



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation must be more SME focused

Brussels, 16 February 2005 UEAPME, the European association for small and medium business and crafts, has called for small and medium enterprise to be the main focus of the Framework Programme for Competitiveness and Innovation in its position paper on the consultation process.

“The principle ‘*think small first*’ should be the starting point for all considerations under the framework programme,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General. “The fundamental importance of SMEs as the main drivers of EU growth is now an accepted part of the Lisbon Strategy. Against this background, the framework programme must be much more focused on encouraging and assisting small and medium businesses in the field of competitiveness and innovation.”

UEAPME regrets the absence of any real concrete proposals in the framework programme as to how achieve the goals it sets out, namely to improve the competitiveness and growth of the EU economy by orienting it towards innovative, productive, environmental and efficient approaches. The following are some of the initiatives that could be introduced to this end:

- A follow-up to the Go Digital programme to promote technological developments to SMEs
- Measures to improve co-operation between SMEs at national and international level
- The adaptation of existing financial instruments to meet the financing requirements of SMEs

Given the fundamental importance of SMEs in this area, it is particularly disappointing that no reference is made to two documents of utmost importance for enterprise policy in general and small enterprises in particular: the Action Plan on Entrepreneurship and the European Charter for Small Enterprises. The 10 action lines mentioned in the Charter are extremely important to the development of small enterprises in Europe and to the continent’s competitiveness. At EU-level, this Charter should be the guideline for any policy towards enterprises and especially for this Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme.

The European Commission must be congratulated for organising such a comprehensive consultation process on the framework programme in response to the demands of the business community. It should now take on board the recommendations of those actors directly affected by policies in the innovation field,” concluded Mr Müller.

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