



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Compromise on labelling of substances hits hard on small scale manufacturers

Brussels, 3 September 2008 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, reacted cautiously to the institutional compromise on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures voted upon today at the European Parliament. The new rules will bring EU legislation in line with the United Nations' General Harmonisation System (GHS) for labelling, and represent therefore a crucial step towards the creation of a truly international and multilateral labelling system. According to UEAPME, MEPs introduced a regulation that is capable of contributing to the protection of health and environment, while facilitating the free circulation of goods both inside and outside the EU. UEAPME regretted, however, that substances produced in small quantities (below 1 tonne) will be subject to notification requirements under the terms of today's agreement. This will create administrative and legal burdens for small scale manufacturers, warned the organisation.

"As of today, the EU is adapting its labelling legislation to internationally recognised standards, which will greatly facilitate cross-border trade and increase commercial opportunities for European businesses of all sizes", commented Guido Lena, UEAPME Director for Sustainable Development. "However, the compromise goes further than needed and includes substances produced in small scale in the scope of the new rules. This is contrary to the spirit of better regulation and totally against the REACH regulation, which rightly excludes these substances from registration requirements. Small scale manufacturers are losing today most of the arrangements they gained when REACH was approved", continued Mr Lena.

An amendment suggesting the exclusion of substances produced in small quantities from notification requirements was tabled by the Parliament's rapporteur but not carried forward in the final institutional compromise, which will create unnecessary administrative burdens for micro and small enterprises whose products were so far largely excluded from registration under REACH. These companies were not expecting to be touched by the new GHS rules, since this possibility was never mentioned in the information received from public institutions and in communication campaigns about REACH. They will now be confused as to which rules apply to their products, which undermines legal certainty, concluded Mr Lena.

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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/>

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