barcelona Entrepreneurship Centre was established in 2004 by Barcelona City Council. The aim was primarily to stimulate economic growth in the region and to encourage business start-ups. It serves both as a point of reference for entrepreneurs and as a focal point for business activities that are promoted by the centre's activities and resources. The project is based on an innovative model with both online and on-site services. This allows entrepreneurs to develop their own strategies, from the initial business idea through to the creation of their company. Training, conferences and workshops help people acquire key entrepreneurial skills and are specifically tailored to the needs and priorities of entrepreneurs in the various economic sectors. The centre provides training, coaching, open areas for people interested in starting a business and a service for start-ups.

More than 150 000 people have already received training as part of the project, and more than 222 000 people attend its events each year. Annually, around 1 300 companies are set up with the support of the Barcelona Entrepreneurship Centre. On average, 1.9 jobs are created in each of these companies.

<http://www.barcelonanetactiva.com/barcelonanetactiva/en/company-creation/entrepreneurial-initiative-center/index.jsp>

'Start Exporting' programme

Catalonia accounts for around 26% of all Spanish exports, making internationalisation a strong lever for the region's growth and competitiveness. ACCIÓ, the Catalan Business Support Agency, has set up the 'Start Exporting' programme, which focuses exclusively on SMEs and entrepreneurs who are only just beginning to export or who generate less than 20% of their turnover from exports.

The programme is specifically designed to help SMEs embark on the difficult process of internationalisation and make up for their lack of time, the risk involved and their limited financial and human resources. The programme supports companies in developing an export strategy. This includes deciding which products or services are exportable, which markets have the greatest potential and finally deciding on the best strategy for accessing those markets.

The programme supports SMEs in the internationalisation process for a period of one year:

1. One-day exporting workshop (GoExport).
2. 50 hours of support from a senior consultant in developing an export strategy.
3. 25 hours of support from a digital marketing consultant to develop an online marketing strategy for the export market.
4. Twice-weekly support from a junior export sales manager in implementing the export plan and carrying out the initial export sales.

Since 2001, around 550 companies have participated in the programme, of which 61% are micro-enterprises, 26.8% are small enterprises and 7.3% are medium-sized enterprises. The main export markets are: France (50%), Belgium (22.7%) and the USA (18.2%).

For more information on Catalonia, please see www.accio.cat

3.3. Lombardy

Lombardy is located in the north of Italy, is one of 20 regions in the country and has 9.9 million inhabitants. Its capital is Milan. Lombardy is the Italian region with the highest population density,

the most companies and the highest GDP. Of Italy's total population, 15.9% live in the region. It generates 21% of the national GDP. Over 40% of the Italian companies that operate internationally have their headquarters in Lombardy, but they only employ 27% of the regional population. The 823 268 SMEs, on the other hand, employ around 4.3 million people.

There are significant differences within the business landscape in Lombardy. The province of Milan is mainly characterised by large international companies and financial firms. Varese, Como, Lecco, Monza, Brianza and Bergamo have a strong manufacturing sector, as well as a successful service industry. Lodi and Brescia are characterised by both industry and agriculture, while the province of Sondrio and the three provinces in the Po valley (Cremona, Pavia and Mantua) have a strong agricultural sector.

Lombardy's infrastructure is one of the best in Italy, and is of great importance for this export-oriented region.

Lombardy is also undergoing a profound shift towards a service and knowledge-based economy. Nonetheless, industry will remain an important mainstay of the region in future, and the sector must increasingly face up to international competition.

The region has an outstanding entrepreneurial spirit, ranking top in a Europe-wide comparison. The weak point in Lombardy is primarily the political and administrative system for SMEs. There is a plethora of funding bodies and associations with overlapping competences, and there is a corresponding lack of structure and clarity.

Implementation and monitoring

Italy officially implemented the Small Business Act in May 2010, thus creating the basis for ensuring the competitiveness of its SMEs. The objective is to revitalise the small and micro-enterprises that are central to employment and economic growth in Italy and Lombardy. The Company Act adopted in November 2011, which guarantees the freedom of private economic initiative and the independence of enterprises, also expressly refers to the SBA.

On account of the strong presence of SMEs in Lombardy, the legislation is very SME-friendly. In 2013, a regional development programme was adopted in Lombardy, containing objectives, strategies and measures for promoting the economic, social and territorial cohesion of the region.

The priorities are the following areas:

- access to finance;
- internationalisation;
- innovation and research;
- sustainable production;
- promoting start-ups;
- cooperation between business and science.

In 2012, the region of Lombardy launched the SBALombardiaLab project in collaboration with the Lombard Chamber of Commerce. This is a discussion platform where entrepreneurs, associations and institutions can discuss all issues relating to SMEs in Lombardy, with the support of experts. One aspect of the project is used for monitoring the SBA in Lombardy, which analyses the effect of the implemented measures on SMEs based on an analysis system that uses a number of indicators and variables. In addition, working groups have been set up, consisting of representatives from associations, companies and public institutions, to address SME policy in Lombardy. Finally, the results from the analysis system and the working groups are summarised once a year in a position paper and forwarded to the relevant SME Envoy.

The main components of this report are:

- An analysis and evaluation of the structural conditions for the creation of new businesses and the development of SMEs in the region. The objective is to evaluate the implemented measures and tap new potential for further development.
- An evaluation of the support measures provided to companies by the public sector in relation to:
 - o growth of the local companies;
 - o capacity for innovation;
 - o internationalisation;
 - o access to finance;
 - o sustainability.

- An analysis of the participation of regional companies in the individual measures. A comparison with the figures for participation in Italy as a whole and in the other regions.
- Examples of best practice.

The SME Envoy

Lombardy is planning to appoint an SME Envoy. Thus far, the responsibility for implementing the SBA has fallen to the Directorate-General for Research and Innovation. The precise responsibilities and duties of the future official are defined in the draft law 'Freedom of enterprises and competitiveness', which will be decided on in the Regional Council in 2014.

The envoy's main duties will cover the following areas:

- Monitoring the implementation of the SBA in Lombardy
- Developing proposals for promoting the development of SMEs in Lombardy
- Continuous coordination and exchange of information with the national SME Envoy and the Ministry of Economic Development
- Evaluation and publication of examples of best practice from the region

The SME Envoy will also prepare an annual report on the impact the measures implemented in the region have had on the local SMEs and send it to the Regional Council and to the national SME Envoy. This should contain proposals for promoting the national and international competitiveness of Italy.

Plans for the future

The aforementioned draft law 'Freedom of enterprises and competitiveness' outlines a comprehensive plan for the further development of the regional production system, tailored to the needs of enterprises in the current economic situation. The goal of the new law is to make the region's growth rates competitive, to increase the production system's capacity for innovation and to make the region attractive from a social perspective.

The new law also provides for a number of measures to simplify company formation, access to credit and the tax system.

Specific planned activities:

1. Agreement on competitiveness: the regional authorities, enterprises, the Chamber of Commerce and other social partners are jointly planning to find a way to reduce the administrative burden on SMEs.
2. Tax credit: in 2014, the tax burden on SMEs will be gradually reduced at regional and local level.
3. Access to credit: access to credit is to be improved.
4. Introduction of the one-stop shop: the public administration will be reorganised in order to ensure maximum efficiency, effectiveness and economy.
5. Inspection system: the inspection work of the administrative authorities is to be reduced by means of publicly available checklists. Ordinary business activities will be monitored less and the relationship of trust between administration and enterprise will be strengthened.

Examples of the implementation of the SBA in the region

SBALombardiaLab

SBALombardiaLab is a project by the Lombard Chamber of Commerce and the region of Lombardy. The project is also supported by the European Commission Representation in Milan and the Ministry of Economic Development in Lombardy.

This is a discussion platform where entrepreneurs, associations and institutions can discuss all issues relating to SMEs in Lombardy, with the support of experts. This should produce a series of concrete proposals and projects that will ultimately be translated into policy initiatives and legislative proposals. The objective is to analyse the political environment for SMEs in Lombardy from various points of view and to consider all facets of the issue, not just the purely economic ones.

