



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Commission veteran Albrecht Mulfinger receives first “Protypos” award

Brussels, 4 May 2007. The first NORMAPME “Protypos – personality of the year” award was assigned in Brussels yesterday (Thursday). The award celebrates and recognises the activities of personalities who played a significant role in promoting the cause of SMEs in the standardisation arena. The Protypos 2007 prize went to Mr Albrecht Mulfinger, who retired in 2006 after a long and successful career in the European Commission. During the award ceremony, UEAPME Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller** praised Mr Mulfinger, a fellow German national, for his efforts towards supporting European SMEs, while recalling his main professional achievements and their long-standing personal relationship.

During his time at the European Commission, Mr Mulfinger was in charge of developing and managing SME support instruments in areas such as access to finance, European Research programmes, technical standards, public procurement and trans-national activities. Mr Mulfinger was also in charge of the organisation of the 1994 Berlin Conference on Crafts and Small Enterprises. Moreover, he played a key role in the set-up of NORMAPME, UEAPME’s sister organisation protecting crafts’ and SMEs’ interests in the European standardisation system. European crafts and SMEs would have never been able to participate in the standardisation process without public support. Mr Mulfinger recognised this basic truth and acted accordingly, laying the foundations of what became NORMAPME.

“I cannot think of a better man than Albrecht Mulfinger to receive the Protypos award, hopefully the first of a long series”, said Mr Müller. *“Throughout his entire career, he was a living example of commitment and earnestness, a great interlocutor that over the years also became a close friend. His vision was instrumental in the setup of NORMAPME, and his dedication was one of the driving forces that led it past its teething pains.”*

Mr Müller’s comments were echoed by **Loucas Gourtsoyannis**, NORMAPME Director: *“Mr Mulfinger has always been a convinced supporter of the importance of SME participation in the standardisation process, as well as of the need to make standards easier for SMEs. We are very grateful to him for that”,* he said.

Mr Müller then went on to explain the rationale behind the Protypos award, which is shaped like an Attic amphora, one of the most popular amphora designs in ancient Greece. In those times, amphorae were increasingly in use for transport, storage and management of goods, which could be measured not only by weight but also by number of containers. Amphorae were thus one of the first volume standards, facilitating trade thanks to their mutually recognised value. NORMAPME therefore chose the shape of an amphora for its Protypos prize due to its symbolic meaning.

Both Mr Müller and Mr Gourtsoyannis concluded by expressing their trust that Mr Mulfinger’s career would serve as an example for his successors, and their wish to award the Protypos prize to many more outstanding personalities in the years to come.

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EDITORS’ NOTES: 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. More information: <http://www.ueapme.com>

NORMAPME is an international non-profit association created in 1996 with the support of the European Commission, under the full name of the “European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium- Sized Enterprises for Standardisation”. NORMAPME is the unique European organisation focused on small enterprise interests in the European standardisation system. Its members represent over 11 million enterprises in all European countries, including all EU and EFTA member states. More information: <http://www.normapme.com>

Further information: Loucas Gourtsoyannis, NORMAPME Director, Tel. +32 2 282 05 30

Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer

Email: pressooffice@ueapme.com, Web: www.ueapme.com/pressroom/