



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Commission urged to ‘follow through’ on proposals for SME policy

- **SME Policy must be focused on small enterprises* to reflect economic reality**

Brussels, 20 September 2005 UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, called on the Commission to deliver on the rhetoric of a new Communication on the future of SME policy a high-level meeting with Enterprise and Industry Commissioner Verheugen yesterday evening (Monday).

“The priorities outlined by the Commission for future SME policy reflect the needs of small firms but this Communication must be more than just another policy document. The Commission must take ownership of the policies outlined. Merely restating broad action areas is not sufficient,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General.

The specific lines of action identified reflect the priorities for SMEs – and support those in the Charter on Small Enterprises – however, there is a need for the Commission to outline concrete proposals on how it aims to realise these priorities.

By adopting the proposed Communication the Commission will accept that it has a role in guiding SME policy in the EU, which is a welcome development. Until now most of the responsibility lay with the Member States, which has yielded mixed results for small businesses.

UEAPME gave a general welcome to the proposed Communication, which is being drafted by the Commission, particularly its inclusive approach to SMEs. The Commission has previously had a tendency to focus on specific, limited groups of enterprises, such as start-ups or gazelles, at the expense of the vast majority of small businesses. However, the need to focus on specifically on small enterprises was stressed.

“Small enterprises – *firms with less than fifty employees – account for the vast majority of SMEs and represent over 96% of all enterprises in Europe. Failing to concentrate on such an important sector ignores the economic realities in the EU,” stated Mr Müller.

The decision by DG Enterprise to consult the affected stakeholders, SME organisations, at such an early stage in the drafting process was praised. For the first time, the stakeholders have been consulted before the Commission’s in-service consultation process. This helps focus the priorities for the proposal from the outset and should become the norm.

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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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