The key element of the project are the six working groups that consist of 87 central SME actors in the region. 70 of the 87 actors are entrepreneurs, 11 are institutional representatives, four are journalists and eight are public figures who will disseminate details and increase awareness of the initiative. The local working groups discuss the following six core areas:

- access to finance;
- internationalisation;
- product innovation;
- process innovation;
- start-ups and entrepreneurship;
- relations with the European Union.

The working groups are also responsible for monitoring the implementation of the SBA. In addition to the regional and local events and meetings, the project has a website (sbalombardialab.it) and its own social media portal (lombardiabusiness.net). This gives entrepreneurs the opportunity to interact directly, write posts, comment on other posts and to share experiences. At present, more than 2 500 entrepreneurs have registered on the portal.

Chamber of Commerce 2.0

Chamber of Commerce 2.0 is a project by the Milan Chamber of Commerce. The chamber has overhauled its entire communications strategy, basing it primarily on multi-channel strategies and infotainment. The aim was to create a meeting place for in-depth analysis of the topics of new entrepreneurship, creating new businesses, research-based innovation and innovation models. New, previously neglected target groups were also actively approached as part of the project, e.g. entrepreneurs under 35, creative industries, designers and digital trades.

The results of the restructuring have been extremely successful. The chamber's pages on the social networks have generated more publicity, all the information has been bundled on a single portal and users have the opportunity to interact and network with each other.

More than 700 informational videos have been posted on 'YouImpresa', and some episodes in

the video series 'I'm going into business' have attracted over 600 000 viewers. On Facebook, the project has over 2 000 'likes', the Twitter channel has 700 followers and the blog also has consistently high visitor figures.

<http://www.youtube.com/user/CameraCommercioMi>

www.regione.lombardia.it/

3.4. Baden-Württemberg

Baden-Württemberg is the third-largest German federal state, and has its capital in Stuttgart. Nearly 11 million people live in Baden-Württemberg, of whom around 1.2 million hold a foreign passport. 40% of the population with a migrant background are from the EU, above all from Italy and Greece. The largest group of migrants from outside the EU come from Turkey.

As in almost all of Europe, the age profile has changed dramatically in recent years. The birth rate has fallen significantly and the proportion of older people has increased.

Even if one tends to associate Baden-Württemberg with global players such as Daimler, Bosch, SAP or Porsche, the federal state's economic structure is still strongly characterised by small businesses. For instance, 99.4% of all companies in the state have fewer than 250 employees. The region contains nearly 300 'hidden champions', i.e. medium-sized world market leaders who develop highly specialised technological products and compete successfully in the global market.

Baden-Württemberg is one of the strongest economic regions in Europe. GDP per capita is 31% higher than the EU average. 5.1% of GDP is invested in research and development. This puts the federal state at the top of all the European regions. In addition to many research-intensive companies, there are more than 100 universities and research institutions. The state is therefore one of the most innovative regions in the world. This capacity for innovation is not restricted to the big cities; the parts of the state outside the metropolitan areas also score high marks for the level and dynamism of their innovation.

The export rate is around 50%, with key industries such as automotive and mechanical engineering attaining figures far above that mark.

The growth areas of Baden-Württemberg's economy extend beyond the classical industries and sectors such as automotive and mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, information and communication technologies, intralogistics or the fields of medical technology, measurement and control technology and optics, and offer good potential for innovation.

Above all, these include four future-oriented fields: sustainable mobility, environmental technology and resource efficiency, health and healthcare, as well as embedded systems and IT services.

Basis and focus of activities

The central basis of Baden-Württemberg's SME policy is the Small Business Promotion Act. The aim of this law is:

- to maintain and strengthen the performance levels of small and medium-sized commercial enterprises and self-employed professionals, and in particular to compensate for size-related competitive disadvantages;
- to improve the provision of equity capital and to promote adaptation to economic and technological change;
- to promote competitiveness within the Single European Market and at a global level;
- to facilitate the creation and establishment of independent companies and the acquisition of SMEs;
- to secure and expand jobs and training places.

The federal state uses the following measures, which are based on the above principles, to support its SMEs:

- improving the supply of capital to SMEs;
- strengthening business-oriented research and development;
- promoting vocational education and training;

- promoting business creation and business start-up advice, and
- promoting transfers of SMEs.

Another priority is to strengthen the innovation capacity of SMEs by means of innovation vouchers as well as promoting access to research and development institutions and innovation coaches who can support SMEs in the reorganisation of their companies.

In improving the framework conditions through public policy measures, major emphasis is placed on the Collective Agreement Compliance Act, which aims to prevent competitive distortions in public procurement processes and to protect SMEs from wage dumping prices.

Monitoring

The federal state has a wide range of monitoring tools and processes. One important tool is the regular exchange of information with the beneficiaries of the promotion and support measures in the context of working sessions and committees. The SME Advisory Board plays an important role in the feedback process.

The federal state can rely on an extensive set of statistical and analytical tools, based on which political decisions can be taken and the impact and success of the specialist policy actions can be evaluated. Key tools for monitoring the development of the performance of the state's innovation systems and of its regions are the Research and Development Monitor and the Baden-Württemberg Innovation Index.

In addition, statistical data from the funding programmes are used to evaluate the different measures. Furthermore, individual innovation policy measures are evaluated by scientific research institutions as well as intensive participation by stakeholders in the regular dialogue and expert forums. Thus, the necessary adjustments are developed, coordinated and implemented jointly.

A range of monitoring activities and evaluations are also carried out within the Enterprise Europe Network, which are then incorporated into political decision-making processes.

Every five years, the Ministry of Economic Affairs draws up a Small Business Report. This report analyses the development of the SME sector and the framework conditions, outlines the federal state's small business policy and the various funding instruments and also describes the future priorities. The next Small Business Report will be published in 2015.

The SME Envoy

The envoy for SMEs and the craft sector is the point of contact for small businesses in Baden-Württemberg. The SME Envoy's priority tasks include promoting start-ups, the cluster policy, securing the availability of skilled workers, the creative sector and technology transfer in SMEs.

The SME Envoy is assisted by an SME Advisory Board to provide additional support in the work. The SME Advisory Board is an informal advisory body and is aimed at increasing dialogue between SMEs and policymakers and acting as a mechanism for providing feedback to politicians. It generally meets twice a year and is composed of senior representatives of the main umbrella organisations for SMEs in Baden-Württemberg.

The Advisory Board should develop recommendations for a future-oriented SME policy and identify starting points for the federal state's political activities or initiatives in the Federal Council or at European level.

Priorities for the SME policy in Baden-Württemberg over the coming years

The main challenge for the region is to secure skilled labour and SME transfers, in order to maintain the potential for innovation and to enhance economic dynamism.

The federal state is already being severely affected by the shortage of skilled labour as a result of demographic changes. This applies to both the vocational and academic sectors. There are already shortages of skilled workers in technical professions and in healthcare. The forecasts indicate that by 2020 the number of skilled workers will have fallen by around 120 000, and then by a further 520 000 between 2020 and 2030. For this reason, in 2011

all the leading stakeholders from the world of business, trade unions, employment services, municipalities, economic development agencies, the State Women's Council and the various ministries joined forces for the first time to form the Baden-Württemberg Skilled Labour Alliance and agreed upon a joint Skilled Labour Programme, which is updated on a regular basis. The central concerns are to increase employment among women and older people, and to boost in-company training. A campaign is being conducted on social networks to promote dual training, while training ambassadors are going into schools to talk about apprenticeships. Career guidance for students in general education is also being promoted in a targeted manner in commercial training centres. In universities, the number of places on Masters programmes is being massively increased, with a focus on science and engineering.

In addition, the framework conditions for a better work/life balance are being improved, for instance by strengthening the childcare infrastructure.

