



## SMEs call for greater participation in the EU decision-making process

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Mr. Kamminga acknowledged that, in the area of R&D, the Commission has done a good job in including SME organizations. In particular, in developing the Technology Stimulation Measures for SMEs in the Fourth Framework Programme, the Commission has taken a practical step to assist SMEs in getting financial assistance from the Commission for RTD projects.

The success of the Technology Stimulation Measures, and the CRAFT cooperative research scheme in particular, underlined the need for special measures to assist SMEs, he said. Mr. Kamminga welcomed the fact that the needs of SMEs were an important part of the discussions taking shape, both on the Action Plan on Innovation and on the Fifth RTD Framework Programme.

With the aim of focusing the minds of those developing the Fifth Framework Programme on areas concerning SME participation, he put forward a ten point action plan. If these points were followed, he suggested, the result would be a genuinely "SME-friendly" Fifth Framework Programme. The UEAPME plan calls for action in the following areas:

- 1. Recognition of SMEs as a target group - a distinction needs to be made between enterprises which generate technology and those which apply technology;
- 2. Identification of SMEs' needs;

- 3. Adoption of a problem-solving approach;
- 4. Greater market orientation in the programmes;
- 5. More emphasis on the dissemination and exploitation of results;
- 6. Better cooperation between SMEs and big industry;
- 7. Better cooperation with universities and research institutes;
- 8. Improve customer-friendliness of programmes and minimize bureaucracy;
- 9. Rationalization of intermediary networks for provision of information on programmes;
- 10. Better access to finance for SMEs.

The UEAPME is the principle representative organization for the craft industry and SMEs at European level, representing 45 SME and SME-related organizations from across Europe - a total of six million businesses and 27 million people.

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**Last update:** 12 November 1996

**Permalink:** <https://cordis.europa.eu/article/id/7252-smes-call-for-greater-participation-in-the-eu-decisionmaking-process>

European Union, 2025

