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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Proposed revision will dilute Small Enterprises Charter

Brussels, 15 February 2005 UEAPME, the European association for small and medium business and crafts, has criticised the recommendation, made by the European Commission in its annual report on the Small Enterprises Charter, to include the entrepreneurship-related issues of the Entrepreneurship Action Plan into the Charter. The Commission gave its formal briefing on this year’s annual report today (Tuesday).

“Broadening the scope of the Small Enterprises Charter to include entrepreneurship-related issues will further dilute the Charter and make it even less capable of achieving its aim of improving small business in Europe,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General.

Since its outset however, UEAPME has expressed concern that the ambit of the Charter is too wide to enable a proper focus on small business as the engine of the European economy, which is its stated goal. Against this background, any attempt to broaden the scope of the Charter will necessarily limit its effectiveness.

UEAPME is also disappointed with the lack of focus of the Charter implementation report, as it gives an overview of governmental initiatives that have been taken in the field of both small- and medium-sized businesses, rather than purely small enterprises, which is the aim of the Charter. Specific measures for small enterprises are almost completely absent.

While the report claims that some further progress has been made in the field of Community policies affecting small business, UEAPME is concerned that the pace of progress is still limited. Furthermore, the implementation report is limited by the fact that it is merely concerned with actions in the member states, with no attempt to report on the implementation at EU-level.

Improving the regulatory environment in which SMEs operate needs to be more urgently addressed if the European economy is to be rejuvenated. While impact assessments on new legislation are now part of the political rhetoric, there needs to be a greater commitment to their implementation and assessments on the impact of new legislation on small businesses, in particular, must become standard.

“One concrete initiative that should be put in place, as soon as possible, is the one-stop-shops for business start-ups. Until measures are taken to improve the excessive red tape on small business, the EU will remain at a competitive disadvantage,” concluded Mr Müller.

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