



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Globalisation Summit: Citizens must be shown light at the end of the tunnel for reforms to be embraced

Brussels, 20th October 2005 Europe’s political leaders must address the legitimate anxiety of citizens concerning their social models in order to win back support for the European integration project and the reforms needed to respond to the dual challenges of demographic change and globalisation, according to small and medium business organisation UEAPME in its submission* to the EU Summit on Globalisation.

“This summit is being called to address the growing public disquiet both at perceived ‘European’ economic reforms and at the EU itself. The tendency of Member State governments to shirk responsibility and blame their social and economic problems on the EU has taken its toll: public antipathy towards the European project has never been higher. The time for hiding behind the spectre of a distant EU must surely be over; national governments need to address the real fears of European citizens with regard to European integration, as well as encouraging confidence in the necessary reform process,” said **UEAPME Secretary General Hans-Werner Müller**.

UEAPME has welcomed the new approach, analysing the interrelationship between economic reforms and the social systems in the Member States. There is clearly a public desire to maintain the perceived principles of their social systems and this cannot be ignored. It is therefore time to review the compatibility of different elements of the economic reform agenda (internal market policies, trade policy – WTO talks and competition policy) and the EU integration process with a sustainable social model. This must go hand-in-hand with an assessment of how the social systems themselves should be adapted.

In the context of this analysis on the interdependence of social and economic reforms, UEAPME is calling for:

- greater efforts to define some common principles and aims for social reforms in Europe, such as ‘Flexi-curity’, re-establishing consumer and investor confidence and support for the project of European integration, increasing the involvement of stakeholders (social partners) in the reform process; and
- a European checklist for a review of national social models with regard to their compatibility with a competitive open economy.

“The time for blaming others is long over; Member States must concentrate on highlighting the positive prospects of economic and social reforms to show their citizens that there is light at the end of the tunnel of economic stagnation and spiralling unemployment,” concluded Mr Müller.

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*Submission will available at http://www.ueapme.com/EN/press_positionpapers.shtml from 13h30

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

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