



## *“The voice of SMEs in Europe”*

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **UEAPME calls for discussion on the need for a European Regulator in current debate over Services of General Interest**

**Brussels, 30<sup>th</sup> January 2004.** UEAPME, the European SMEs employers’ association has asked the European Parliament and Commission to launch a thorough debate on the creation of a European Regulator to serve as a second instance in enforcing European legislation in the field of Services of General Interest. In a document sent to the European Parliament and Commission, the organisation argues that a serious reflection should be started on this matter, as the existence of a European Regulator could prevent distortions that render the current system deficient.

“The proposal to create a European Regulator would be a conclusive step towards avoiding the Internal Market distortions that exist in a system in which national regulatory authorities are the only instance to interpret European legislation in the field of Services of General Interest.” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME’s Secretary General, today.

According to UEAPME, the current system allows distortions stemming from the differences in interpretation of European legislation by national regulators, the pressure put by economical operators on the national regulators and the slowness of the decision process at the ECJ, amongst other elements. The existence of a European Regulator could fill these shortcomings.

In its Position Paper, UEAPME also pleads for further liberalisation of the provision of Services of General Interest. The SME association argues that the liberalisation of markets has stimulated the modernisation, interconnection and integration of the liberalised sectors and has led to price reductions, higher-quality of services, more choice for consumers and net positive impact on employment, all of which have been very useful for SME activities. However, UEAPME explains that this liberalisation has to be accompanied by an efficient regulatory environment that guarantees the fulfilment of the general interest mission.

UEAPME is against a horizontal European framework directive for the Services of General Interest. Indeed, the common elements that define the concept of Services of General Interest (universality, continuity, quality, affordability and consumer-protection) have different meanings in the different sectors they have to be applied. Hence, a one size fits all solution would prove to be too vague. Secondly, a horizontal framework directive on Services of General Interest would weaken the effectiveness of the current sector and issues specific approach to Community action. Finally, such a horizontal directive would dilute the Community’s focus on its crucial responsibilities (single market and fair competition) and counteract the existing State aid legislation, competition law and Public Procurement directive.

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

**Note to editors:** For further information, please contact Gerhard Huemer on tel +32 2 230 7599

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