



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Rhetoric on Lisbon must be matched by action on SME priorities

- **European Parliament underlines need for SME-focus in Lisbon review**
- **Member States must now take meaningful action to support SMEs**

Brussels, 9 March 2005 UEAPME, the European association for small and medium business and crafts, has welcomed the attention given to SME issues in the debate on the Lisbon Strategy review in the European Parliament today (Wednesday).

“The growing consensus on the fundamental importance of SMEs to the European economy at EU-level is a welcome development,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General. “However, this well-intentioned rhetoric must be matched by meaningful action on the part of Member States to improve the operating environment for SMEs if the Lisbon Strategy is to be a success.”

“Today’s debate has once again underlined that any strategy that does not attempt to realise the potential of Europe’s SMEs, as the main growth generators and innovators in the EU, is a pointless exercise. Refocusing the Lisbon Strategy on jobs and growth is the right approach to take and SMEs must play a central role in this process.”

Member States now have an obligation to deliver on the rhetoric of the EU institutions and implement the necessary reforms to enable European small businesses to resuscitate the European economy. Some specific areas where action is needed include:

- Taking real ownership on the Lisbon Strategy, making the necessary commitments and adding certainty to the implementation process
- Carrying out meaningful impact assessments on the different reforms to assess their impact on SMEs.
- Improving access to finance for small and medium businesses by extending credit guarantee schemes, creating better conditions for self-financing and developing a market for risk capital for SMEs, among other actions.
- Addressing the high costs of cross border tax compliance by introducing the one-stop shop for VAT obligations and agreeing the Home State Taxation Scheme.
- Taking action to enable a greater commitment to R&D by small businesses in the upcoming 7th Framework Programme for R&D, by agreeing a specific budget for SMEs.

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