"The voice of SMEs in Europe"

Press Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Parliament's report puts SMEs at the heart of Single Market

Brussels, 6 September 2007. UEAPME, the European crafts and SME employers' organisation, warmly welcomed the adoption of the "Toubon report" on the Single Market Review at the European Parliament's plenary in Strasbourg last Tuesday (4 September). The text, which was agreed upon by a large majority, aims to close the gap between the potential and the reality of the Single Market. UEAPME was particularly pleased by the focus placed on promoting the role of SMEs through the creation of a business-friendlier environment.

"A well-functioning internal market is fundamental to encourage the sustainable growth of crafts and SMEs and enable them to express their innovation potential. Burdensome regulatory barriers preventing SMEs from taking full advantage of the single market must be swiftly removed, and we are pleased to see that the European Parliament is going exactly in this direction", said UEAPME Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller**.

Support for SMEs was clearly prioritised by MEPs as a means to reinforce the Single Market. Several concrete measures were identified in the report, touching both SMEs operating locally and those active internationally.

One of the main channels identified by the EP is the reduction of administrative costs for businesses, in particular for smaller undertakings. Furthermore, MEPs clearly stated that a better implementation and enforcement of legislation is essential to provide the legal stability and predictability needed by SMEs to thrive. UEAPME completely agrees with the Parliament's stance on both issues.

The Toubon report also touches the sensitive argument of SMEs' access to public procurement, on which UEAPME expressed concerns in the past months. The EP encourages Member States to improve the current state of affairs, perfectly in line with UEAPME's requests. In this respect, the existing imbalance between European SMEs and those based in the EU's main international trading partners, most of which asked and obtained the exclusion of SMEs from the scope of the WTO Agreement on Public Contracts, must be redressed.

Finally, UEAPME welcomed the reference made to the final declaration of the 4th European Conference on Craft and Small Enterprises, which was held in Stuttgart on 16 and 17 April 2007.

"The European Parliament has laid down the theoretical foundations of a successful approach to the Single Market. We trust that the European Commission will take notice of this important step forward, and we hope that all institutions will act accordingly when confronted with important policy decisions in the coming months", concluded Mr Müller.

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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 84 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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