Another priority for action is the promotion of start-ups and, in particular, the guaranteeing of company acquisitions and the development of tools for acquisitions and start-ups. More than half of family-run SMEs have no business successors in place. Advice and coaching measures are therefore being promoted to ensure that small businesses can continue to be operated. Succession planning facilitators also play an important role in supporting business succession.

In addition, maintaining the federal state's capacity for innovation, intensifying the cooperation between SMEs and research institutions and developing future-oriented markets are all considered important areas for future economic policy.

Examples of the implementation of the SBA in the region

The SME Alarm and the Red Tape MOT

When it comes to removing and avoiding bureaucratic burdens, the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises play a special role

for the federal state. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance therefore applies the SME Alarm and the SME Check tools.

To avoid creating new administrative burdens in the first place, the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises need to be incorporated into the legislative process as early as possible. As soon as the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance becomes aware of draft laws and regulations that are to be adopted at European or national level, these are submitted to the various business organisations – in particular the chambers of commerce, crafts and industry – for their comments. If, during this process, it is established that these laws or regulations will cause SMEs to be burdened with additional, unjustifiable bureaucracy, e.g. in the form of additional or extended approval procedures, Baden-Württemberg will, by means of appropriate applications, incorporate the concerns of the SMEs into the legislative procedure or public consultations at EU level.

In the case of draft laws and regulations at federal state level, these are also checked at an early stage by the relevant department for any possible new or additional administrative burdens on SMEs. Drafts with relevance to SMEs will be submitted to the appropriate unit within the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. Where appropriate, this unit will submit proposals for modifying the laws or regulations to the specialist department or unit that is responsible.

Furthermore, business owners and members of the public have the opportunity to express their concerns about administrative burdens in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance's 'Red Tape MOT'. These concerns will be reviewed as part of a complaint management procedure and the problem will be remedied if possible.

Succession planning facilitators

The role of succession planning facilitators is to actively speak to SME owners and raise their awareness of early business succession planning to identify alternative courses of action and support services and to facilitate access to

funding programmes. If desired, they can assist in the search for a business transferee and facilitate the entire succession process. They work together with various professional advisors (bankers, tax consultants, lawyers, business and management consultants), who are responsible for providing individual in-depth advice.

The advice, which is funded by the ESF, is provided via the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and via the Chambers of Crafts and Trades. The succession planning facilitators are experienced professionals who were generally entrepreneurs themselves or who have experience in business and financial consulting.

Interview with Peter Hofelich, SME Envoy of the Provincial Government of Baden-Württemberg

Mr Hofelich, what are your responsibilities as SME Envoy?

As the Envoy of the Provincial Government for SMEs and the craft sector, I am the point of contact for small businesses in Baden-Württemberg. Therefore, I maintain a large number of contacts in associations, visit companies and appear at public Chamber of Commerce events and the events of other economic organisations, as well, of course, as attending meetings at the Ministry itself. I listen to the concerns of SMEs and advise the Provincial Government accordingly. Moreover, I can undertake the obligations of the Minister of Economic Affairs and Finance over the entire scope of small business and craft sector policy on the Minister's behalf. In my position, I have the greatest possible freedom to look after the interests of small and medium-sized enterprises. I report directly to the Minister, and therefore have the opportunity to directly address all the issues that are referred to me by small businesses.

What impact has the office of SME Envoy had internally on the Provincial Government and externally on the business world since your appointment in July 2012?

The importance of small businesses for our region has been recognised for a long time and not just since my appointment. Small business thinking has always been present within the ministries, but there has been a learning curve in terms of taking account of SME issues in all the ministries, not just the Ministry of Economic Affairs. The department heads in the ministries now have to check whether the SME Envoy needs to be involved should there be new laws, regulations or funding programmes. The Provincial Government as a whole uses the post as a way of reinforcing the orientation of its policy for SMEs.

This means that the post also has an important impact externally and is recognised and used beneficially by economic actors. In the event of any conflict of interests between the administration and the business world, whether at regional level or at national and EU level, I try to influence the discussion and the decision in favour of small business.

What are your most important tasks for the next few years?

The SMEs in Baden-Württemberg are the basis for the economic development of our region. Therefore, as a cross-cutting issue, it is a question of developing the economic dynamism in the federal state further.

We want to shape the economic and demographic structural changes in such a way that small businesses can continue to operate. The topic of business acquisition and succession is very important for us as a result. Securing skilled labour in SMEs is also of great importance for the future.

<http://mfw.baden-wuerttemberg.de/de/ministerium/mittelstandsbeauftragter-peter-hofelich/>

3.5. Dinamarca Meridional

The region of Southern Denmark comprises the south of Denmark and the island of Funen. The region was established in 2007 as part of a reorganisation of the public administration in Denmark. With 1.2 million inhabitants, Southern Denmark contains around 22% of the total Danish population.

Among other things, the region is responsible for regional development and healthcare.

Southern Denmark is home to one of the largest and most modern hospitals in Scandinavia, the Odense University Hospital, as well as the third largest university in Denmark, the Syddansk Universitet.

Several world-renowned businesses have their headquarters in Southern Denmark.

The Southern Danish growth model as the political vision for Southern Denmark by 2020

The region of Southern Denmark has only experienced weak growth in recent years, and its productivity advantage over other OECD countries has disappeared. The level of education is below the Danish average and is not in line with the needs of companies.

As the goal for 2020, the Southern Danish growth model is designed to create strong growth, supported by high levels of productivity and employment and globally active companies. Productivity should be 10% higher than the OECD average and the level of employment should be among the top five in the OECD.

The region aims to transform the great challenges of globalisation, demographic change, climate change and generation of renewable energy into opportunities, with the Southern Danish companies taking full advantage of the market potential of these changes.

This growth should mainly be supported by a small number of fields with particular potential for growth:

- health economy and social innovation;
- sustainable energy;

- experience economy, especially tourism, food and design.

The aim is to achieve growth and employment by enhancing human capital and education, reinforcing entrepreneurship, access to capital, research, innovation and new technologies, as well as the development of clusters.

The Action Plan is intended to implement the key objectives of the strategy and identifies specific objectives and action areas for the aforementioned fields. It will prioritise any initiatives that may be expected to provide the largest contribution towards achieving the objectives:

- implementing the Small Business Act and the EU policies through the Southern Danish growth model;
- creating an entrepreneurial culture through consulting and training;
- strengthening regional integration and cross-border cooperation, and developing an interregional cluster policy;
- environmental sustainability.

The Regional Growth Forum

The growth model was developed by the Regional Growth Forum, a public-private partnership that brings together the world of business, educational institutions, trade unions, employers, municipalities and the region of Southern Denmark in a process of dialogue. It has 20 members who are appointed by the Regional Council at the proposal of municipalities and business associations, and meets several times a year under the chairmanship of the region.

The Growth Forum is the hub for all regional growth initiatives.

In addition to strategic work, the Forum makes recommendations for the co-financing of regional economic development projects that support the creation and establishment of companies, stimulates demand for new products and services, aims to improve companies' access to venture capital and other funds, and strengthens research, education, training and knowledge-building in the economy.

Furthermore, the Growth Forum is responsible for monitoring the conditions for growth at local and regional level and the measures that have been taken. The individual projects are also evaluated in a highly structured system. Regular progress reports are assessed by external evaluators and reviewed for their effectiveness and their contribution to the achievement of the objectives.

Priorities for the implementation of the SBA in Southern Denmark

In implementing the SBA, the region of Southern Denmark focuses on the principles of enhancing entrepreneurship, facilitating access to finance, benefiting from the opportunities of the Single Market and innovative public procurement.

Entrepreneurship

The region sees education and the acquisition of entrepreneurial skills, from primary school level through to university graduation, as essential building blocks for successful entrepreneurs. It is not merely a question of business knowledge, but also of promoting creativity and the willingness to take risks.

There are several facilities within universities that act as a link between higher education and the business world and that encourage students' skills in the areas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

Moreover, collaboration between universities and regional SMEs should reinforce the exchange of information and thus facilitate the transfer of knowledge.

