



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Council agreement on Waste Directive leaves unsolved issues on the table

- Quantitative targets and deadlines rightly eliminated from the compromise text
- Status of companies occasionally dealing with waste unclear; stakeholders’ involvement far too weak

Brussels, 29 June 2007. The political agreement on the “Waste Directive” reached yesterday (Thursday) by the Environment Council went in the right direction but stopped short of answering to small businesses’ concerns, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation. The Environment Ministers rightly scrapped unworkable and aleatory EU-wide waste quantitative targets, which would have been disproportionately burdensome for smaller businesses. However, the compromise failed to clarify the status of small companies dealing with non-hazardous waste on an occasional basis, and left important decisions on technical aspects to meetings taking place behind closed doors with no stakeholders’ involvement.

“The Council took a sensible decision in avoiding a quantitative target-setting exercise”, commented UEAPME Director for Environmental Affairs **Guido Lena**. *“On the other hand, small businesses irregularly transporting waste run the risk of being subject to the same rules of larger companies running waste management as their core function. This defies reason”*, he continued.

UEAPME had repeatedly called for clauses simplifying bureaucracy for undertakings sporadically disposing of waste, which is not a result of their main economic activity. This would have ensured a certain degree of flexibility in applying the Waste Directive to smaller businesses. Unfortunately, the European Parliament and the European Council have failed to react appropriately to this request so far.

Moreover, the Waste Directive leaves a number of procedural decisions and definitions to be decided at a later stage, with the help of a committee made up of representatives from Member States and from the European Commission. UEAPME had called for an improved involvement of all stakeholders, including SMEs – a proposal that was backed by the European Parliament in first reading but not taken into account by the Council’s political agreement.

The consensus text will now go back to the European Parliament for a second reading. *“We hope that the Council will maintain its position on quantitative targets, which were inserted at the last minute by the Parliament and are not backed by any kind of impact assessment study, and call on the Parliament to insist on a better stakeholder involvement. The text as it stands can definitely be enhanced to better respond to the reality of European crafts and SMEs”*, concluded Mr Lena.

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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.

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