



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Chemical rules made less damaging for small businesses

Brussels, 13 December 2005 EU Competitiveness Ministers have gone some way towards making proposed chemical regulations more manageable for small firms, according to UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, following a compromise reached by the Council today (Tuesday).

“Today’s decision by the Council shows they have recognised the need to balance a high degree of environmental protection with the survival of thousands of small firms in the chemicals sector and related sectors. The original proposals would have driven many SMEs, both formulators and downstream users, out of business but EU Competitiveness Ministers have added a welcome degree of proportionality to the proposals, both in the registration and authorisation phases of the new system,” said **UEAPME Director of Environmental Policy Guido Lena**.

By making the registration of chemicals produced in small quantities that pose no real risk less complicated the Council has made REACH more manageable for small businesses. In addition, the possibilities to opt-out from the One Substance One Registration (OSOR) seem to be more limited than those proposed by the European Parliament’s proposals, which is an improvement for small formulators. UEAPME is calling for more extensive data-sharing however.

“Ultimately, providing for the compulsory sharing of all testing data will be the most effective way to avoid the duplication of testing and counteract the disproportionate cost burden, which would place SMEs at a major competitive disadvantage to large firms. Registration costs for small businesses estimated to be up to 20% of annual turnover, a cost that a small firm cannot absorb. It is therefore crucial that both the Parliament and the Council use the second reading to seriously restrict the use of opt-outs from data-sharing,” continued Mr Lena.

UEAPME also welcomed the decision to reduce the burdens that were introduced to the authorisation stage by the European Parliament. “Shifting the bureaucratic burden from the registration phase to the authorisation phase will not make it any easier for small firms to cope with REACH. It is vital that the livelihood of small firms does not fall victim to horse-trading between different parts of the regulation,” stated Mr Lena.

“The Council has gone some way to making these new chemicals rules manageable for small firms but we are looking to the second reading phase to make progress on the crucial area of data-sharing,” concluded Mr Lena.

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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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