Business coaching

Targeted advice at any stage of the life cycle of existing businesses is also an essential part of the strategy. The Regional Business Development Centre makes a variety of experts available to companies in all areas of business, from accounting to marketing. Particular emphasis is placed on providing advice to female entrepreneurs.

The region also implements the early warning system and the second chance initiative, which advises companies in financial difficulties and helps unprofitable companies to terminate their business operations with minimum cost.

At local level, there are facilities for entrepreneurs that offer advice and training courses.

Access to finance

Obtaining the right financing is a major challenge for SMEs, which often have weak equity capitalisation. A finance check service offered by the region provides recommendations for optimised financing. The consultants available to assist the SMEs should be able to help them obtain capital.

Several initiatives in the region aim to improve access to capital. Public funds provide venture capital in conjunction with private partners and Danish banks. Another fund supports companies in the healthcare industry in remote rural areas with loans and venture capital. There are also two funds for technology companies.

Benefiting from the Single Market and internationalisation

Internationalisation is an essential part of Southern Denmark's strategy. A range of measures have been implemented to strengthen export activities. Together with the liaison office in Brussels, the region is active in several networks, including ERRIN, and supports SMEs in becoming involved in European projects and growth markets in the priority areas.

The Regional Business Development Centre supports SMEs in preparing market analyses, participating in trade fairs, exchanging experiences and networking.

Particular emphasis is placed on cross-border cooperation with Schleswig-Holstein in Germany, as well as on setting up innovation networks with international partners.

Innovative procurement

One of Southern Denmark's priority sectors is the healthcare industry. In the context of public-private partnerships, the region has developed strategies for public procurement that improve the efficiency of public healthcare services and strengthen the innovation capacity of companies.

In pilot projects, guidelines are drawn up and tested for pre-commercial contract awards, where the public contracting authority acts as

the initial purchaser of technological innovations and thus strengthens innovation in SMEs.

Furthermore, the region wants to create a better understanding of public demand and public procurement processes among SMEs, which will consequently lead to greater participation by SMEs in public procurement. This is achieved, for example, through partnerships between large and small enterprises that give SMEs better access to the public procurement market in Denmark. At the same time, these partnerships should also enhance export opportunities for SMEs.

Structural Funds for implementation

The European Structural Funds play an important role in the implementation of the growth model. These resources are combined with both public and private funds, and are used for the regional economic development projects in the priority areas that are recommended by the Growth Forum, for example.

Example of the implementation of the SBA in the region

Welfare Tech Invest – innovation and growth through improved access to venture capital

Access to capital is also a challenge for companies with a strong market position in the region of Southern Denmark. To improve access to venture capital for health technologies, a capital fund called **Welfare Tech Invest – Southern Denmark** was created in 2012. The fund can invest around EUR 10 million in health technology companies in the region. Another approximately EUR 2.7 million is available for loans to entrepreneurs in the rural areas of the region.

The fund is financed 50% by EU funds and 50% by regional public funds and is managed by professional investment managers who have special knowledge of the industry.

The investments from the fund may be supplemented, depending on the individual case, by money from other investors and lenders.

The objectives of the fund for the first five years are:

- investments in 12 young health technology companies in the region;
- 30 loans to companies in rural areas of the region;
- the creation of 175–250 new jobs by companies in the fund's portfolio.

<http://www.regionsyddanmark.dk/wm235842>

3.6. Helsinki

Helsinki-Uusimaa is the capital region of Finland, with around 1.6 million inhabitants. This represents more than a quarter of the country's population.

The region is the economic and scientific centre of the country and is one of the leading regions in Europe in the knowledge economy, economic performance and competitiveness. 39% of Finland's gross national product is generated in Helsinki-Uusimaa by around 100 000 companies, of which 90% are small enterprises.

Even if Finland and Helsinki have dropped somewhat in the innovation rankings, the region still has one of the best innovation systems in the world. A challenge for the future is to maintain and improve this level of innovation.

This region has also been affected by demographic change. The population of working age will decline over the coming years as a result of the ageing of the general population.

The political vision of the Helsinki-Uusimaa region up to 2033

The Regional Council, which includes representatives from all the municipalities in the region, adopted the strategy in 2009 after an intensive consultation process with all the relevant stakeholders in the region and the Finnish government. The region has set itself the goal of reinforcing its position as an international metropolis for growth and innovation. In this way, the capital region wishes to act as an engine for the whole country.

The vision is underpinned by several strategic goals, including:

- developing the region into the most important innovation cluster in the Baltic region within a demand-driven and open innovation environment;

- making the region more attractive for investors and business;
- becoming the first carbon-neutral Finnish region.

Priorities of the SME policy and implementation of the SBA

The Finnish government has adopted a programme for employment and entrepreneurship that is based on the principles of the SBA. In addition, the regions, including Helsinki-Uusimaa, have set their own regional priorities. The main objectives are to increase SMEs' preparedness for growth processes, reinforce entrepreneurial training, reduce bureaucratic obstacles for entrepreneurs and to evaluate the effects of legislation on companies.

In addition to promoting start-ups, there is also support for the regeneration of existing enterprises. The structural changes in the global economy are also reflected in the Helsinki-Uusimaa region. The technology sector, and in particular the ICT industry, has been affected by this the most. Thanks to new technological approaches, start-ups and existing businesses can generate new opportunities for participating in growth processes.

The growing demand for healthcare and educational services leads to business opportunities that can be utilised by the region's companies, and that are accordingly supported by the region.

The strategy addresses a number of themes in the SBA and implements them for the region;

an enterprise-friendly administration has been set up by the region, in conjunction with the regional SME organisations. This includes the creation of innovation-friendly procurement

processes by establishing a dialogue between purchasers and service providers, strengthening cooperation between suppliers and the development of guidelines for public administration. Emphasis is placed on pre-commercial applications.

The region also supports SMEs in taking advantage of business opportunities in the environmental sector. Innovations in the environmental sector are evaluated and assessed by a panel of experts. In the event of a positive evaluation, the panel then supports the company with an individual plan for launching the product on the market.

Companies benefit from specialists evaluating the innovation, support for market development and internationalisation, setting up networks between companies and research institutions, as well as in terms of financing.

One of the priorities of SME policy in Helsinki-Uusimaa is to promote young entrepreneurship. The region has therefore launched a range of measures and actions in schools and universities with the aim of strengthening the entrepreneurial spirit in pupils and students. For example, entrepreneurs have presented their personal stories in schools to give students a feeling for entrepreneurship.

Best practices were transferred to Helsinki-Uusimaa from other regions, such as Entrepreneurship Tuesday. During these talks, well-known entrepreneurs encourage students to start their own businesses.

The region promotes an entrepreneurial environment throughout the whole growth process, from generating ideas to forming a company, and supports the growth processes of SMEs with infrastructure, advisory services and financing, in partnership with various institutions.

The various stages of the model are described in more detail in the following table:

Idea generation and birth of the company	Formation and development	Expansion	Internationalisation
Spin-offs from universities and research institutions => Activation and evaluation of ideas	Incubators Facilities for supporting companies and the entrepreneurial environment => Founding the company, kick-off and coaching	Science parks Facilities for promoting companies, public-private cooperation platforms => Financing growth and setting up networks	Facilities for internationalisation, clusters, growth programmes => Enhance growth through internationalisation, integration in clusters, VC and European networks

The model covers all the phases of the development of companies. Companies that are in difficulties also receive support and advice. Companies that have gone bankrupt are encouraged with various measures to try again. The public attitude towards failed companies and the 'second chance' also needs to be improved.

Structural Funds for implementation

Relatively few resources from the Structural Funds are available to the region. Hence, most resources for supporting companies of all sizes come from national sources. The objective of using the Structural Funds is to create the best conditions for entrepreneurship. For this reason, ERDF resources are mainly used to support SMEs, and funding is concentrated on projects that facilitate business activities by SMEs and enhance the companies' long-term competitiveness. ESF resources are also used to finance business incubators and provide advice on business ideas and start-ups with a network of experts.

