



## UEAPME joins pan-European campaign on safe maintenance

Brussels, 16 February 2011 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, has become today an official partner of the "Healthy Workplaces Campaign" managed by the European Agency on Health and Safety at Work (OSHA). Crafts and SMEs support this important campaign to raise awareness of the risks associated with the maintenance of plants, equipment and machines, which is a crucial part of eliminating hazards at the workplace. Health and safety related risks are becoming increasingly complex. According to UEAPME, there is a clear need to assist SMEs and in particular micro-companies with limited financial and human resources with the related legal requirements in a simple, non burdensome way. Strong guidance, adapted risk assessment methods, a more structured approach and better promotion of a culture of risk prevention are needed, stressed UEAPME, which intends to use the campaign to support the business case for healthy workplaces and to raise public recognition of employers' efforts. The organisation also aims at highlighting the need to fully apply the "Think Small First" principle at all levels for existing and new health and safety regulations. UEAPME is looking forward to cooperate more closely with the OSHA on SME-related specificities in the health and safety field.

Speaking in Brussels at a launch event organised by UEAPME, Secretary General **Andrea Benassi** said:

*"We are proud to join the Healthy Workplaces campaign on safe maintenance, and I would like to thank OSHA for strongly encouraging our members to become active in this important process. Eliminating hazards at the workplace and ensuring safe maintenance, including for plants and equipment, is a legal obligation for all employers. However, it is a more challenging task for owners of small businesses with limited financial and human resources. This is made even more complicated due to existing, but also newly emerging health and safety risks, especially since work processes are becoming more complex and therefore more difficult to assess. It is essential to support small companies in particular, with adapted risk assessment methods, a structured approach and the promotion of a better risk prevention culture."*

*"There is obviously a strong business case for healthy workplaces associated with higher productivity. This is important as we clearly need job creation to exit from the current crisis. SMEs will play a crucial role in restoring economic growth in Europe – this can be achieved by fully respecting and putting into practice the 'Think Small First' principle in all matters, including of course health and safety obligations."*

*"Small business entrepreneurs in particular are socially responsible actors. In a small company, the owner-manager works on a daily basis with employees and takes a personal responsibility towards them. We believe that there is clearly a need to raise public recognition of employers' efforts, and we will work to this end as partners of the 'Healthy Workplaces' campaign. We look forward to cooperating with the European Agency for Health and Safety at Work and to making sure that SME specificities are effectively taken on board in future initiatives in the best possible way."*

\*\*\*\* 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 80 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

The pan-European **Healthy Workplaces Campaign** is focusing in 2010 and 2011 on the issue of safe maintenance. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of maintenance in workplaces, and of the risks if it is not carried out properly. The Campaign is coordinated by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA) and its partners in the 27 EU Member States and beyond. It supports a wide range of activities that promote safe maintenance at both European and national level. More information: <http://hw.osha.europa.eu/>

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