



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UEAPME starts project to improve knowledge of community acquis in accession countries SMEs

Brussels, 28th April 2003. Today sees the launch of the second Business support programme. This project funded by the European Commission and carried out by UEAPME in collaboration with some of its members organizations, aims to help SMEs and handicraft enterprises in the CEEC (Central and Eastern European Countries) to understand the changes arising from the Acquis. UEAPME, the European crafts and SME employers association will preside the kick off meeting that will take place today in Brussels.

The Business Support Programme comes in timely for SMEs in the CEEC, as knowledge regarding the community Acquis in several vital fields seem still deficient only one year ahead of the completion of the enlargement process. This situation is the result of 40 years of virtually non-existent private entrepreneurship in most CEECs that left the private SME sector with little time to organize itself and set up strong intermediary structures.

In order to achieve progress regarding the Acquis, the programme is structured around two main pillars: information and awareness building at the level of SMEs regarding the Acquis in the fields standardization, certification, quality management safety at work, environment and social affairs and institution building to strengthen the business representative organisations.

Regarding the methodology for the first pillar, a train the trainers programme will be set up so as to create a system of trainers and consultants that can be used to provide information to SMEs. Furthermore, an information campaign on sector level will be launched to provide hands on information to the enterprises.

As regards the pillar concerning the strengthening of the business representative organizations in the CEECs, several management seminars for management personnel are foreseen as well as assistance from partners EU SME representative organizations on individual lobby projects and the implementation of service structures.

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