



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

High-level event to gather SME representatives and EU policymakers

- **State Aid reform, energy and climate change, better regulation on the agenda**

Brussels, 5 November 2007. UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation, is pleased to announce the first “SME Policy Dialogue” that will take place in Brussels in the premises of the European Parliament on 8 November in the afternoon. The event is organised in collaboration with the SME Intergroup and the support of the EPP-ED group in the EP. It will feature representatives from UEAPME member organisations discussing with high-ranking policymakers from the European Parliament and the European Commission. The SME Policy Dialogue will be opened by a keynote speech on State Aid by Commissioner Neelie Kroes, followed by two panel discussions on energy and climate change and on better regulation.

“A frank and open exchange of ideas is crucial to ensure that the policy challenges ahead are properly addressed and hopefully solved”, said **Georg Toifl**, UEAPME President. *“The SME Policy Dialogue is an excellent opportunity in this respect, and its remarkable speakers’ list shows that Parliamentarians and Commissioners are concerned with improving SME policy as much as we are”,* he continued.

The European State Aid reform will be the subject of Commissioner Kroes’ keynote address. The ambitious and far-reaching plan to simplify and modernise State aid rules won UEAPME’s support from the very beginning. *“The ‘less and better targeted aid’ principle is the key to reduce the market-distortive effects of State aid and redirect assistance from national champions and industrial dinosaurs to smaller, more innovative realities”,* commented Mr Toifl. *“We appreciate Commissioner Kroes’ efforts in this direction, and we are glad that she will be able to discuss the State Aid Action Plan in detail with our members.”*

Two panel discussions with UEAPME representatives and MEPs will follow:

- The new energy and climate change policies will be discussed in the first panel. The lack of competition in the energy sector is a key concern for SMEs, which are often left with no choice on their energy supplies. Moreover, SMEs can deliver effectively on energy efficiency and greenhouse gas reduction only if their needs are properly taken into account and their innovation potential maximised. Opportunities and threats for SMEs in this vital policy area will be assessed by Industry Committee MEPs Giles Chichester (EPP/ED) and Claude Turmes (Greens/EFA), together with UEAPME experts on environmental, economic and construction policy.
- Better regulation will take centre stage in the second panel discussion. Rather than focusing on the theoretical concept, however, the SME Policy Dialogue will analyse two concrete policy examples. The ongoing debate on company law and accounting standards will be the first case, and a discussion on the “new approach” on marketing of products will follow. Internal Market Committee MEP Marianne Thyssen (EPP/ED) will speak on the first subject, while her Committee colleague Toine Manders MEP (ALDE) will elaborate on the second. Experts in legal affairs and standardisation from UEAPME and NORMAPME will present the SME perspective.

UEAPME and the EPP/ED look forward to welcoming 120 participants from different sectors. *“We hope to have a fruitful and lively debate both with our speakers and between UEAPME members, and we thank Mr Otmar Karas MEP, Chairman of the SME Intergroup, for his support in organising this event”,* concluded Mr Toifl.

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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.

More information on the SME Policy Dialogue, including the full programme and registration form in four languages, can be found at: http://www.ueapme.com/EN/press_events_071108_sme_policy_dialogue.shtml

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