



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Statement**

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

## **Employment Council conclusions do not solve working time impasse**

- **Adoption of common principles on flexicurity a good result for SMEs**

**Brussels, 6 December 2007.** UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, was left with mixed feelings by the conclusions of the Employment and Social Affairs Council yesterday (Wednesday). UEAPME warmly welcomed the unanimous adoption of the eight “common principles on flexicurity”, which must now be integrated in the forthcoming European Council's conclusions and pave the way to a long-term commitment to modernise Europe's labour markets. According to UEAPME, these principles should also be part of the forthcoming Employment guidelines for 2008-2010. UEAPME deeply regretted, however, the lack of consensus on the Working Time Directive. While some progress was made by the Portuguese Presidency, which UEAPME thanked for its efforts, the Council was not able to close a deal on this urgent dossier yesterday.

*“The results of yesterday's Council are yet another missed opportunity on a number of important pending issues”,* commented Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller**. *“In particular, the persisting minority blockade on the Working Time Directive leaves important unresolved questions on the table, such as the solution of the ‘on call time’ problem, the reference period for calculating the average working time and the opt-out criteria.”*

UEAPME has repeatedly backed the inclusion of the concept of “inactive” part of “on call time” in the Directive. It has also called for a 12-month reference period as a general rule to calculate the average working time, which would properly take into account the seasonal fluctuations in productivity typically associated with SMEs' business plans.

*“The Council's failure to reach political agreement on working time is a worrying signal for European small businesses and extends an already lengthy period of legal and political uncertainty, which is detrimental for workers and employers. This file should remain on top of the list of priorities for the forthcoming Presidencies in 2008, and its resolution must be built on the progress made yesterday. Europe cannot afford vagueness on working time for much longer”,* 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 12 million enterprises with 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

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