



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Solar radiation proposal brought back to reality by Parliament

- **Regulation of health and safety aspects of solar radiation left to Member States**

Brussels, 12 July 2005 The European Parliament has made proposals on controlling exposure to solar radiation more realistic, according to UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, following the approval of amendments to the proposed Directive on optical radiation at the Employment and Social Affairs Committee on Tuesday (12 July).

“Introducing prescriptive obligations at European level on exposure to sunlight would have done nothing to help the EU’s reputation. MEPs have taken a sensible approach to this directive by leaving it up to Member States to decide whether or not more measures are necessary to address the potential risks of solar radiation,” said **UEAPME Secretary General Hans-Werner Müller**.

The European Parliament Employment and Social Affairs Committee approved amendments to the directive today, which make Member States responsible for determining if obligations on employers to assess the health and safety risks of natural sources of optical radiation (i.e. sunlight) are necessary. A previous draft proposed the introduction of onerous and unmanageable risk assessment and action obligations on employers at EU level. UEAPME is calling on the European Parliament to endorse the amendments at plenary session.

“EU level regulations requiring scientific risk assessments and detailed action plans would have been completely impractical and unworkable for the vast majority of affected small businesses and could have opened up a can of worms with regard to legal liability. Thankfully, common sense has prevailed and the parliament has amended a proposal, which could have damaged the credibility of the EU,” continued Mr Müller.

“There is clearly a risk from over-exposure to sunlight but this risk varies dramatically across Europe. Given the risk from exposure to sunlight affects all members of the public when they are outdoors, it would be better addressed by the provision of adequate information both to employees and the general public at national level.”

Employees are the most important resource for most small businesses and it is crucial that they are sufficiently informed to protect themselves against all risks to their health. As a small construction or catering firm has neither the resources nor, more importantly, the expertise to undertake sufficient scientific analysis, it is crucial that national authorities do not shirk their responsibility in this regard.

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EDITORS’ NOTE: UEAPME is the employer’s organisation representing the interests of crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 78 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across the whole of Europe, covering over 11 million enterprises with nearly 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

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