



## “The voice of SMEs in Europe”

### Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

## Report shows SMEs are active promoters of diversity and non-discrimination

### • UEAPME unveils compendium at the “European Year of Equal Opportunities for All” closing event

**Brussels, 19 November 2007.** Crafts and SMEs are well aware of the importance of promoting diversity and non-discrimination, not only from a pure economic perspective but first and foremost because they are socially responsible actors who are well embedded in the local community. This was the message brought forward by UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation, at the closing ceremony of the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All in Lisbon today (Monday). On this occasion, UEAPME unveiled a 60-page compendium collecting about 50 good practices carried out by its members and individual small businesses all over Europe, showing that crafts and SMEs are taking effective actions in the field of diversity and in the fight against all forms of discrimination, be it on gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability or sexual orientation (1).

*“European crafts and SMEs are conscious that discrimination is simply not acceptable in the workplace and in our society as a whole, and they act accordingly on a daily basis”,* said UEAPME Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller**. *“However, their ‘silent actions’ are often left unnoticed. The compendium we are releasing today is both a testimony of SMEs’ involvement and an awareness-raising tool on their activities.”*

The “UEAPME Compendium of good practices of diversity and non-discrimination initiatives in European Crafts, SMEs and their organisations” presents a selection of the countless different approaches and initiatives carried out across Europe, the vast majority of which took place at regional and local level. The choice to focus on a specific ground depends very much on the national or regional situation. However, the general trend in crafts and SMEs is to rather deal with the topic of diversity in a broad sense and by tackling multiple discriminations. The activities of our members had often several objectives, including prevention, dealing with prejudice and stereotypes, exchange of experiences with the most common being awareness raising, integration and employability. A great variety of tools was used, including some very innovative ones such as a work calendar with religious holidays from all beliefs.

The report demonstrates that SMEs and their organisations have various motivations to be active on the issue of diversity and non-discrimination. However, certain elements were highlighted by nearly all respondents as drivers for their involvement, for instance shortages of specific skills and competences, high levels of unemployment for certain groups (young, women, older people) even in areas with a general low unemployment rate, CSR-related reasons and an increasing number of immigrant population, which are potential employees but also potential customers and clients. The results also showed that UEAPME members, while carrying out many activities by themselves, also use every possible form of cooperation, be it together with other employers’ organisations, trade unions and public authorities or by taking part in wider national campaigns or initiatives.

*“The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All has been an excellent opportunity to showcase the involvement and the ‘hands on’ approach of crafts and SMEs for diversity and non-discrimination. However, there is still a long way to go before the mindset of people will change. This cannot be achieved primarily with new regulations but with more awareness-raising activities towards the society, employers and employees, and with a strong support from public authorities”,* concluded Mr Müller.

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

(1) The “UEAPME Compendium of good practices of diversity and non-discrimination initiatives in European Crafts, SMEs and their organisations” is available in [high resolution](#) (6.5 MB) or [low resolution](#) (1.5 MB) on the UEAPME website.

**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 12 million enterprises with 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

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