



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

First structured dialogue on vocational education and training: UEAPME stresses need for validation of informal learning

Brussels, 04th February 2003. UEAPME, the European SME employers association, who will participate in the first trilogue between the Education Council, the Social Partners and the Commission on vocational education and training on Wednesday the 5th, calls on the Education Ministers to recognise informal learning as a tool for enhanced competencies. The recognition and validation of non-formal learning is vital for European SMEs and their employees, as this is their main tool for the development of competencies.

“It is indispensable that the ministers understand the importance of recognising this kind of learning. Informal learning allows SME employees to gain on the job competencies that they would not be able to gain with formal training” **Hans Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s secretary General argued ahead of the meeting. Furthermore, the organisation demands a validation of vocational experience and competencies acquired by employees on the job, so as to allow a system for transferable qualifications for all SMEs employees. Such a system would facilitate geographical and occupational mobility and would enhance the efficiency of labour markets.

UEAPME and its SME think-tank “Academy Avignon” have consistently supported the validation of informal learning via different Leonardo projects. In 2002, Academy Avignon set up a multidisciplinary professional training network with the aim of identifying new competences produced in the informal learning in SMEs and craft enterprises. It also aims to experiment and promote new methodologies and practices of evaluation and validation of competencies acquired in the work process.

UEAPME is very pleased with its participation in the trilogue meeting that marks the entry into force of the resolution on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and training between Member States and the Commission- the so called Copenhagen process. The association congratulates the Member States and the Commission on this initiative that recognises the important role played by the social partners in the development, validation and recognition of vocational competences and qualifications and in vocational training. UEAPME will continue to echo the concerns of European SMEs in the debate.

The structured dialogue on vocational education and training will also enable the European Social Partners to emphasise on their respective priorities and deepen the dialogue with the Education Council on the Copenhagen declaration. On this occasion, the Social Partners will also inform the Ministers on the follow up of the agreed “framework of actions for lifelong development of competencies and qualifications”.

***** End *****

Note to editors: For further information, please contact Liliane Volozinskis on tel +32 2 285 0720

Raphael Anspach, Press officer
Tel: +32 2 230 7599/ Fax: +32 2230 7861
Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com

Web: www.ueapme.com/pressroom