Monitoring

The monitoring of the strategy and measurement of the efficiency and effectiveness of the measures are carried out and managed by the Finnish government and the Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment to which it is attached.

The region has several public companies that, on behalf of the municipalities, implement the measures adopted by the Regional Council in accordance with annual plans. Follow up on

projects and monitoring also take place at this level. Monthly coordination meetings are held in the region between the institutions in the region and the Centre for Economic Development, to review the progress of the measures.

Business associations, chambers of commerce and other stakeholders are involved in the monitoring process via the municipal institutions.

Example of the implementation of the SBA in the region

Company formation service Perustayritys.fi

With the website perustayritys.fi, the region provides a free, fast and simple way to form a company on the Internet, all on one web page. All the basic documents, a bank account and the insurance needed for starting a business can be created immediately in one visit to the site.

The services were developed in coordination with the national tax authorities and the Ministry of Employment and the Economy, as well as other institutions. Banks and insurance companies have been invited to add their services to the system. Many companies have already done so.

More than 1 000 companies were formed using the website in 2012, the year it was launched.

The system has been designed and structured in such a way that it can also be set up in other countries, with just a few modifications.

www.perustayritys.fi

http://uudenmaanliitto.fi/en/helsinki-uusimaa_region

4

Concrete examples of projects from the European regions

© .../Photodisc/Thinkstock

In addition to the example regions, projects to implement the SBA have of course been carried out in many other regions of Europe. The projects cover a wide scope and reflect all the principles of the SBA. This guidebook will present eight of these best practices from eight different regions.

More projects can be found on the website <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/database/SBA/index.cfm?fuseaction=welcome.detail>

4.1. The online administrative burden calculator | Estonia | Tallinn | Ministry of Communications

The online administrative burden calculator calculates the time and the resources required to comply with legal or administrative obligations. The calculation is based on four components:

- 1) The time required to fulfil the legal or administrative obligations.
- 2) The remuneration paid to the staff carrying out the task.
- 3) The frequency with which the obligation must be fulfilled.
- 4) The number of people involved in fulfilling the respective obligation.

In addition to the calculations, it is also possible for users of the online platform to access old calculations and thus determine any change in the administrative burden. The platform also offers users the option of generating a report and thus, for example, seeing an overview of the administrative burden for a particular area of business and comparing it with another area.

The administrative burden calculator is available at the following address: hkm.mkm.ee

4.2. Early Warning System | Denmark | Aarhus | Business Development Centre Denmark

One of the greatest barriers to starting a business or for the growth of start-ups is the fear of bankruptcy. To remove this fear from young entrepreneurs, an early warning system has been set up in Denmark. Early Warning is a hybrid between a professional B2B service and a network of economic experts operating on a voluntary basis. It offers free, confidential and professional help to companies in crisis, assisting them either to regain their profitability or to initiate an orderly bankruptcy.

The initiative is funded by a globalisation fund that is intended to make Denmark one of the world's most competitive economies. Since start-ups generally have fewer resources and cannot afford professional advice, establishing a network of volunteer consultants and business experts was a key element of the initiative. The consultants can be reached online and in five regional development centres. These consultants carry out an initial screening of the company and determine whether the company can be saved or if it should declare insolvency. Depending on the outcome of this screening, the companies are then passed on to experts.

Since 2008, Early Warning has assisted 2 800 companies in Denmark to either get out of difficulties or to close down. After receiving support from the programme's consultants, the companies had an average public debt of around EUR 100 000. That is approximately 20% less than the average debt in comparable companies that did not receive any assistance in closing down.

4.3. Become an entrepreneur with one click | Italy | Sardinia | Department of Industry

This initiative is intended to reduce the administrative burden and improve the relationship between enterprises and the public authorities. Entrepreneurs should be encouraged to start new businesses or to expand or reorganise their business activities. Emphasis is placed on

measures to simplify administrative formalities, regulations and procedures. The internet platform brings together all the administrative bodies responsible for approving new enterprises. This platform is linked to a thematic portal, which provides entrepreneurs with a single location for accessing all the information and forms required to submit their application and to monitor its processing.

4.4. Fit for Business Succession in the Craft Sector | Germany | Brandenburg | Lower Lusatian District Craft Association

The Fit for Business Succession in the Craft Sector project offers young workers and committed trainees in the craft sector the opportunity to gain an additional professional qualification, either during or immediately after their initial training. The aim is to prepare them at an early stage for a management position or, in the best case scenario, to acquire a craft sector company. This will enable the Southern Brandenburg region, characterised by its strong craft sector, to meet the major challenges of demographic change more quickly and without delay, and to make an important contribution to securing skilled labour in the state of Brandenburg. From 2008 to 2010, the number of trainees with this additional qualification increased fourfold. The project is funded by the European Regional Development Fund and has already received two awards.

http://www.efre.brandenburg.de/media_fast/4055/16_FIT.pdf

4.5. A unique entrepreneurial ecosystem | Ireland | County Kerry | Private Public Partnership

The Junior Entrepreneur Programme and Young Entrepreneur Programme are initiatives from the Institute of Technology Tralee, Shannon Development and Kerry Technology Park and Tweak.com.

The Junior Entrepreneur Programme has set itself the goal of teaching the basics of entrepreneurship to children and thus promoting an

awareness and understanding of the role of entrepreneurs in society. Children should be enabled to think entrepreneurially and understand that initiative, creativity and independence are invaluable assets in the modern business world. The programme is aimed at pupils aged 8–12, and is carried out in conjunction with the Mary Immaculate College of Education, Ireland's largest training provider. 15% of schools in the region took part in the pilot phase, and today around 50% to 60% of the region's pupil participate in the programme. Next year, the model will be developed further and finally offered to national and international schools.

<http://www.juniorentrepreneur.ie/>

<http://www.youngentrepreneur.ie/>

4.6. Go International | Austria | Vienna | Austrian Chamber of Commerce

The export sector has been a major contributor to stable economic growth in Austria and is thus an important factor for prosperity. In order to maintain and expand its excellent position in an increasingly competitive international environment, the Austrian Chamber of Commerce and the Federal Ministry of the Economy have agreed on a comprehensive package of measures entitled 'Go International' to strengthen the international competitiveness of SMEs. This package consists of six support measures:

- export motivation;
- focusing on sectors and themes;
- international technology networking;
- competitiveness through training;
- promoting exports of services and the international project;
- business communication campaign.

The strategic objective of 'Go International' is to safeguard Austria's position among the top five exporters in the EU-15 and to strive to obtain a position among the top three. 27 operational objectives were assigned to the individual support instruments and subjected to both an internal and an external monitoring procedure.

62% of companies that participated in the initiative indicated that the events helped them to find new business partners in the defined target markets. 76% of all companies that received technology funding were able to launch at least one concrete project. The creative industry aspect brought together 1 600 participants on international platforms from the fields of architecture, design, fashion, film, arts, multimedia and music, attracted new customers and raised the international profile.

4.7. Entrepreneur Platform | Portugal | Lisbon | Portuguese Chamber of Commerce and Industry

The project was developed jointly by the AIP (Portuguese Industrial Association), the Office of Strategy and Planning and the central authority of the State administration. The project had its origins in a study that identified the following problems: an extremely difficult financial and economic environment, rising unemployment, a very low percentage of enterprises founded by women, scattered information at national and international level, a culture of risk avoidance and a lack of cooperation and innovation. Ultimately, four core areas for the promotion of SMEs were drawn from the study:

1. Skill development
2. Business field development and evaluation
3. Network creation
4. Information and dissemination of entrepreneurial culture

Workshops were offered on how to start a business, support was provided for access to finance and new markets, cooperation networks were set up between entrepreneurs and market participants, and the development of partner networks and the improvement of training opportunities for entrepreneurs were promoted. Entrepreneurs, associations, companies, local authorities, secondary and vocational schools, universities and technical colleges were all involved in implementing the project. The project was carried out in the regions of Northern Portugal, Central Portugal, Alentejo, Algarve

and Lisbon; 22 workshops have now been organised and 50 partnerships and 61 support agencies have been set up.

