



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

## **Marketing of products: EP puts “new approach” on the right track**

**Brussels, 21 February 2008.** The European craft and SME employers’ association UEAPME and its sister organisation NORMAPME, which represents SMEs’ interests in the European standardisation and certification systems, warmly welcomed today’s vote at the Parliament’s plenary in Strasbourg on the so-called “goods package”, a framework on various horizontal aspects of marketing of products, including CE marking and other general requirements for a product to be placed on the market. According to the two organisations, today’s vote brings the package closer to the needs and expectations of European small companies, by enforcing the proportionality principle and facilitating conformity assessments for small series and made-to-measure products, which often represent crafts’ and SMEs’ core business. UEAPME and NORMAPME praised the EU institutions for reaching consensus on this crucial dossier, and encouraged all EU policymakers to take these principles into account in the upcoming revision of sector regulations and directives.

*“Today’s vote puts the EU’s ‘new approach’ on the right track. It finally provides a workable framework for crafts and SMEs, without compromising on the safety and quality of the products and services marketed in the European Union”,* said NORMAPME Director **Loucas Gourtsoyannis**, who then went on to comment on the main positive points for SMEs in the package of rules approved today.

First of all, small series and custom-made goods will not be submitted to the same rules applied to large-scale production. Conformity assessments will be considerably facilitated, which is in line with the requests put forward by UEAPME and NORMAPME in the past months, explained Mr Gourtsoyannis. Secondly, conformity assessment bodies will have to ensure proportionality and consider the so-called “4S”, i.e. the operator’s size, structure, economic sector and serial production when testing SMEs’ products. Thirdly, today’s vote opens the possibility for trade associations to use and set up notified testing laboratories and certification bodies, thereby cutting costs and increasing the number and the SME-friendliness of facilities available.

All these measures are not only an important step forward per se, continued Mr Gourtsoyannis; they will also become the cornerstone of a large number of sector regulations, the first two of which (on toys and construction products) are already in the pipeline. *“The new rules will guarantee that SME-specific problems are taken into account by default in the upcoming sector regulations. UEAPME and NORMAPME will closely monitor the future developments, in order to make sure that the potential advantages of the ‘new approach’ are passed on to crafts and SMEs in the field”,* he concluded.

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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 85 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across Europe, covering over 12 million enterprises with 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

NORMAPME is an international non-profit association created in 1996 with the support of the European Commission, under the full name of the “European Office of Crafts, Trades and Small and Medium- Sized Enterprises for Standardisation”. NORMAPME focuses on small enterprise interests in the European standardisation and certification systems. Its members represent over 11 million enterprises in all European countries, including all EU and EFTA member states.

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