



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Services Directive must now clear the implementation hurdle

- **“Single points of contact”, screening and notification requirements key issues for SMEs**
- **UEAPME to closely monitor national transposition processes**

Brussels, 15 November 2006. Today’s vote on the Services Directive at the European Parliament’s plenary session, which left the Council common position text unaltered, was welcomed by UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation. UEAPME praised the European Parliament for showing good judgment in approving the reviewed Directive and insisted on the need to secure a swift implementation, urging Member States to prioritise the transposition of the text into national law.

“The European Parliament’s vote marks the end of almost three years of negotiations over a complex and controversial piece of legislation, and shows how far the European institutions can go when they are willing to listen to requests and comments from European stakeholders. However, efforts to open up the services market in Europe should continue”, said **Hans-Werner Müller**, UEAPME Secretary General. “It is now up to Member States to abide to the compromise text they approved at the European Council, and ensure that it is promptly put into practice”, he continued.

According to UEAPME, an open and productive discussion led to the adoption of an improved – albeit not perfect – set of concrete measures, which guarantee workable solutions on the most contentious issues while at the same time keeping the spirit of the initial Commission proposal.

A number of rules will be particularly beneficial for European SMEs if properly applied at national level. Clauses setting up “single points of contact” in each Member State, for instance, will support small businesses operating at national and cross-border level. UEAPME called for the involvement of all stakeholders, particularly of national business organisations, in setting up these “one-stop shops”.

Other specific small businesses’ concerns were also addressed by the common position. For example, the Directive now allows Member States to keep their regulations on the establishment of retail stores and the prohibitions to sell below cost, both of which were of the utmost importance for small firms and retailers. On the other hand, screening and notification requirements will ensure that national legislation is assessed for compliance and amended when necessary, thus removing pointless red tape while at the same time giving Member States the possibility to protect their general interest. UEAPME welcomed these requirements as a means to improve access to cross-border services markets for SMEs.

“If the Directive is not rapidly put into effect, years of delicate negotiations will be wasted and the wording of the text as it stands will ring hollow. UEAPME and its member organisations will now closely monitor the national transposition processes. We trust that Member States will act without delay in this respect and we look forward to analysing the real impact of their efforts”, concluded Mr Müller.

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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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