



“The Voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

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Thessaloniki SME Ministerial Conference: UEAPME tells Ministers it is time for action

The European SME employers’ federation highlights the deficient implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises

Brussels, February 14th, 2003. “SMEs need more actions and less words” **Hans Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s secretary general, told EU’s SME ministers on the occasion of the informal Ministerial Meeting on SMEs in Thessaloniki today. The meeting, in which the main SME representatives and the SME ministers of the 15 member states participated, focused on the implementation of the Charter for Small Enterprises and on Entrepreneurship in Europe.

During the meeting, UEAPME’s Secretary General welcomed the Commission’s recognition of the importance of entrepreneurship and underlined that recognizing entrepreneurship, as a vital element for achieving the Lisbon Targets, is already an important step towards achieving the targets. “But”, Müller stated, “ it was high time to take that step as we have already lost two important years”. Müller further argued that the recently released Green paper made the right analysis of the problems faced by SMEs but that many of these problems could have been addressed through a better implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises.

So far action taken to implement the European Charter for Small Enterprises have been insufficient in the majority of Member countries and at European level. There is thus a need to reinforce measures to apply the European Charter. Therefore, in view of the upcoming Spring Summit, UEAPME urges the Council to ask the Commission to propose recommendations and action lines to be implemented by the Member States. In that perspective, the Spring Summit should also decide in the framework of the Multiannual programme for Enterprises 2003-2005 on a concerted and co-ordinated “Multiannual Action plan” between Member states, Commission and representative of Business Organisations.

Article 10 of the Charter stipulates the need to develop a more effective representation of small enterprises at Union level. In view of this objective, UEAPME considers that the community institutions have to consult SME representative organisations in all areas open to consultation, after having previously verified their representativeness. As regards the European Social Dialogue, Müller stated “it is absolutely necessary and justified that the organisation representing crafts and SMEs at European level is invited and present in all the meetings as an autonomous body.”

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