



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Small Business Act: Commission's report disappoints SMEs

Brussels, 15 December 2009 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, was left disappointed by today's EC report on the implementation of the Small Business Act at European and national level. According to UEAPME, the text adopted today is a clear demonstration of the lack of ownership of the Small Business Act by Member States, only a few of which have acted in a comprehensive manner, while most have only cherry-picked parts of the package. UEAPME also criticised the European Commission for failing to publish a comprehensive assessment of the status quo, preferring instead a rather short and uncritical document that does not compare and contrast Member States' actions in the last 12 months. The SME organisation acknowledged the progress made on issues such as access to finance and standardisation, while stressing that SME organisations must be more involved to ensure an all-inclusive implementation of the SBA and of its principles.

"Today's report is disappointing in more than one way", said Secretary General **Andrea Benassi**. *"First of all, it is a very short and superficial document that amounts to little more than self-gloss by the Commission. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, it shows that only a handful of Member States have acted in a comprehensive manner, while most cherry-picked a few points and got away with it. All we have is a few examples from a few countries on a few issues. We are very, very far from where we should be one year after the adoption of the Small Business Act",* he continued.

As far as Member States are concerned, only two out of 27 have fully transposed the Small Business Act in their national policy programmes, deplored Mr Benassi. Positive news came on some issues such as late payments, where some Member States are anticipating the recast of the EC directive and at times go beyond its scope, although they are much more willing to act on B2B payment terms than on their own payment delays, stressed Mr Benassi. However, the picture at national level is far from being rosy, with most Member States failing to take advantage of the rules already in place and above all to put in place an all-encompassing transposition of the Small Business Act and its principles into national law.

As far as the Commission is concerned, UEAPME was left unimpressed by today's report, which does not deliver an in-depth analysis of the situation and only provides a handful of positive examples in an uncritical manner. Mr Benassi acknowledged the progress made on legislation with the adoption of a number of proposals linked to the Small Business Act. He also recognised that the Commission has acted swiftly and positively to secure access to finance during the crisis and to promote SMEs' participation in and defence of their interests in the standardisation process. However, the EC must do more to embrace the "Think Small First" principles and significantly improve the "SME Test" recently introduced.

On the whole, the report shows a significant lack of ownership of the Small Business Act at national level and mixed results at European level, concluded Mr Benassi: *"The Commission may say that progress has been made by looking at the adopted legislation, but when we speak to entrepreneurs on the ground we hear that nothing has changed. The Small Business Act suffers from a clear lack of commitment, which must be swiftly redressed in the coming months. This can be done for instance by involving more closely business organisations. It is not by chance that the countries that decided to do so are the more advanced in the implementation of the Small Business Act",* concluded Mr Benassi.

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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 84 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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