4.8. Implantis® | Rhône-Alpes | Lyon | Enterprise Rhône-Alpes International (ERAI)

With an increasing number of companies looking for direct access to markets by having a commercial presence abroad, ERAI supports the internationalisation of companies in the Rhône-Alpes region. ERAI provides a system (Implantis®) that allows companies to register abroad, facilitating their integration into new markets and expanding their business network. The aim is to provide a simple and practical system that enables companies to achieve success immediately and efficiently with the development of their business abroad.

The three different phases of Implantis® (validation, prospecting and implementation) ensure

the successful establishment of companies abroad. First, a meeting is held with an international development consultant from ERAI regarding the company's financial situation and its short- and medium-term strategies for international development. Once the Implantis® contract has been signed, ERAI ensures favourable conditions for enterprise creation and provides the company with important contacts. In terms of implementation, there are three different versions of Implantis® based on the company's requirements: Light Implantis, Junior Implantis and Senior Implantis.

To date, ERAI has helped more than 1 000 companies as part of its Implantis® service, and the system is currently being used by more than 150 companies in the Rhône-Alpes to achieve their goals abroad. SMEs are the main beneficiaries of the programme, representing around 80% of Implantis® investments.

<http://www.implantis.com/>

5

European competitions for regional initiatives to implement the SBA

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5.1. European Entrepreneurial Region

In 2009, the Committee of the Regions (CoR) launched the European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) awards. In doing so, the CoR wished to make a contribution to promoting the implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe at regional and local level.

Local and regional authorities with outstanding future-oriented visions and action plans for enhancing entrepreneurship are awarded the label 'Entrepreneurial Region of the Year'. The size or economic strength of a region play no role in this; the key concern is how the region wishes to promote its entrepreneurial potential, within its capabilities.

The aim of the EER is twofold:

- **to implement the Small Business Act for Europe (SBA)** in partnership;
- **to demonstrate optimal use of EU and other public funds** geared towards developing an entrepreneurial policy within the region.

The CoR is thus making a contribution to promoting dynamic, environmentally friendly and entrepreneurial regions throughout Europe. The implementation of the measures is reviewed on a regular basis by the EER jury.

Great emphasis is placed on a partnership approach in developing and implementing the strategy, which involves all the relevant actors (representatives of companies, universities, clusters, etc.) and levels of government/administration (multilevel governance).

With the EER initiative, the CoR is also supporting the creation of a pan-European network between the EER regions in order to strengthen interregional collaboration in the promotion of entrepreneurial initiatives.

The previous winning regions (three per year) were:

- 2011 Brandenburg (DE), County Kerry (IRL) and Murcia (ESP)
- 2012 Catalonia (ESP), Helsinki-Uusimaa (FIN) and Trnava (SLK)

- 2013 Nord-Pas de Calais (FR), Southern Denmark (DEN) and Styria (AT)
- 2014 Flanders (BEL), Marche (IT) and North Brabant (NL)

5.2. European Enterprise Promotion Awards

With the European Enterprise Promotion Awards, the European Commission recognises innovative and successful measures undertaken by public institutions and public-private partnerships to promote enterprise and entrepreneurship at local, regional or national level. The winners should serve as role models for others.

National, regional or local authorities, educational institutions and business organisations, as well as public-private partnerships, from all EU Member States, as well as Iceland, Norway, Serbia and Turkey, can participate in this European competition.

In total, around 350 organisations and projects each year enter the preliminary national competitions. Over 50 of them qualify for the competition at European level.

The European Enterprise Promotion Awards are designed as a two-stage competition. In an initial national selection process, each country nominates two entries to participate in the competition at European level.

The competition categories are based on the priorities of the European Small Business Act and include

- promoting the entrepreneurial spirit,
- investing in entrepreneurial skills,
- improving the business environment,
- supporting the internationalisation of business,
- supporting the development of green markets and resource efficiency,
- responsible and inclusive entrepreneurship.

More details can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/european-enterprise-awards/index_en.htm

6

Annexes, references and links

6.1. The ten principles of the SBA

1. **Create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded.**

Entrepreneurial interest should be fostered, particularly among young people and women.

2. **Ensure that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy quickly get a second chance.**

To promote a positive attitude in society towards giving entrepreneurs a second chance, the Commission recommends public information campaigns. Each year, 700 000 SMEs in the EU file for bankruptcy.

3. **Design rules according to the 'Think Small First' principle.**

36% of EU SMEs report that red tape has hampered their business activities over the past two years. The European Commission wishes to reduce the administrative burden by 25% by 2012. The time required to set

up a business should be less than one week, with the appropriate permits being available within one month at the latest.

In 2007 the Commission set up a high level group of external experts, under the direction of former Bavarian Prime Minister Edmund Stoiber, which deals exclusively with the question of reducing the administrative burden.

4. **Make public administrations responsive to SMEs' needs.**

Electronic government and one-stop shops for all SME needs are the key ideas for implementation.

5. **Adapt public policy tools to SMEs' needs: facilitate SMEs' participation in public procurement and better use State Aid possibilities for SMEs.**

The Commission intends to make the sometimes complex and lengthy support procedures more efficient and more attractive to SMEs.

6. Facilitate SMEs' access to finance and develop a legal and business environment supportive to timely payment in commercial transactions. It should be easier for SMEs in particular to obtain risk capital, micro-credit and mezzanine finance. One out of four insolvencies is due to poor payment practices in European business.

7. Help SMEs to benefit more from opportunities offered by the Single Market.

In this case, the Commission is promoting advisory and networking services, such as the Enterprise Europe Network. Member States should also reinforce the SOLVIT online network for resolving problems with Single Market rules.

8. Promote the upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation.

Support measures should encourage SMEs to carry out research, including within transnational cooperation projects.

9. Enable SMEs to turn the environmental challenges into opportunities.

Suppliers of environmental technologies are primarily SMEs. To increase their own energy efficiency, SMEs should make use of environmental management systems.

10. Encourage and support SMEs to benefit from growth of markets.

Large enterprises are more likely than SMEs to take advantage of market opportunities abroad. SMEs should be helped to benefit from globalisation and EU enlargement.

6.2. Overview of the actions in the SBA and the possibilities for implementing them in the regions

Overview of the measures in the Small Business Act and the implementation of these in the regions			
Measures in the SBA and the SBA review	Direct responsibility		Comment
	Central	Decentralised	
1. The EU and Member States should create an environment in which entrepreneurs and family businesses can thrive and entrepreneurship is rewarded. They need to care for future entrepreneurs better, in particular by fostering entrepreneurial interest and talent, especially among young people and women, and by simplifying the conditions for business transfers.			
Member States are invited to stimulate innovative and entrepreneurial mindsets among young people by introducing entrepreneurship as a key competence in school curricula, particularly in general secondary education, and ensure that it is correctly reflected in teaching material.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to ensure that the importance of entrepreneurship is correctly reflected in teacher training.	(Yes)	(Yes)	Depends on the education system

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to step up cooperation with the business community in order to develop systematic strategies for entrepreneurship education at all levels.	Yes	Yes	Depends on the education system
Member States are invited to ensure that taxation (in particular gift tax, taxation of dividends and wealth tax) does not unduly hamper the transfer of businesses.	No	No	
Member States are invited to put in schemes place for matching transferable businesses with potential new owners.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to provide mentoring and support for business transfers.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to provide mentoring and support for female entrepreneurs.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to provide mentoring and support for immigrants who wish to become entrepreneurs.	Yes	Yes	
2. Member States should ensure that honest entrepreneurs who have faced bankruptcy quickly get a second chance.			
Member States are invited to promote a positive attitude in society towards giving entrepreneurs a fresh start, for example through public information campaigns.	Yes	Yes	National campaigns can be supplemented by regional initiatives
Member States are invited to aim to complete all legal procedures to wind up businesses in cases of non-fraudulent bankruptcy within a year.	No	No	Normally national legislation
Member States are invited to ensure that re-starters are treated on an equal footing with new start-ups, including in support schemes.	(Yes)	Yes	Depends on the implementation of the support programmes, especially from the Structural Funds
3. The EU and Member States should design rules according to the 'Think Small First' principle by taking into account SMEs' characteristics when designing legislation, and simplify the existing regulatory environment.			
Member States are invited to consider the usefulness of introducing common commencement dates and annual statements on legislation entering into force.	Yes	Yes	Insofar as these regulations concern regional responsibilities and are not decided at national level

