



“The Voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mueller reappointed as UEAPME’s Secretary General

“SMEs in Europe: great progress but not quite there yet”

Brussels, November 14th, 2002. On the occasion of UEAPME’s General Assembly and his reappointment as Secretary General, **Hans Werner Mueller**, declared, “During these last ten years we have achieved lots of things in the interest of SMEs. We became a reference in terms of SMEs representation at European level and the different stakeholders, notably through our participation in the Social Dialogue, have progressively taken our interests into account. But we are still far away from our goal as several vital issues for SMEs, which currently represent 99% of enterprises in Europe, are only partially considered when it comes down to real policy.”

In his address Mueller listed UEAPME’s main tasks and priorities for his next mandate. On policy issues Mueller insisted that SMEs role in the society should be highlighted and UEAPME must work towards a more explicit differentiation between small and big businesses when needed. “We have to make it clear to everyone that not only do we have different interests but we also have different roles in society” he argued. The concept of ownership is still not clear enough and there still an awareness raising effort that has to be done to anchor the difference between the owner manager and the manager in a listed firm. Mueller went on to advocate a stronger role for UEAPME in the Social Dialogue. While pleading for a prolongation of the positive collaboration with UNICE in order to strengthen employers interest in Europe, Mueller said that it is essential that UEAPME becomes a fully independent social partner put on an equal footing with the other partners.

Another key task for UEAPME, Mueller continued, will be the enlargement process. “We have to help our new friends to become integrated partners in the EU and in the internal market. Therefore we should carefully listen to their needs.” Mueller also announced that the previous work on business support programs would be sustained in order to create a strong representation of SME in the new member states and help them implementing EC law.

In terms of organisational issues, Mueller ranked once more the acknowledgement of UEAPME as independent fully recognised employer of SMEs in Europe as one of the top targets to be achieved. According to Mueller a further development of the branch organisations is also important in order to stay in very close contact with the real needs and problems of European SMEs. Finally, Mueller argued that the improvement of strategic cooperation with EU organisations that are important partners for SMEs, such as banks, liberal professions and business support organisation will be high on his agenda.

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