



French MEP Jacques Toubon receives 2008 "Protypos" award

Brussels, 16 July 2008 – The "Protypos – personality of the year" award, which celebrates and recognises the activities of personalities who played a significant role in promoting the cause of SMEs in the standardisation arena, was assigned in Brussels yesterday (Tuesday). Sponsored by NORMAPME, the organisation representing small businesses in the European standardisation and certification systems, the 2008 Protypos prize went to French MEP and member of the Internal Market Committee Jacques Toubon, in recognition of his long-standing commitment towards European crafts and SMEs. Mr Toubon's dedication to Europe's small enterprises was re-confirmed once again last February, when the Parliament dramatically improved the so-called "goods package", a framework on various horizontal legislative aspects of marketing of products, including CE marking.

"Jacques Toubon was by far the most fervent and outspoken SME supporter at the European Parliament during the votes on the 'goods package'. He recognised from the outset that products made to measure or in small series, which often represent crafts' and SMEs' core business, cannot be submitted to the same rules applied to large scale production as the EC suggested", explained NORMAPME President Hans-Werner Müller. "Far from passively accepting the status quo, Mr Toubon worked hard to improve the text and to persuade his fellow MEPs. The final result is much closer to the reality of SMEs, without compromising on the safety and quality of the products and services marketed in the European Union. We could not have asked for a better outcome – that is why we are celebrating Mr Toubon today", continued Mr Müller.

Further to Mr Toubon's and his colleagues' improvements to the "goods package", small series and custom-made goods will not be submitted to the same rules applied to large-scale production, and conformity assessments will be considerably facilitated. Moreover, 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. Finally, trade associations can now 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, explained Mr Müller; 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. *"Mr Toubon's vision and political acumen in dealing with such a sensitive dossier have earned him our gratitude and admiration. Today's award is a token of our respect, and a wish for our fruitful collaboration to continue in the years to come", concluded Mr Müller.*

The Protypos award is shaped like an Attic amphora, one of the most popular container designs in ancient Greece. In those times, amphorae were in use for transport, storage and management of goods, which could be measured not only by weight but also by number. Amphorae were thus one of the first volume standards, facilitating trade thanks to their mutually recognised value. NORMAPME chose this shape for its award due to its symbolic meaning. The first Protypos prize was awarded in 2007 to Mr Albrecht Mulfinger, who retired in 2006 after a long and successful career at the European Commission, during which he played a key role in the set-up of NORMAPME.

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 87 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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 is the unique European organisation focused on SMEs' interests in the European standardisation system. More information: <http://www.normapme.com>

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