



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Vocational Training: UEAPME asks for creation of ERASMUS programme for apprentices

Brussels, 12th February 2004. During his first meeting as the president of the Vocational Training Committee of the European association for crafts and SMEs,- UEAPME- **Mr. Alain Griset** expressed his wish to see the European Commission seriously study the creation of an ERASMUS programme for apprentices in Europe. According to UEAPME, such a programme should be targeted at young people who are at the end of their vocational training apprenticeship and at the beginning of their professional career.

“At the moment, the Commission systematically favours the mobility of students to the detriment of people in vocational training. For this reason we ask the EU to give young workers and people in vocational training an instrument as well-recognised and easily-accessible as ERASMUS is for students” Mr. Griset declared during the meeting. In this context, UEAPME calls for a clear definition of the status of apprentices at European level.

Furthermore, Mr. Griset, who is also the president of the Permanent Assembly of Craft Chambers in France, also explained the necessity of improving career guidance systems in Europe. Indeed, currently the majority of young people are guided into university studies whereas small enterprises and craft professions offer a large number of employment opportunities for qualified labour. “It is therefore necessary to improve the image people have of SME and craft trades which are often perceived as a second or third choice for young people” M. Griset stressed.

Another priority for UEAPME’s Vocational Training Committee in this field will be a better recognition of informal training methods and improved validation of skills acquired on the job. Indeed, it is worthwhile to recall that, given the size and limited human resources of craft enterprises and SMEs, people tend to learn more by experience than via traditional vocational training methods in this type of enterprises.

Finally, UEAPME stresses the need to take account of SMEs and craft trades in the implementation of the European Social Partner’s Framework of Actions for the Lifelong Development of Competencies and Qualifications. It is also important to remember that SME owner-managers need training as much as their employees.

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