



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Statement**

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

## **European Commission takes sensible stance on migration issues**

**Brussels, 24 October 2007.** UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation, welcomed the two initiatives launched by the European Commission yesterday (Tuesday) to facilitate access to the European labour market for highly skilled migrants and to provide a common set of rights to all third-country workers already admitted and legally working in a Member State. According to UEAPME, a step-by-step harmonisation of criteria and procedures at European level is the correct strategy in such a sensitive policy area, while respecting the responsibility of Member States to decide on the number of immigrants to be admitted from third countries.

Commenting on the EC-suggested “Blue Card” for highly skilled immigrants, Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller** said: *“The European Commission rightly decided to tackle the issue of legal migration focusing on certain categories of employees. A sector-by-sector approach, which UEAPME favours and requested several times, is crucial to ensure that Europe can benefit more from legal migration in the coming years.”*

UEAPME also insisted, however, on the need to tackle the high unemployment rates in most of the European Union’s Member States at the same time and with the same energy. *“Improving the integration in the labour market of the unemployed, which are an untapped source of talent, should remain high on the list of priorities”*, stated Mr Müller.

As far as third-country workers’ rights are concerned, UEAPME fully backed the European Commission’s aims to guarantee basic socio-economic rights on an equal footing with Member States’ own nationals. *“Employees cannot and should not be discriminated on the grounds of nationality when it comes to working conditions, salary and social security”*, reaffirmed Mr Müller.

\*\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*\*

**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.

Further information: Ralf Drachenberg, Social Policy Advisor, Tel. +32 2 230 7599

Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer,  
Email: [pressooffice@ueapme.com](mailto:pressooffice@ueapme.com), Web: [www.ueapme.com/pressroom/](http://www.ueapme.com/pressroom/)