



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

European Convention: European SMEs want extension of Qualified Majority Voting

Brussels, 07th March 2003. “Representatives of national SMEs association in Europe are in favour of an increased use of the qualified majority voting at the council of Ministers”. That was one of the key messages delivered by representatives of national SMEs in Europe on the occasion of the second Craft and SME Summit in Rome organised by UEAPME, the European federation of SME employers. The SME associations have taken on a document in which they highlight their demands in relation to a new European Constitution.

European SMEs representatives argue that in the present Union, the unanimity rule has very much delayed many important legislative acts, which are central for SMEs. For example, the Union still has not been able to adopt legislation, which introduces a certain degree of harmonisation of corporate taxation. “When the Union will embrace its 10 new Members, the rule of unanimity will represent an even bigger hindrance for progress in vital cases. That kind of inflexibility should not be enshrined in the new treaty or the new constitution of the Union.” **Hans Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s Secretary General declared. Therefore, Convention drafters should consider extending the fields for qualified majority voting.

Secondly, European SMEs associations plead in favour of making the co-decision procedure the normal rule. The extension of this procedure to areas of European policy, where it is not possible to apply co-decision today, such as parts of labour market and social policy, would strengthen the democratic legitimacy of the Union. Ultimately, a more open and transparent legislative procedure would also ensure without prejudice a greater consultation of stakeholders, such as professional organisations.

Finally, European SMEs associations’ representatives have called for the incorporation of the small business charter, which was adopted by heads of State and government in Feira in 2000, in the second part of the new constitution. “This is a natural demand, which should not be problematic given the widely propagated recognition of the role and the importance of SMEs in the European economy” Müller concluded. The inclusion of the essence of the Charter would grant a legal status to the recognition of the importance of SMEs.

***** End *****

Note to editors: For further information, please contact Christina Linderholm on tel +32 2 230 7599

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