



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

New UEAPME President Georg Toifl outlines priorities for his mandate

- **SMEs’ status in new Member States, undeclared work, energy policy on the spotlight**

Brussels, 4 December 2006. The General Assembly of UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation, unanimously elected **Georg Toifl**, a successful entrepreneur and Chairman of the Crafts and Trades Division of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), as new President on Friday 1 December. In his acceptance speech Mr Toifl announced that his two-year mandate, which will start on 1 January 2007, would concentrate on strengthening small businesses and SME organisations in new Member States, as well as focus on undeclared work and on energy policy.

“Integrating small businesses and SME organisations from new Member States is the key to a successful European internal market”, said UEAPME’s newly elected President. “Strong and long-lasting SMEs should become the backbone of new Member States’ economy. Moreover, the legal and political framework for national business associations must be strengthened to allow them to become a representative actor in civil society and provide high quality membership services to crafts and SMEs in the EU10”, he continued.

Mr Toifl also stressed the need to improve the regulatory framework to fight undeclared work, which is particularly disadvantageous for SMEs in labour-intensive sectors as it creates unfair competition. Moreover, it is detrimental to the balance of social protection systems and to national budgets due to the lack of fiscal revenue it generates. Tax and benefit systems should be designed to transform undeclared work into regular employment as much as possible, for instance by tackling non-wage labour costs and income taxes, which are often the driving force behind the recourse to informal economy. Instruments focusing on private employment are lagging behind and are urgently needed in this respect.

As far as the energy markets are concerned, Mr Toifl expressed concerns that the existing players are hampering rather than promoting competition in the sector, with SMEs being burdened by excessive prices and a lack of choice on the range of energy suppliers available. Private monopolies in the energy sector should be avoided as much as possible, and fair treatment for small business consumers should be ensured.

“UEAPME’s track record during the Presidency of Paul Reckinger, who I personally want to thank for his efforts in the past four years, has been outstanding. I hope my term of office will be equally successful in dealing with our work priorities. I look forward to working with the Secretariat, the Board of Directors, all UEAPME members and of course the EU institutions in this respect”, concluded Mr Toifl.

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EDITORS’ NOTE: Georg Toifl is a successful entrepreneur leading his family business in the laundry sector in Vienna, currently employing a workforce of 155. From 1995 to 2000 he served as Vice President of the Vienna Economic Chamber. In June 2000 he was appointed as Chairman of the Crafts and Trades Division of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), and is as such the highest representative of Austrian crafts and trades. A biographical note on Mr Toifl, including his CV and high-resolution pictures, is available at the following link: http://www.ueapme.com/EN/press_events_061201_toifl.shtml

UEAPME is the employers’ 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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