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Press Release

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Charter for Small Enterprises: frail legal status is barrier to faster and better implementation

Brussels, 29 June 2004 On the occasion of the Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises, UEAPME, the European Crafts and SMEs employers’ association criticised the lack of progress made by Member States in implementing the Charter. The association stressed that despite increased efforts made by Member States to report on the implementation of the Charter, its weak legal status is still the reason for the lack of concrete results for small enterprises in Europe.

Speaking at the event, organised by the Irish Presidency and DG Enterprise to mark the 4th anniversary of the adoption of the Charter, **Hans-Werner Müller**, Secretary General of UEAPME said, “giving the document a more legally binding status would not only compel Governments to do more in favour of small businesses, but it would also be the proof that EU leaders are really supporting small enterprises.”

A survey produced by the national SME member organisations of UEAPME reveals that progress on the ten recommendation points is modest and too disparate. Member States continue to apply the cherry picking policy and focus only on one or two measures.

Nonetheless, UEAPME said it was particularly pleased with the Commission’s launch of the Action Plan on Entrepreneurship although it argues that the Commission must also do more to implement the Charter notably by producing better legislation.

UEAPME argued that in order to improve the implementation of the Charter, the establishment of common evaluation criteria would be necessary to establish an unified picture of the progress being made. The association stated that it would encourage the development of an impact indicator in order to highlight the actions taken to implement the Charter.

Furthermore, the association argued that it would support the European Parliament in encouraging the Commission to propose a multi-annual action plan setting out measures to implement the Charter. Such a plan would be the basis for the launch of more concrete actions, in areas such as standardisation, which would provide good examples of real benchmarking.

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