



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Small Business Act: more efforts are needed at EU and national level, warn SMEs

UEAPME calls for steps forward on governance and for adequate financial resources to secure SBA implementation

Brussels, 24 May 2011 – The implementation of the Small Business Act is very far from being complete and requires progress to be made without further delays, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation. Speaking today in Gödöllő at the annual SBA conference "Mobilising SMEs for the Future of Europe" organised by the Hungarian Presidency of the EU, Secretary General Andrea Benassi called on national governments to put the SBA principles and actions at the centre of all SME-relevant policies, to fully involve representative business organisations and to put in place the recently made suggestions to improve governance. He also stressed that steps forward should be taken at EU level, for instance by fully embracing the 'Think Small First' principle from the very early stages of policy making and securing the availability of financial resources for all the initiatives foreseen by the Small Business Act. The Secretary General offered the following comments:

"The principles and actions of the Small Business Act are far from being well established, both at EU level and in the vast majority of Member States. The EU institutions are still in two minds about fully embracing the 'Think Small First' principle. In the meantime, governments seem to be paying mostly lip service to the SBA and only a few have really put it at the centre of their policies. This was clearly highlighted by the examples of 'good practice' in the SBA review recently published by the European Commission. Such a slow-paced and uneven implementation cannot be tolerated any longer. It is a slap in the face of the millions of small enterprises that have kept Europe running throughout the crisis."

"The proposals made by the Commission in its review could help to speed up the process and bring about concrete results in the near future. This is true especially as far as governance is concerned. The SBA review has stressed the importance of involving representative business organisations. We expect progress to be made in this respect, also through the national 'SME Envoys' that are currently being appointed. They should closely monitor and coordinate the SBA implementation and follow-up, guarantee that the interests of SMEs are taken into account in all policy areas and last but not least ensure the full application of the 'Think Small First' principle. The same aims should be further pursued at EU level. For instance, the reality of small companies should be fully taken into account from the very early stages of policy making, starting from impact assessment. That is why the European Commission's 'Impact Assessment Board' should include the European SME Envoy recently nominated by Vice President Tajani."

"The impact of the Small Business Act will depend on one hand on the concrete implementation at national, regional and local level. On the other hand, it is also clearly linked to the availability of adequate funds. Financial resources must be secured for the many important actions contained in the SBA, for instance on standardisation, risk capital, guarantees, the comparison of existing best practices, statistics and research on the SBA implementation and many others. The creation of a European funding programme dedicated to SMEs would be the best solution in this respect. With the debate on Europe's financial perspectives now well underway, policymakers have a chance that cannot be missed to invest in SMEs. We hope that they will put their money where their mouth is."

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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 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/>

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Luc Hendrickx, Director for Enterprise Policy and External Relations, Tel. +32 (0)2 230 7599, Email: l.hendrickx@ueapme.com
 Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer, UEAPME, Tel. +32 (0)496 520 329, Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com