



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

REACH: EP Environment Committee vote delivers mixed results for SMEs

Brussels, 10 October 2006. UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation, mildly welcomed the results of today’s vote at the European Parliament on REACH, the EU regulation on chemical substances. According to UEAPME, the Environment Committee showed consideration for European SMEs by clarifying clauses on cost sharing and approving proposals facilitating the implementation of REACH by small businesses. Furthermore, MEPs appropriately shunned dangerous plans to extend the deadline for data liberalisation from 10 to 15 years.

The Committee, however, overlooked a crucial issue for SMEs by rejecting calls for an independent evaluation of the “opt-outs” from the OSOR (One Substance One Registration) principle. It also failed to introduce simplified procedures for small businesses, which would have allowed them to notify specific uses of substances directly through the European Chemicals Agency. Additional requirements approved by the Parliament, which foresee notification for some substances in articles below one tonne and compulsory chemical safety reports/assessments for substances in articles below ten tonnes, will add an unneeded layer of bureaucracy and lead to extra costs for SMEs, warned UEAPME.

“Today’s vote on REACH entails some positive elements for European small businesses, albeit not quite to the extent we hoped it would”, said **Guido Lena**, UEAPME Director for Environmental Policy. “While the latest rules on cost sharing and data liberalisation are to be welcomed, the newly introduced requirements on notification and chemical safety reports/assessments for substances produced in smaller quantities invalidate all efforts made towards assisting SMEs in implementing REACH.”

Regarding registration procedures, UEAPME regretted that the European Chemicals Agency will ultimately not be responsible for assessing exceptions to the OSOR (One Substance One Registration) principle. It welcomed, however, rules introducing compulsory notification both to the Agency and to downstream users for companies that do not intend to register a substance. Clarifications on the way registration costs are to be shared, i.e. according to each party’s production or import volume, were also greeted with satisfaction.

UEAPME insisted on the need to ensure that European small businesses are properly assisted during the implementation of REACH, both at Member State and at Community level. A number of measures were introduced by the Parliament to this end, including help on data collection and support networks for SMEs – unfortunately, burdensome procedures on substances produced in smaller quantities will nullify their benefits and put a further strain on SMEs working with chemicals in Europe.

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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 81 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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