



EUROPEAN COMMISSION  
ENTERPRISE AND INDUSTRY DIRECTORATE-GENERAL

Promotion of SMEs' competitiveness  
Director

Brussels, 06/10/2010  
ENTR/E/1 – UI/vam (2010) ARES534347

Committee in the Danish Parliament  
Industry Committee  
Mr. Erhvervs Udvalget  
Folketinget, Christiansborg  
1240 København K

**Subject: Results of the Commission study on "Internationalisation of SMEs"**

Dear Sir,

It is our pleasure to present you with a copy of the latest study of the Enterprise and Industry Directorate General on "Internationalisation of European SMEs". This study was commissioned to provide an updated and comprehensive overview of the level of internationalisation of European SMEs.

The study analyses all business activities of SMEs that put them into a meaningful business relationship with a foreign partner: exports, imports, foreign direct investment, international subcontracting and international technical co-operation. It is based on a survey of 9,480 SMEs in 33 European countries, comprising the EU27 plus 6 non EU European countries<sup>1</sup>. The survey was carried out during 2009.

The conclusions of the study present the status of the international activities of SMEs divided by Country, by SME size (micro, small, medium) and by sector (26 separate sectoral groupings were analysed) in 33 European countries. The study further sheds a light on key aspects of international activities of SMEs such as main barriers to internationalisation, the impact of internationalisation on job creation by SMEs and the link between internationalisation and innovation.

The most relevant finding was that 25% of EU 27 SMEs export or have exported at some point during the last 3 years. However, international activities are mostly geared towards other countries inside the internal market and only about 13% of EU SMEs are active in markets outside the EU.

In addition to the numerical findings, the study presents fact based evidence of the need to support greater internationalisation which has consequences for the development of SME policy:

- **International SMEs create more jobs:** Internationally active SMEs report an employment growth of 7% versus only 1% for SMEs without any international activities.

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<sup>1</sup> Croatia, Iceland, FYROM, Liechtenstein, Norway and Turkey

- **International SMEs are more innovative:** 26% of internationally active SMEs introduced products or services that were new for their sector in their country; for other SMEs this is only 8%.
- **Public support goes largely un-noticed:** Only 16% of SMEs are aware of public support programmes for internationalisation and only a small number of SMEs use public support.
- **A larger percentage of European SMEs are more internationally active than in the US or Japan.** Overall, European firms are more active than their counterparts in Japan or the US. Even if only extra EU exports are considered they still perform better.

The study, the worksheets containing detailed results of the survey and previous studies on the subject can also be accessed online in:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/market-access/internationalisation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/market-access/internationalisation/index_en.htm)

I trust that the report will be a rich source of inspiration and information for you for the formulation of policies to support SMEs.



Joanna Drake

Encl. "Internationalisation of European SMEs"

Information and further copies:

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