



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Innovation: concrete efforts are needed for Europe to catch up, say SMEs

UEAPME calls for progress on Community patent, invites Member States to make use of all existing opportunities

Brussels, 2 September 2009 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation, welcomed the approach taken by the European Commission in its communication on innovation policy released today (Wednesday). According to UEAPME, the EC showed a better and refined understanding of innovation, which cannot be seen merely as the result of R&D but more as a combination of all stakeholders acting in the right environment. The document also identifies the right challenges to fill the innovation gap between Europe and its main competitors, namely the protection of intellectual property rights, access to finance and a better cooperation between science and business. However, UEAPME called once again on the EU to make progress on a single community patent, which would dramatically boost innovation in SMEs, and on Member States to make use of all the existing opportunities to promote innovation via state aid, public procurement and the creation of lead markets.

Secretary General **Andrea Benassi** offered the following comments:

“Properly defining innovation is a precondition to promoting innovation. Today’s communication goes exactly in this direction. It rightly stresses that innovation is not only the end result of research and development, but also, in the words of Commissioner Verheugen, the product of scientists, researchers, entrepreneurs and their employees, investors, consumers and public authorities acting in a conducive environment. Unfortunately, such an environment is far from being a reality at the moment. Intellectual property rights must be better protected, financing for innovative actions must be secured and the ties between science and business must be strengthened if we are serious about closing the innovation gap with Europe’s main competitors in the near future.”

“At EU level, this means first and foremost making progress on the Community Patent and on a single European patent system. Under the current rules, the same invention can be subject to up to 27 different legal systems in Europe. I do not see how we can catch up with the rest of the industrialised world until this fundamental flaw is dealt with.”

“At national level, Member States must make full use of all existing opportunities to promote innovation, as pointed out once again today by the European Commission. The new State aid framework and public procurement are two crucial tools in this respect, which are already in place and can be used without further delays. Lead markets are another excellent instrument, as long as they do not become closed circles for one or a few winners. Member States should also promote a better dialogue between science and business. All too often potentially ground-breaking technologies do not make their way from the research stage to the market stage. Europe cannot afford to let this happen for much longer.”

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EDITORS’ NOTES: UEAPME is the employers’ organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 83 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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