



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **UEAPME project shows that respect of SMEs specificities in collective bargaining leads to better performing businesses**

**Brussels, 03rd October 2003.** Futurisme, a project on the Future of Social Dialogue in SMEs, carried out by UEAPME- the European SMEs employers association- reveals that consideration of the particularities of small enterprises in framework agreements helps the whole national business sector to achieve better results. The two-year project that was financed by the European Commission with the participation of SME organisations from all 15 Member States held its closing event in Brussels today.

Amongst its important findings, the project demonstrates that enterprises are more capable of adapting to new challenges and react more flexibly in the labour market in countries in which collective agreements recognise the specificities of large enterprises and SMEs. This implies separate agreements for SMEs and agreements respecting regional productivity differences. On the other hand, SMEs and businesses in general tend to have restricted means of manoeuvring when SMEs specificities are not taken into account in general sectoral agreements.

The project also shows that the content of the Social Dialogue should be widened beyond discussions about wage and time so as to allow firms to face the challenges globalisation has created. On that basis, elements allowing companies to use labour more flexibly according to their needs should be included in the framework contracts. Secondly, a greater flexibility on wage agreements should also be allowed in the Social Dialogue for SMEs. Indeed, due to their specific situation SMEs should have the possibility to apply wage agreements with certain elasticity with regard to the profit of the company and the performance of the worker.

A final conclusion of the project regards the representation of SME organisations in the national Social Dialogue. The findings illustrate that trade unions only tend to recognise the special needs of SMEs in collective agreements in countries where an independent SME employers' organisation participates in the Dialogue.

Besides the innovative findings it has produced, the Futurisme II project was also a three-fold success for SMEs as:

- it has enabled the involvement of branch and regional organisations in the discussion about the future of the social dialogue.
- it has brought SME associations, which are not yet Social Partners, closer to the Social Dialogue in some countries.
- it has allowed the integration of liberal professions into the European Social Dialogue.

\*\*\*\*\* End \*\*\*\*\*

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