



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Annual SME summit to focus on the European Social Model

Brussels, 5 April 2006. Two weeks after the EU Spring Summit, European SMEs will hold their annual meeting in Graz, Austria, on 7-8 April. Organised by UEAPME, the European SME employers' organisation, the 5th Craft, Trade and SME Summit will focus on “SMEs and the European Social Model”. The agenda will feature interventions by high profile speakers such as the Austrian Minister for Economics and Labour, Martin Bartenstein, and the SME Envoy of the European Commission, Françoise Le Bail.

UEAPME President **Paul Reckinger** will welcome about 100 delegates from 25 European countries to discuss recent and upcoming developments in SME-related policy. “With this year’s Summit, we aim to foster the ongoing debate about the European Economic and Social Model from a small business perspective”, said Mr Reckinger.

Mr Martin Bartenstein, Austrian Minister for Economics and Labour, will greet participants on behalf of the Austrian Presidency of the EU. He will discuss with the audience the results of the recent EU Spring Council and their relevance for SMEs. “We are delighted by the participation of Mr Bartenstein”, continued Mr Reckinger. “It shows that the Austrian Presidency is well inclined towards SMEs and conscious of their importance as actors in the European Social Model.”

Three main items will be at the centre of the Summit agenda:

- A debate on SMEs and the European Social Model as a follow-up to the EU Summit on Globalisation, held on 27 October 2005 in Hampton Court Palace, UK;
- A discussion on the implementation of the “flexicurity” concept in SMEs with a high representative from the Trade Unions, Mr Reiner Hoffman, Deputy General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation;
- An intervention by Ms Françoise Le Bail, SME Envoy and Deputy Director General of DG Enterprise at the European Commission, on Saturday 8 April. Ms Le Bail will speak about the new support measures by the European Commission for Crafts and SMEs.

“We hope to have a fruitful and lively debate both with our guest speakers and between UEAPME members, and we thank in advance the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ) for their support in organising this event. I am sure participants will enjoy the Summit, the typical Austrian hospitality and last but not least the city of Graz, a charming municipality with a great cultural heritage”, concluded Mr Reckinger.

***** END *****

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

The Craft, Trade and SME Summit is an annual event featuring high-ranking representatives from UEAPME and its member organisations, together with a number of external keynote speakers from the EU institutions and EU member states.

Further information: Gerhard Huemer, Director of Economic and Fiscal Policy, Tel: +32 2 230 7599

Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer

Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com Web: www.ueapme.com/pressroom/