

Joint Press Statement



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ENHANCING SUPPLY CHAIN SECURITY: EUROPEAN BUSINESS ASSOCIATIONS SUGGEST RECONSIDERING THE PROPOSAL

Brussels, 11 December 2006 – The European business organisations EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME call for a serious reconsideration of the EU proposal for a regulation on enhancing Supply Chain Security ahead of tomorrow’s meeting between the European Parliament and Transport Commissioner Jacques Barrot. The three organisations say they are very critical of this proposal, principally because of the cost and administrative burdens it generates which seem disproportionate, especially for SMEs.

LAUDABLE AIM BUT SERIOUS DRAWBACKS OF PROPOSAL

While the aim of the proposal – in the general sense of improving security – is laudable, EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME regret the fact that measures already in place in the different sectors were overlooked. They also voice concerns about the disproportionate compliance costs the proposal would trigger for European businesses. It has been estimated that the cost of implementing the security measures could be 130.000 EUR per year for SMEs.

Concerns are also raised on the actual terms and scope of the proposal, which are extremely unclear and do not warrant a single EU voice amongst Member States, which the fight against terrorism requires. The organisations want to avoid 27 different systems from developing – a concern shared by Ms Hennis-Plasschaert, the EP’s rapporteur. Ms Hennis-Plasschaert sent a letter to Commissioner Jacques Barrot on 4 December, stressing that a level playing field for all companies as well as for different transport modes should be guaranteed by EU legislation.

STEPS FORWARD: LAUNCH NEW DEBATE, TAKE EXISTING SECURITY MEASURES INTO ACCOUNT AND ENSURE MUTUAL RECOGNITION, RAISE AWARENESS AND TRAIN

According to EUROCHAMBRES, EuroCommerce and UEAPME it must be guaranteed that any measures taken

- are coherent with, and complementary to, existing legislation,
- distort the free flow of goods as little as possible,
- are proportional to the risks of the sector or transport mode covered,

- and justify extra cost to be imposed on the business sector through substantial gains in security.

The three organisations believe that the proposal does not fulfil these criteria and therefore urge for the proposal to be seriously reconsidered. Ms Hennis-Plasschaert's letter will hopefully give a new breath to the discussion and lead to more consultation with all relevant stakeholders.

Meanwhile, the three organisations would like to encourage the setting up of awareness-raising initiatives, such as sharing of best practices or trainings for SMEs.

BACKGROUND

The Commission's proposal of 27 February 2006 aims to improve the security of road, rail and inland waterway freight against terrorist attacks. It sets up a scheme that enables Member States to award the "secure operator" status to operators in the supply chain, who meet a set of specific requirements.

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EuroCommerce represents the retail, wholesale and international trade sectors in Europe. Its membership includes commerce federations and companies in 29 European countries. Commerce is the closest link between industry and the 480 million consumers across Europe. It is a dynamic and labour-intensive sector, which plays a significant role in the European economy, generating 13% of the EU's GDP through 5.5 million companies. 95% of these are small enterprises.

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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.