



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Decision on training and education mobility programme welcomed

- **Amendments will increase possibility for trainees to get experience across the EU**
- **Firms to receive grants for sending and receiving apprentices**

Brussels, 13 September 2005 UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, has welcomed changes to the new lifelong learning action programme*, which will greatly increase the prospects for small enterprises to take part in mobility projects in the EU, following a European Parliament Culture and Education Committee decision yesterday (12 September).

“If we are to be successful in encouraging mobility during apprenticeships, it is crucial that the EU programmes are relevant and accessible for SMEs, which account for two-thirds of employment in the Union, and young people in initial vocational training. The parliament’s Culture and Education Committee has to be praised for recognising this in its decision on the lifelong learning action programme,” said **UEAPME Secretary General Hans-Werner Müller**.

“The target of making at least 150,000 placements per year available in enterprises under the mobility programme by 2013 is now a very real prospect, thanks to the changes adopted.”

UEAPME praised the decision to make grants available for businesses for sending or receiving apprentices as part of the EU trainee mobility programme – the Leonardo programme. Previous participation by small firms and apprentices in the programme was limited. Providing grants for these businesses will help create greater opportunities for apprentices to gain experience overseas.

The decision to make specific supporting measures, in addition to funding, available for SMEs, and particularly micro-enterprises, to facilitate their participation in the programme has been strongly welcomed by UEAPME. These practical measures will help both the businesses sending apprentices and those receiving them, and will cover language courses for example.

Guaranteeing individual participation by trainees in the mobility programmes will also greatly relevance of the programme for small businesses. The vast majority of businesses in the EU, over 90%, are micro-enterprises with less than nine employees.

“Providing opportunities for trainees to gain experience overseas is crucial for the development of the EU workforce. Making the forthcoming mobility programmes more inclusive and straightforward for small businesses, is an important step in this regard,” concluded Mr Müller.

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EDITORS’ NOTE: The European Parliament Culture and Education Committee yesterday adopted their report on the Commission proposal for ‘Integrated action programme in the field of lifelong learning, 2007-13’, which included a number of amendments to improve participation in the EU’s education and training mobility programmes, such as the Leonardo programme for trainees.

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