



“The Voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

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Entrepreneurship: EU should focus on setting up a pro-entrepreneur culture and environment

Brussels, July 30th, 2003. In its contribution to the European Commission’s Green Paper on Entrepreneurship, UEAPME, the European association of crafts and SMEs stressed that the future European plan of action on entrepreneurship should concentrate on creating a more favorable culture and environment for entrepreneurial activities in the European society. UEAPME, which supported the Commission’s initiative to create a reference document on Entrepreneurship at European level, underlines the need to restore the image of entrepreneurs and raise understanding of the advantages of entrepreneurship in the society.

According to the association, currently, there is too much emphasis on the disadvantages and the prejudices that are linked with entrepreneurship in the society. UEAPME argues that the media must play an essential role in the elaboration and the communication of a "new" image of entrepreneurs and their important role in the social-economic framework. “It is necessary to present the entrepreneur, his role and activities in a more positive way” **Hans Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s secretary General said.

Müller argues that creating a new image and a new culture should start at the early stages in school. “In order to promote entrepreneurship and to make the future generation aware of the opportunities that self-employment presents, it is essential to foster entrepreneurship already in primary schools” he said. So far, education systems across Europe have not been very creative on this issue. Contact with entrepreneurship comes too late in the education process and the image that is given of entrepreneurs in the school manuals is rarely positive.

With regard to the creation of an adequate environment, UEAPME calls for more measures allowing and facilitating the continuity of the “traditional” enterprises. While recognising the role of start-ups and “growth companies, the association states that so called “traditional” SMEs, which represent 70% of the total SMEs, should be regarded as the primary source for growth and be promoted accordingly. Traditional SMEs should be supported by the implementation of the measures foreseen in the European Charter for Small Enterprises, which should be the guiding factor of the future Multi-annual Action Plan.

Finally, fearing that the Green Paper and its follow-up will remain a “declaration of good intentions”, as most of the measures proposed in the Paper are of the competence of Member States, UEAPME encourages the setting up of a more compulsory and more targeted approach by the Commission towards the Member States. The Member States should be encouraged to work towards at least a common approach.

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