



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

"Innovation Union" commitments must be turned into reality, say SMEs

UEAPME praises Commission's analysis on "innovation emergency", calls for progress on concrete files

Brussels, 6 October 2010 – The "Innovation Union" communication unveiled by the European Commission today is a comprehensive analysis of challenges facing Europe when it comes to innovation, but its success will largely depend on how its commitments are put into practice, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation. UEAPME appreciated the Commission's proposals on how to remove obstacles to innovation and stimulate action by the private sector. However, it stressed that policymakers must now demonstrate their willingness to act and make progress on concrete files, starting from the Community Patent, which would dramatically boost innovation in SMEs. Moreover, UEAPME criticised the lack of focus towards small businesses that are not fast-growing or high-tech based, which are somewhat ignored in the Commission's text despite providing the vast majority of Europe's innovation activities and potential.

Economic and Fiscal Policy Director **Gerhard Huemer** offered the following comments:

"The strategy presented today by the European Commission rightly identifies the main barriers holding back our innovation potential and the key role of the public sector when it comes to removing these obstacles and stimulating the private sector. However, the possible benefits of this strategy will remain on paper unless the commitments taken today are turned into reality and followed by concrete progress in all policy areas. The Community Patent will be the first test in this respect. We hope that the Belgian Presidency will be able to strike a deal before its term comes to an end."

"When it comes to SMEs, the largest amount of innovation in Europe is provided by traditional small businesses. Their potential cannot be underestimated and they must be further supported. Unfortunately, today's communication seems to focus mainly on high-tech based or 'fast growing' small businesses, and the Commission seems to be willing to improve access to EU funding and research programmes only for these companies. As a consequence, the vast majority of Europe's small enterprises will find it even harder to participate to cross-border EU-funded innovation and research projects. This is a shortcoming that must be redressed if Europe is serious about promoting innovation and closing the gap with its international competitors. An innovation strategy that only deals with a minority of companies is bound to fail."

**** END ****

EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 85 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Gerhard Huemer, Director Economic and Fiscal Policy, Tel. +32 (0)2 230 7599, Email: g.huemer@ueapme.com
Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 (0)496 520 329, Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com