



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

Small Business Act a litmus test for EU’s commitment to SMEs

Brussels, 17 December 2007. The “Small Business Act for Europe” recently announced by the European Commission must contain a core of legally binding measures, principles and objectives in order to transform the EU’s commitment to a better SME policy into concrete results, according to UEAPME. The European craft and SME employers’ organisation released today a comprehensive position paper on the issue, which was drafted after extensive consultations with its members (1). The document insists on the need to mainstream SMEs in all EU policy areas, and puts forward a set of concrete proposals both on existing programmes and on new actions. UEAPME urged the EC to act swiftly to ensure the adoption and consequent implementation of the Small Business Act in 2008, which is the last full year of mandate for this college of Commissioners.

*“We can only welcome the Commission’s intentions to issue a Small Business Act”, commented Secretary General **Hans-Werner Müller**, who is spending his last week at UEAPME before retiring at the end of the year. “However, the last thing European SMEs need at this stage is yet another wordy, toothless communication. The Small Business Act will prove its worth only if it can be used as a legal basis for long-term, EU-wide policy measures. UEAPME and its members expect a clear commitment in this respect”, he continued.*

In its position paper, UEAPME made a comprehensive list of objectives, criteria and principles to be included in the legally binding core of the Small Business Act. UEAPME insisted, for instance, on the need to ensure higher consultation standards for representative business organisations. It also called for systematic, specific, real and independent impact assessments for every new legislative proposal including the amendments subsequently made by the Council or by the European Parliament if need be. Furthermore, legislation should always be based on a number of key principles such as the proportionality principle and the “only once” rule.

UEAPME also stressed that respect for entrepreneurs and for their invaluable contribution to the European Social Model must be the overarching principle of the Small Business Act. Moreover, the package should be based on a number of all-encompassing criteria. First of all, all the aspects and consequences of new rules on SMEs should be properly taken into consideration, regardless of the specific DG responsible for the legislative procedure. Secondly, the diversity, specificities and needs of the different categories of SMEs should be duly taken into account, although the SBA should be obviously applicable to all SMEs. Thirdly, the SBA must leverage existing and valuable EU documents such as the European Charter for Small Enterprises and its action lines. Fourthly, the Small Business Act should not target only the EU level but also be addressed to Member States and regions.

Finally, UEAPME presented the European Commission with a set of suggestions on the following goals: promote the entrepreneurial spirit, the culture of enterprise and access to competences; improve access to markets and clients for SMEs; reduce the administrative burden and promote better regulation; enhance the dialogue between SMEs, their representative organisations and policymakers at regional, national and EU level.

“We hope that the European Commission will be able to respect the tight time schedule it has ahead and manage to transform its plans into a workable legal framework for SMEs by the end of 2008. We trust that our comments will be of use in this respect, and we call on all the involved policymakers at EU and Member State level to lend their full support in order to make the Small Business Act a success”, concluded Mr Müller.

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(1) http://www.ueapme.com/docs/pos_papers/2007/071214_pp_SBA.pdf

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.

Further information: Luc Hendrickx, Enterprise Policy and External Relations Director, Tel. +32 2 230 7599

Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer

Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com - Web: www.ueapme.com/pressroom/