



EC Vice President Günter Verheugen to receive 2009 “Protypos” award

Brussels, 2 July 2009 – 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 European standardisation arena, will be assigned in Brussels today (Thursday). Sponsored by NORMAPME, the organisation representing small businesses in the European standardisation and certification systems, the 2009 Protypos prize will go to Commission Vice President Günter Verheugen, in recognition of his long-standing commitment towards European crafts and SMEs. Commissioner Verheugen’s attention to SMEs was recently re-confirmed in the Small Business Act proposed last year. The text increases financial support to promote the participation of SMEs and the defence of their interests in standardisation and calls for less expensive and more accessible standards.

“Despite being the main users of standards, SMEs were all too often left without a say on their content in the past. This usually ended up in expensive, burdensome rules that were completely out of touch with the reality of small businesses. Vice President Verheugen recognised from the outset the urgency to redress this imbalance. He has worked hard to ensure that SMEs are recognised in the standardisation process, and it is with great pleasure that we present him with the Protypos award today”, said NORMAPME President **Hans-Werner Müller**.

The Vice President’s dedication to SMEs showed once again in the text of the Small Business Act adopted last year, continued Mr Müller. The text makes a clear reference to the need to promote the participation of SMEs and the defence of their interests in standardisation and to improve SMEs’ information on, and use of, European standards. It also urges European standardisation bodies to reduce the cost of access to standards and to publish abstracts with unrestricted access and in different languages, making it less expensive and easier for SMEs to obtain access to standards. *“Such a clear-cut and committed language would have been unheard of some years ago. It is also thanks to Vice President Verheugen if our voice in the standardisation arena is now stronger and respected”,* 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 as a symbol of an affordable and easily accessible standard.

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. In 2008, the Protypos prize was awarded to French MEP and member of the Internal Market Committee Jacques Toubon, who was instrumental in making the so-called “goods package”, a framework on various horizontal legislative aspects of marketing of products, including CE marking, closer to the needs and to the reality of European small businesses.

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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 83 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 “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>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Loucas Gourtsoyannis, NORMAPME Director, Tel. +32 (0)2 282 05 30, Email: L.gourtsoyannis@normapme.com
Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 (0)496 520 329, Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com