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to make use of flexibility provisions aimed at SMEs when implementing EU legislation and avoid 'gold-plating'.	No	No	Possibly at regional level also, if implementation is carried out regionally
Member States are invited to adopt targets that are similar in ambition to the commitment to cut administrative burdens by 25% by 2012 at EU level, where this has not yet been done, and to implement them.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to ensure swift adoption of the proposals relating to the reduction of the administrative burden in Community legislation.	i.d.R. No	i.d.R. No	Normally national legislation
Member States are invited to adopt the Commission proposal that would permit Member States to increase the threshold for VAT registration to EUR 100 000.	No	No	
4. The EU and its Member States should make public administrations responsive to SME needs, making life as simple as possible for SMEs, notably by promoting e-government and one-stop-shop solutions.			
Member States are invited to reduce the level of fees requested by Member State administrations for registering a business, taking inspiration from the Member States with the lowest level of fees.	No	Yes	
Member States are invited to continue to work to reduce the time required to set up a business to less than one week, where this has not yet been achieved.	Yes	Yes	Regions can also provide assistance via central government and thus reduce the administrative burden
Member States are invited to accelerate the start of SMEs' commercial operations by reducing and simplifying business licences and permits. More specifically, Member States could set a maximum deadline of one month for granting these licences and permits, except in cases justified by serious risks to people or the environment.	(Yes)	Yes	Insofar as regional powers are concerned, the regions have possibilities for speeding up procedures

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to refrain from asking SMEs for information that is already available within the administration, unless it needs to be updated.	(Yes)	(Yes)	Depends on the level at which the information is requested; at least coordination is possible; regions can at least support national authorities with the provision of data
Member States are invited to make sure that a micro-enterprise is not asked to participate in a statistical survey under the responsibility of the State, regional or local statistical office more than once every three years, provided that the needs for statistical and other types of information do not require otherwise.	Yes	Yes	Regional and local regulations are the responsibility of the regions
Member States are invited to establish a contact point to which stakeholders can communicate rules or procedures that are considered to be disproportionate and/or to unnecessarily hinder SME activities.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to ensure full and timely implementation of the Services Directive, including the setting up of points of single contact through which businesses can obtain all relevant information and complete all necessary procedures and formalities by electronic means.	Yes	Yes	e.g. via the single point of contact
<p>5. The EU and the Member States should adapt public policy tools to SMEs needs.</p> <p>They should make use of the Code of Best Practice providing guidance to contracting authorities on how they may apply the EC public procurement framework in such a way that facilitates SMEs' participation in public procurement procedures.</p> <p>To address the market failures that SMEs face throughout their life cycle, they should make better use of the possibilities offered by Community State Aid rules to support start-ups and provide incentives for SMEs.</p>			
Member States are invited to set up electronic portals to widen access to information on public procurement opportunities below the EU thresholds.	Yes	Yes	

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to encourage their contracting authorities to subdivide contracts into lots where appropriate, and to make sub-contracting opportunities more visible.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to remind their contracting authorities of their obligation to avoid disproportionate qualification and financial requirements.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to encourage constructive dialogue and mutual understanding between SMEs and large buyers through activities such as information, training, monitoring and exchange of best practices.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to refocus State Aid policy to better address SMEs' needs, including the design of better targeted measures.	No	No	
6. The EU and Member States should facilitate SMEs' access to finance, in particular to risk capital, micro-credit and mezzanine finance, and develop a legal and business environment that supports timely payment in commercial transactions.			
The Member States are invited to develop financing programmes that address the funding gap between EUR 100 000 and EUR 1 million, in particular with instruments combining features of debt and equity, while respecting State Aid rules.	Yes	Yes	Possibilities for the use of ERDF resources
Member States are invited to tackle the regulatory and tax obstacles that prevent venture capital funds operating in the Single Market from investing on the same terms as domestic funds.	No	No	Normally national legislation
Member States are invited to ensure that the taxation of corporate profits encourages investment.	No	No	In individual cases also regionally, e.g. in German business tax
Member States are invited to make full use of funding available in cohesion policy programmes and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, in support of SMEs.	(Yes)	Yes	Yes, if the programming and implementation are carried out at regional level

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
7. The EU and Member States should encourage SMEs to benefit more from the opportunities offered by the Single Market, in particular through improving the governance of and information on Single Market policy, enabling SMEs' interests to be better represented in the development of standards and facilitating SMEs' access to patents and trade marks.			
Member States are invited to ensure correct application of the mutual recognition principle.	No	No	
Member States are invited to reinforce the SOLVIT problem-solving system to ensure that problems with the exercise of Single Market rights can be resolved informally, speedily and pragmatically.	No	No	Generally implemented at national level
Member States are invited to encourage national standards bodies to reconsider their business model in order to reduce the cost of access to standards.	No	No	Generally implemented at national level
Member States are invited to ensure that the composition of the standardisation committees is fair.	No	No	Generally implemented at national level
Member States are invited to ask national standards bodies, together with European standards organisations, to carry out promotion and information campaigns to encourage SMEs to make better use of standards and provide more frequent feedback on their content.	No	No	Regions can support campaigns
Member States are invited to provide SMEs with advisory services, including support to defend themselves against unfair commercial practices.	Yes	Yes	
8. The EU and Member States should promote the upgrading of skills in SMEs and all forms of innovation. They should encourage investment in research by SMEs and their participation in R&D support programmes, transnational research, clustering and active intellectual property management by SMEs.			
Member States are invited to encourage the efforts of SMEs to internationalise and become high growth enterprises including through participation in innovation clusters.	Yes	Yes	e.g. by Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies and with the help of the ERDF

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to promote the development of SMEs' competences in the field of research and innovation by means of e.g. simplified access to public research infrastructure, use of R&D services, recruitment of skilled employees and training, as allowed for in the new Community Framework for State aid for Research and Development and Innovation.	Yes	Yes	e.g. by Regional Smart Specialisation Strategies and with the help of the ERDF
Member States are invited to open up national research programmes where this is of mutual benefit to SMEs from other Member States, and contribute to SMEs' access to transnational research activities, e.g. through joint programming.	No	Yes	This can also take place at regional level
In their implementation of the Cohesion Policy programme, Member States are invited to ensure easy access for SMEs to funding related to entrepreneurship, innovation and knowledge.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to support the development of an electronic identity for businesses, to enable e-invoicing and e-government transactions.	No	No	
Member States are invited encourage businesses, in particular SMEs and other stakeholders, including procurement authorities, to participate in actions contributing to the speedy implementation of the Lead Market Initiative.	Yes	Yes	
9. The EU and Member States should enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities. They should provide more information, expertise and financial incentives for full exploitation of the opportunities for new 'green' markets and increased energy efficiency, partly through the implementation of environmental management systems in SMEs.			
Member States are invited to provide incentives for eco-efficient businesses and products (e.g. tax incentive schemes and prioritising subsidies for funding sustainable business) in line with the Community guidelines on State aid for environmental protection, and to make use of the simplified approach to environmental aid for SMEs developed in the GBER.	Yes	Yes	Depending on the incentive, tax schemes are normally national legislation, funding is often regional

