



## ***“The voice of SMEs in Europe”***

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

#### **Member States must deliver reforms for jobs and growth**

- **Member States must take responsibility for implementing necessary reforms**
- **Lisbon review must remove the barriers faced by SMEs as growth generators**
- **New solution must be found to improve the internal market for services**

**Brussels, 15 March 2005** UEAPME, the European association for small and medium business and crafts, has called on Member States to take ownership of the Lisbon Strategy in its Action Plan for the Lisbon mid-term review, launched in Brussels today (Tuesday) at a conference hosted jointly by European SME groups.

“The Lisbon Strategy is about everything and therefore about nothing,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General. “Therefore, focusing the agenda on economic growth and job creation, as the Commission has proposed to do in the mid-term review, is an important step.”

“The main problem with the Strategy, however, is that everyone is responsible for its implementation and, as a result, nobody takes proper responsibility,” Mr Müller continued.

Member states must take the lead and implement the necessary reforms to facilitate growth, specifically by improving the operating environment for SMEs, including in the following areas:

- Improving the internal market for services by cutting red tape, harmonising quality requirements and ensuring standards from the principle of origin are properly regulated and controlled
- 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.
- Increasing the involvement of the relevant stakeholders, notably the Social Partners, and properly including them in the implementation process through ‘partnerships for reform’.

“Without action, the positive rhetoric is pointless. The review will only be worthwhile if it properly addresses the priorities of SMEs and enables them to fulfill their role as Europe’s main growth generators and innovators,” concluded Mr Müller.

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