



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

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Small Business Charter needs a fresh start

- **Recent and accurate data are required**
- **Specificities of micro and small enterprises should be retained**

Brussels, 14 June 2006. Future actions in the context of the European Charter for Small Enterprises should be based on recent and accurate data and focus on the specificities of micro and small enterprises, according to UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation. Speaking at a conference on the Charter organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU today (Wednesday), UEAPME Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller** outlined the views and expectations of European SMEs on the Charter.

The lack of up-to-date information on the reality of European SMEs is a primary cause of concern. “The EC Observatory of European SMEs ceased operations after producing the 2003-2004 reports”, said Mr Müller. “The resulting shortage of information means that current European SME policies may be based on less than satisfactory statistics, which might lead in return to less than satisfactory policy outputs.”

Mr Müller insisted on the need to retain the small and micro-businesses dimension of the Charter, which was “somewhat diluted” during the process. Both the European Commission and the EU Member States failed in this respect. “The specific challenges faced by micro-enterprises call for a tailored policy response. We cannot accept the current ‘one size fits all’ approach towards such companies, which is not in line with the ‘think small first’ principle. New legislation should always start from the perspective of smaller businesses, which must be the rule rather than the exception in the EU law-making process”, he continued.

UEAPME also warned against cherry picking some of the areas in which the European Charter for Small Enterprises foresees support measures for small businesses. All the ten key areas should be treated equally in order to fulfil the objectives of the Charter. Moreover, it encouraged a better involvement of business organisations in the national evaluation and reporting phases on the implementation of the Charter.

“The Small Business Charter needs a fresh start in order to have a real impact on European small businesses”, concluded Mr Müller. “We trust that the European Commission will be able to inject new life in it by means of recent data and a renewed commitment towards small businesses.”

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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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