



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

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Small Business Act: beware of the paper tiger, warn SMEs

Brussels, 6 February 2008. The “Small Business Act for Europe” due for adoption in June must shift SME policy up a gear and provide added value for all the legislative initiatives in the coming years, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation. Speaking in front of Vice-President Verheugen and President Barroso at a public hearing organised by the European Commission today, Secretary General **Andrea Benassi** reinstated UEAPME’s calls for a solid, legally binding document based on the “think small first” principle. According to UEAPME, the Small Business Act must create the best possible environment for micro and small enterprises and give concrete answers to the diverse challenges they face along their lifecycle. A bland repackaging of the existing rules is by no means sufficient to achieve the Commission’s ambitious aims, stressed Mr Benassi, who called for more attention to small businesses’ needs across all relevant EU policy areas.

“The potential of European crafts and small businesses is all too often crippled by badly designed, ill-conceived legislation that does not take into account their reality. The Small Business Act is an excellent opportunity to put an end to this regrettable state of affairs”, said Mr Benassi. *“However, we cannot afford another lip-service exercise. Small businesses do not need a paper tiger, but workable answers and a long-term perspective to fully express their capacities. UEAPME and its member organisations will only support a text that goes in this direction.”*

In a position paper issued in December, UEAPME made a comprehensive list of legally binding measures, principles and objectives, which must be included in the Small Business Act in order to transform the EU’s commitment to a better SME policy into concrete results (1). Such a legal basis must be applied to all EC policies, mainstreaming a solid “think small first” approach by which all legislation is conceived from a small business perspective from the outset.

“Instead of carving out an endless series of exceptions for micro- and small enterprises, the EC would fare better if it conceived legislation with smaller realities in mind from the beginning. Since small businesses are concerned with a range of measures that goes beyond pure enterprise policy, it is also crucial that the Commission speaks with one voice every time SMEs are concerned. The presence of President Barroso today is an encouraging sign in this respect”, concluded Mr Benassi.

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(1) See 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.

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