



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Outgoing European Parliament had mixed track record on SME policy, says UEAPME

Brussels, 28 April 2004 During a breakfast meeting with MEPs in Brussels today, UEAPME, the European Crafts and SMEs employers’ association, presented a lukewarm assessment of the outgoing parliament’s work in favour of European crafts and SMEs. “Whilst SMEs got punctual support from a growing number of MEPs supportive of small businesses on important issues such as the reduction of VAT rates on labour intensive services and Basel II, we have to admit that unfortunately, in several cases, the Parliament missed chances to back SMEs and even worse it took decisions against their interests” **Hans-Werner Müller**, Secretary-General of UEAPME, said today.

The association’s main criticism is the lack of systematic business impact assessment on decisions made by the European Parliament (EP). Carrying out independent impact appraisals is essential if the EP wants to keep the three pillars of sustainable development in equilibrium for the EU. In that perspective the organisation also regrets that SME representatives were often not invited to hearings on SME relevant subjects.

More concretely, UEAPME criticises the fact that the EP regularly increased environmental standards beyond the proposal from the Commission and available scientific evidence for many proposals for directives such as the VOC, electronic waste and air quality directive. These decisions have considerably added to the burdens for SMEs. UEAPME also disapproves of the equal treatment directive approved by the departing Parliament. This directive has created unjustified burdens for SME employers, especially through the reversal of burden of proof.

But the outgoing EP also had achievements in SME policy. Indeed, the reappearance of the SME-Intergroup (all-party) and the strengthening of the SME circle (EPP) assisted in getting important issues through for SMEs. For example, the work of the EP was essential in securing the Late Payment Directive, which considerably contributes to easing the financial situation of SMEs. The EP also allocated funding to assist SMEs to participate in the European Standardisation Process.

UEAPME is now hopeful that the new Parliament will adopt an even more SME-friendly posture. In order to do this, the new European Parliament should amongst other things:

- Press for the finalisation of the internal market in the area of taxation and services
- Ensure that impact assessments are carried out systematically and independently

***** End *****

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

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