



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Barroso Commission brings Lisbon back to realism

Brussels, 3 February 2005 The recommendations of the European Commission for a new European Partnership for Growth and Employment gives the Lisbon Strategy the chance to get back on track. Putting the efforts on the real problems of Europe’s economy, which are the lack of competitiveness and growth, makes the whole strategy more realistic and increase its credibility.

“Europe’s SMEs have asked for several year for a stronger focus on economic growth and employment in the framework of the Lisbon Strategy and it seems President Barroso and his new European Commission are finally ready to follow this economic rationalism”, said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General, in his first reaction to the Commission recommendation for the Lisbon Midterm Review.

The SME Association generally welcomes the renewed Lisbon Action Programme with its focus on attractiveness for investors and qualified employees, on a modern approach on innovation and on job creation. With this new approach the Commission overcomes the most important shortcoming of the previous one, which is about everything and nothing. Hence there are some areas, where UEAPME would like to see more efforts to tackle the specific problems of SMEs, like access to finance and new technologies, the remaining barriers at the Internal Market and the administrative burdens imposed by many regulations, which are not SME adequate. Therefore , the concrete Action Plans should focus more on the needs of SMEs, because they are not only the most innovative sector, but also the strongest job engine.

The announcement made by President Barroso to redraft the proposals on the Service Directive and the REACH Directive underlines the willingness of the European Commission to act in accordance with its new priorities and it will contribute to renew the confidence of investors and costumers in the overall strategy.

“The readiness of the new Commission to drawback these very controversial proposals is a clear sign that the messages sent by the business community during the last months were understood and it demonstrates further that the new Commission is heading for a competitive framework, which is balanced and fair to all stakeholder”, welcomes **Müller** the latest developments.

Furthermore, the SME Association sees in the proposals for streamlining the Lisbon Strategy by integrating the existing process into a single and more coherent approach as a useful step to increase the capacity for delivering. A single national action plan with concrete targets and responsibilities as well as the establishment of a Mrs. or Mr. Lisbon will increase the ownership regarding the Lisbon agenda by the national governments and the pressure to deliver.

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Note to editors: For further information, please contact Gerhard Huemer on tel +32 2 230 7599.

Raphael Anspach, Press officer
Tel: +32 2 230 7599/ Fax: +32 472 33 3525
Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com
Web: www.ueapme.com/pressroom