



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UEAPME proposes ways to increase SME participation in Eco-Management and Audit Scheme systems

Brussels, 18 February 2004. During the conference on Eco- Management and Audit Scheme-EMAS- organised today in Rome by UEAPME together with its Italian member Confartigianato and DG Environment, proposals emerged on how to make the EMAS Regulation still more SME-friendly during the next revision.

EMAS, a voluntary environmental management system set up by the European Union tried since its relaunch in 2001 to attract SMEs through specific provisions. However, the uptake of the EMAS system by SMEs has not been too successful, particularly in the last year.

“EMAS is currently declining in most EU Member States. Since SMEs represent 99,7% of European enterprises, EMAS must become SME driven if it wants to survive in the future” said Mr. Giorgio Russomanno, Director for Environment and Sustainable Development in Confartigianato and Chairman of the Environment Committee of UEAPME.

Among the proposed measures to improve the uptake of the system by SMEs are:

- to remove the obligation for an external verifier to validate the modifications of the environmental statement each year. This is too time consuming and expensive for SMEs.
- the possibility for businesses to implement EMAS in a staged or gradual approach.
- the real possibility for industrial clusters composed of SMEs to become EMAS registered.
- more visibility and reward for EMAS certified businesses. This could take the form of regulatory relief measures such as reduced controls, faster deliverance of permits etc.
- to promote other incentives such as lower insurance premiums or favourable bank loans for EMAS certified businesses.

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