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"The Voice of SMEs in Europe¹"

UEAPME warns Education Council and Commission that Lisbon goals for Education and Training cannot be achieved without specific support measures for SMEs

In a meeting with European Social Partners, Commissioner Reding and the Troika of the Education Council yesterday, UEAPME, the European SMEs employers' association warned that the urgent increase in private investment called for in the joint interim report to the European Council "Education and Training 2010" can only be realised if more is done to make investing in formal training more attractive to SMEs.

The association stressed the absolute necessity of financial and fiscal incentives for SMEs to invest more in formal training but argued that this alone would not be enough to make lifelong learning a reality in Europe: Specific measures to improve the quality and access to training for SMEs must also urgently be taken.

The association welcomed the importance assigned in the joint interim report to stronger relationships between enterprises and the education and training world, to the teaching of entrepreneurship skills in schools, and to the equality between vocational training and general education.

"The call for vocational training to be treated on a par with general education must now be translated into action" said **Hans-Werner Müller**, secretary general of UEAPME "which means an adequate share of the budget for vocational training in the new generation of EU Education and Training programmes, an ERASMUS-style programme for apprentices and a specific programme for SMEs".

Note to editors: For further information, please contact Emma Stringfellow on tel +32 2 230 7599

¹ UEAPME (**U**nion **E**uropéenne de l'**A**rtisanat et des **P**etites et **M**oyennes **E**ntreprises / **E**uropean **A**ssociation of **C**raft, **S**mall & **M**edium-sized **E**nterprises) is the European Social partner representing craft, trades and SMEs in Europe (EU and countries applying for accession to the EU). It represents, through 75 national and European sectoral federations, over 10 million small enterprises, which employ over 50 million people.