European Commission publishes its response to the Eurostars Programme Interim Evaluation Report

On 8 April, the European Commission (EC) published its response to the Interim Evaluation Report of the Eurostars Joint Programme. The Interim Evaluation was carried out by a Group of Independent Experts between July and December 2010 chaired by Anne Laperrouze, former MEP and Vice-Chair of the ITRE Committee. In its communication, the EC welcomes the strong SME interest in Eurostars and highlights its support for the current programme (until 2013). According to the panel’s report, the Eurostars Programme - the first European funding and support programme to be specifically dedicated to SMEs – is an ‘attractive programme for R&D-performing SMEs and should be continued’. Its bottom-up approach, the easy access to participation and its central evaluation system at EU level are assessed as some of its key strengths.

EUREKA welcomes the panel statement that ‘Eurostars is an excellent programme concept that is well aligned with the objectives of Europe 2020 and the need to nurture technology-intensive SMEs.’

On 31 May 2011, the European Competitiveness Council welcomed the expert group’s conclusions in the presence of the Research and Innovation Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn.

UK’s Technology Strategy Board develops a strategy for business innovation

The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) - the UK’s national innovation agency – publishes its strategy for business innovation for 2011-2015. With its concept to commercialisation, the TSB aims to accelerate economic growth by stimulating and supporting business-led innovation. Important references are made to the Eurostars Programme as a best practice example to strengthen help for companies accessing EU innovation funding and support for SMEs. TSB’s budget for the period 2011-12 to 2014-15 is over 1.13 bn euro. In partnership with business and other funders, this will generate investment of around 2.84 bn euro to drive economic growth.

DID YOU KNOW?

Following the Competitiveness Council conclusions on the ‘Small Business Act’ for Europe on 30 May 2011, the start-up time for new enterprises should be reduced to 3 working days and the cost to 100 euro by 2012. The time needed to get licences and permits to start and perform a specific activity should reduce to 3 months by the end of 2013.

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