



“The Voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Small Business Charter: UEAPME says implementation of Charter still deficient in Member States and Accession Countries

Brussels, September 30th, 2003. UEAPME, the European association of crafts and SMEs, says that much work still lies ahead for Member States and accession countries to fully implement the guidelines set out in the European Charter for Small Business adopted in Portugal in 2000.

“Recognizing the importance of the role small companies play in the economy by endorsing the Charter is a first positive step. But implementing the think small first perspective, which is vital to create the right environment for SMEs, is something we still have to strive for in the EU’s enterprise policy” said **Paul Reckinger**, UEAPME’s president at the Conference on the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises in Candidate Countries in Talinn today.

UEAPME’s president was hopeful that the action plan to implement the Commission’s Green Paper on Entrepreneurship would take the principles of the Charter into account. But according to Reckinger, currently the majority of initiatives taken by the Member States and the Commission are set out for big businesses and assume that small undertakings will automatically benefit from these actions. Therefore, UEAPME calls for specific efforts to be undertaken for small businesses, which must be distinct to actions targeted at enterprises in general.

Amongst the actions that have to be taken in favor of European SMEs, UEAPME argues that national tax systems should be aimed at facilitating not only the creation but also the succession of small enterprises. Moreover, a considerable effort has to be done to diminish the red tape at national and Community level. The association also states that all new national and Community business regulations should be thoroughly screened to assess their impact on small enterprises.

In that perspective, UEAPME reminds the Commission of the role it has to play in order to fulfill the Charter. “Despite the fact that most of the measures to be taken in the frame of the Charter are of the competence of national governments, the Commission’s role is more than decisive given that around 70% of legislative decisions affecting businesses are directly or indirectly started at European level” Mr. Reckinger stated.

Finally, with regard to the strengthening of the representation of small business interests, UEAPME urges national governments to ensure that SMEs can directly and indirectly participate in the Social Dialogue and in all tripartite structures through their national SME association in accordance with the Charter.

***** End *****

Note to editors: For further information, please contact Luc Hendrickx on tel +32 2 285 0717

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