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Boosting research and innovation friendly support programmes for SMEs in Europe

**Key success factors and good practice examples
for supporting SMEs in research and innovation activities**



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Making Progress and Economic enhancement a Reality for SMEs

General Introduction

Innovation is more crucial than ever if business ought to be sustainable and prosper. Markets are changing faster and there is increased competition from emerging economies in Asia, Latin America and other regions around the globe.

The need for making progress and economic enhancement a reality for SMEs across the EU, that has always been an objective of the European Commission, has now turned out to be an key issue of utmost priority, significance and urgency not only for the benefits of the SMEs themselves but also as a cornerstone of the European policy of Implementing the Innovation Union under the Europe 2020 strategy.

In this respect it is a major aim to close the gap within the entire Innovation Life Cycle Europe: Europe is facing a situation of **innovation emergency**¹. Europe is spending 0.8% of GDP less than the US and 1.5% less than Japan every year on Research & Development (R&D).

Therefore innovation friendly framework conditions have to be implemented in all policy areas.

SMEs are a the cornerstone of this strategy and they are desperately needed to fully support, develop and implement all these aims and short and mid-term actions that will result in long-term economic growth, empowerment and social development.

SMEs have become increasingly important in our society as providers of employment opportunities and as key players for the well-being of local and regional communities. European SMEs represent:

- 99.8% of all European enterprises
- 67.1% of private sector jobs
- More than 80% of employment in relevant industrial sectors such as metal products manufacture, construction and furniture¹

¹ Eurostat. "Key Indicators for Enterprises in the Non-Financial Business Economy; EU 27". 2005.