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to make full use of the around EUR 2.5 billion allocated in Cohesion Policy programmes to support eco-friendly products and processes in SMEs.	(Yes)	Yes	Depends on where Structural Fund programmes are developed and implemented
10. The EU and Member States should support and encourage SMEs to benefit from the growth of markets outside the EU, in particular through market-specific support and business training activities.			
Member States are invited to encourage coaching of SMEs by large companies in order to bring them to international markets.	Yes	Yes	
REVIEW			
Member States are invited to systematically assess the impact of legislation on SMEs using an SME test, while taking into account differences in the size of enterprises, where relevant.	Yes	Yes	The SME test can be considered at any level; the correction of legal provisions depends on the level of legislation
Member States are invited to present at a set time each year their forward planning of the business-related legislation that will enter into force over the next budgetary period.	No	No	Preparatory work for national plans possible, if appropriate
Member States are invited to apply the 'Think Small First' principle not only to legislation, but also to administrative procedures affecting SMEs (e.g. by introducing a single interlocutor and reduced reporting obligations).	Yes	Yes	Especially in the design of processes (not of legal acts)
Member States are invited to facilitate SMEs' access to the Structural Funds by allowing SMEs to submit all data necessary for Structural Fund support only once.	(Yes)	Yes	Depends on the administration and control systems of the Member States and regions
Member States are invited to develop credit ombudsman-type solutions to further facilitate the dialogue between SMEs and credit institutions.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to ensure that inconsistencies in tax treatment do not lead to double taxation that would hamper cross-border venture capital investments.	No	No	
Member States are invited to create one-stop shops where SMEs can apply for European, national and local grants.	(Yes)	(Yes)	Possible in the event of responsibility for support, for all levels
Member States are invited to fully implement the European Code of Best Practices facilitating SMEs' access to public procurement.	Yes	Yes	

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to promote the online publication of easily accessible and free-of-charge abstracts of European standards with a clear indication of changes made whenever standards are revised.	No	No	Makes more sense at national level
Member States are invited to provide support to SME network-building, in accordance with Community State Aid and competition rules.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to encourage SMEs to hire or buy in specialist expertise in order to help companies to grow, innovate and go international.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to make better use of State aid possibilities to support investment in the environment and energy fields.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to help SMEs acquire the necessary managerial and technical skills to adapt their business towards the low-carbon, resource efficient economy, inter alia through the European Social Fund.	Yes	Yes	
Member States are invited to provide regulatory incentives to SMEs registered with the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and with ISO 14000, and to take measures to encourage micro- and small enterprises to take advantage of simplified EMAS-type schemes, such as EMAS-EASY.	No	No	
Member States are invited to implement the recommendation set out in the SBA Action Plan to reduce the start-up time for new enterprises to 3 working days and the cost to EUR 100 by 2012; to reduce the time needed to get licences and permits (including environmental permits) to take up and perform the specific activity of an enterprise to one month by the end of 2013.	(No)	Yes	Depends on the legal responsibilities
Member States are invited to implement the recommendation set out in the SBA Action Plan to promote second chances for entrepreneurs by limiting the discharge time and debt settlement for an honest entrepreneur after bankruptcy to a maximum of three years by 2013.	No	No	

	Central	Decentralised	Comment
Member States are invited to develop user-friendly and widely supported marketplaces and databases for transferable businesses, and to provide training and support to increase the number of successful business transfers, including communication campaigns to raise awareness of the need for early preparation of business transfers.	No	No	Can only offer a complete overview at national level; regions can carry out their own awareness campaigns and initiate business succession projects
Member States and, where relevant, regional and local authorities, are invited to set up, in coordination with representatives of business organizations, national and local SBA implementation plans backed up by a strong monitoring mechanism as well as a body in charge of coordinating SME issues across different administrations (SME Envoy), equipped with adequate human resources and having a high standing within the administration itself.	Yes	Yes	

6.3. SME Envoys at national level

Country	Name	Title	Organisation	Address
AUSTRIA (AT) 	Dr. Matthias Tschirf	Sektionschef	Federal Ministry of Science, Research and Economy	Stubenring 1 A-1010 Wien POST.ISL@bmwfw.gv.at
BELGIUM (B) 	Mr Didier Kinet	Director General	FPS Economy, SMEs, Self-employed and Energy	North Gate Boulevard du Roi Albert II 16 BE-1000 Bruxelles ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
BULGARIA (BG) 	Mr Evgeniy Ivanov	Executive Director	Bulgarian SME Promotion Agency	2-4 Lege Str BG-1000 Sofia office@sme.government.bg
CROATIA 	Mr Dražen Pros	Deputy Minister for Entrepreneurship and Crafts	Ministry of Entrepreneurship and Crafts	Ulica grada Vukovara 78 HR-10000 Zagreb ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
CYPRUS (CY) 	Mr Constantinos Karageorgis	Director of Industrial Development Service	Ministry of Energy, Commerce, Industry and Tourism	Andrea Araouzou 6 CY-1421 Nicosia ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
CZECH REPUBLIC (CZ) 	Mr Tomáš Novotný	Deputy Minister for EU Funds, International Competitiveness Strategy, Investments and Innovation	Ministry of Industry and Trade	Na Františku 32 CZ-110 15 Praha 1 ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
DENMARK (DK) 	Mrs Lisbet Dyerberg	Deputy Permanent Secretary	Ministry of Business and Growth	Slotsholmsgade 10-12 DK-1216 Copenhagen om2@evm.dk
ESTONIA (EE) 	Mr Ahti Kuningas	Deputy Secretary General of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication	Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communication	Harju 11 EE-Tallinn 15072 ENTR-SME- @ec.europa.eu
FINLAND (FI) 	Mr Petri Peltonen	Director General Enterprise and Innovation Department	Ministry of Employment and the Economy	P.O. Box 32 FI-00023 Government ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu

Country	Name	Title	Organisation	Address
FRANCE (FR) 	Mr Pascal Faure	Director General for competitiveness, industry and services	Ministère de l'Economie, du Redressement Productif et du Numérique	67 rue Barbès - BP 8001 F-94201 Ivry-Sur-Seine cedex pascal.faure@finances.gouv.fr
GERMANY (DE) 	Dr. Sabine Hepperle	SME Envoy (EU level) Director General	Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy	Schamhorststr. 34-37 D-10115 Berlin kmu-botschafter@bmwi.bund.de
GREECE (EL) 	Mr Zacharias Mavroukas	Acting SME Envoy	Ministry of Development and Competitiveness	Kaniggos Square 20 GR-10200 Athens ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
HUNGARY (HU) 	Mr Áron Lenner	Deputy State Secretary for Ministry for National Economy	Deputy State Secretary for Ministry for National Economy	Honved U. 13-15 H-1055 Hungary ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
IRELAND (IRL) (IE) 	to be nominated	Minister for Small Business	Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation	Kildare Street IE-Dublin 2 Ireland ENTR-SME-ENVOY@ec.europa.eu
ITALY (IT) 	Mr Giuseppe Tripoli	Head of the Department for Enterprise and Internationalisation, Ministry of Economic Development	Ministry of Economic Development	Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico 2, Via Molise IT-00187 Roma, Italy dipartimento.impresa@sviluppoeconomico.gov.it
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6.4. Links to EU and regional pages

Small Business Act

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/index_de.htm

SME Performance Review

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/facts-figures-analysis/performance-review/index_en.htm

The Guidebook Series for SME policy in the regions of Europe

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/regional-sme-policies/index_en.htm

Database of best practices for the implementation of the SBA in the Member States and regions

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/database/SBA/index.cfm?fuseaction=welcome.detail>

The national SME Envoys

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/sme-envoy/index_en.htm

European Small Business Portal

http://ec.europa.eu/small-business/index_en.htm

European Enterprise Promotion Awards

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/european-enterprise-awards/index_en.htm

European Entrepreneurial Region (EER) of the Committee of the Regions

<http://cor.europa.eu/en/takepart/eer/Pages/eer.aspx#>

Smart Specialisation Platform

<http://s3platform.jrc.ec.europa.eu/en/home>

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