



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

EC roadmap on energy is an ambitious but much needed step forward

- **Completing the European internal market for energy a key priority for SMEs**
- **Costs and benefits of efficient use of energy, renewable sources to be properly assessed**

Brussels, 10 January 2007. UEAPME, the European SME employers’ organisation, welcomed the communication “An energy policy for Europe” released by the European Commission today (Wednesday). UEAPME was particularly pleased by the communication’s wording on improving the EU internal market for energy by “unbundling” production from distribution and introducing stronger, EU-wide regulatory control measures. Furthermore, UEAPME said it was favourable in principle to the goals of increasing energy efficiency and the use of renewable sources of energy.

“A serious lack of competition and private monopolies limiting the range of suppliers have stifled the creation of a truly European internal market for energy so far. European households and small businesses are the hardest hit by the current state of affairs. Today’s communication is a step in the right direction on the way to a functioning internal market for energy in the EU”, said UEAPME’s newly elected President **Georg Toifl**.

Mr Toifl insisted on the importance of increasing competitiveness in the energy market as a key short-term priority towards a comprehensive energy policy overhaul. According to UEAPME, separating energy production from distribution networks is likely to prevent discrimination from large private companies and increase competition on the market. Mr Toifl also stressed the need for measures to improve cross-border infrastructures and interconnections. He welcomed the Commission’s proposals to achieve effective regulation in the energy sector, but warned that only a strong and independent regulatory body with Community-level competences will ensure a level playing field, increase policy co-ordination and make cross border trade in energy work in practice.

Regarding energy efficiency, UEAPME emphasised the potential of energy-saving products and technologies as drivers for innovation, and highlighted the role small businesses can play in this respect. A better regulatory environment, however, is a key pre-condition to maximise SMEs’ contribution. Market failures in financing innovative SMEs should be properly addressed, and “lead markets” defining higher standards of energy efficiency should be fostered as much as possible in order to further improve the EU’s leading edge on energy efficiency.

The same innovative approach should be encouraged for renewable energies. UEAPME agreed on the strategic goal of diversifying the energy mix to include a fair share of renewable sources, but warned that the costs of such a shift must be fairly distributed and that market forces, rather than subsidies, should determine the most successful and efficient forms of renewable energy.

Finally, UEAPME encouraged Member States to ensure a proper follow up to the communication. “The goals and plans set by the European Commission are ambitious but justified by the current state of play in the energy sector. We trust that Member States will take a responsible stance and work together for an EU-wide solution, rather than indulge in protecting their national vested interests”, concluded Mr Toifl.

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EDITORS’ NOTE: 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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