



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

SMEs must stay at the heart of Commission actions

Brussels, 12 June 2006. Efforts by the European Commission to recognise and foster the role of SMEs in the European economy were praised today (Monday) by UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation. UEAPME Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller** spoke during a panel discussion at the EU “SME Day” revising the recent Commission actions in the SME field.

Enterprises in Europe employ on average eight workers, with one third of the overall employment in the EU coming from micro-enterprises, i.e. SMEs with less than ten staff members. SMEs largely dominate the services sector, which is the most competitive and dynamic area of the EU economy nowadays. Against this background, it is apparent that legislative efforts at EU level should be directed towards small businesses, and this is more and more often the case.

“We are glad that the European Commission has finally recognised the importance of small businesses for Europe and is putting in place policies that go in the right direction in this respect”, said Mr Müller. “The launch of the ‘SME Days’ throughout Europe is an excellent initiative that brings together small businesses and policymakers for the benefit of the European economy.”

Mr Müller stressed the beneficial actions taken by the Commission on several issues, namely:

- The new EC approach on innovation, which recognises the specificities of the process for SMEs in programmes such as CIP and the Research and Development and Innovation (R&D&I) Framework in the State Aid Action Plan;
- Innovative financial instruments such as JEREMIE, which are managed by the European Investment Fund and specifically designed to support micro and small and medium enterprises;
- The efforts towards the completion of the EU internal market in services;
- The initiatives aiming at reducing red tape for small businesses, by analysing the existing legislation and thoroughly assessing new proposals for their impact on SMEs.

“In recent times, the European Commission has showed a steady support for SMEs and a good understanding of the challenges they face. This has brought about a whole new set of measures that are specifically geared towards SMEs”, continued Mr Müller.

“We trust that the European Commission will continue using this approach during the next years, and we look forward to the implementation phase, when hopefully SMEs will be able to draw concrete benefits out of this carefully drafted legislative framework”, he concluded.

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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.

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