



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

#### **Waste Directive: Committee vote leaves crucial issues unsolved**

- **Waste, “by-product” definitions not clarified – 5-step waste hierarchy reduces flexibility**
- **Improved stakeholders’ involvement, increased SME user-friendliness positive points**

**Brussels, 28 November 2006.** The European Parliament’s Environment Committee failed to shed some light on key features and definitions of the Waste Framework Directive when voting on the text today (Tuesday), according to UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation. The Committee approved a report that leaves the definition of “by-products” to forthcoming guidelines instead of integrating a workable explanation in the Directive itself, and adopted a complicated 5-step system for the so-called “waste hierarchy”, which replaces the previous 3-step scheme. MEPs, on the other hand, took a reasonable stance on stakeholders’ involvement and user-friendliness for SMEs.

“The EP Committee lost a good chance to spell out common and effective definitions for ‘waste’ and ‘by-products’, the lack of which is creating confusion, legal uncertainty and burdensome extra workloads for European SMEs”, said **Guido Lena**, UEAPME Director for Environmental Policy. “Rules on involving stakeholders and improving ease of use for small businesses must be welcomed, but should be accompanied by greater precision on the subject matter of the Directive”, he continued.

According to the report voted today, the European Commission will be required to provide guidelines on the legal definition of “by-product”. Whether by-products fall or not within the scope of the Directive is a key issue for SMEs, which for the time being cannot anticipate the impact of the text on their daily business operations. UEAPME deems the EP solution to be sub-optimal, as external guidelines do not provide enough legal certainty and the timeframe for adoption and enforcement is at present unclear.

Regarding the definition of “waste”, UEAPME insisted on it being restricted to substances and objects that cannot be rendered economically useful in their existing form without pre-treatment. As far as the “waste hierarchy” system is concerned, UEAPME expressed worries that it may decrease flexibility in applying the scheme, which was initially designed as a non-rigid prescription.

UEAPME conversely welcomed amendments aiming at involving stakeholders, which were integrated into several articles of the Directive. It was also pleased by the Committee approving rules enforcing the harmonised application of the European Waste Code, which increases user-friendliness for SMEs.

“There is definitely room for improvement on the wording of the Waste Directive as it stands after today’s vote. We hope that the Parliament Plenary and Member States will work towards a more efficient text setting good definitions and ground rules for all related EU pieces of legislation”, concluded Mr Lena.

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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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