



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Commission’s post-2013 budget proposal ticks all the right boxes, say SMEs

UEAPME pleased with SME-dedicated programme, new cohesion policy; calls for plans to be approved without many changes

Brussels, 30 June 2011 – The plans for the post-2013 EU budget unveiled by the European Commission yesterday (Wednesday) tick the right boxes in terms of spending priorities, although their benefits for small companies will largely depend on the final budget available and on the concrete implementation of the various headers and programmes, according to UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers’ organisation. UEAPME was particularly pleased by the Commission’s proposal to increase the amounts allocated to research and innovation, education and SME development, as well as by the “Connecting Europe” facility to finance investments in infrastructure. It also welcomed the aims to direct the use of structural funds in the framework of cohesion policy to a limited number of priorities, including SMEs’ competitiveness and innovation. Moreover, UEAPME welcomed the general approach of the new “Horizon 2020” framework on R&D&I, but reserved its judgment on the funding aspects until the division of resources among its “pillars” and the specific volumes for SME support will be made public. Finally, the SME organisation called on the European Council and on the European Parliament to approve the European Commission’s “Multiannual Financial Framework” without changes and cuts.

Secretary General **Andrea Benassi** offered the following comments:

“The European Commission must be praised for presenting a balanced and realistic budget proposal, which manages to secure resources for many fundamental headers while keeping the overall spending footprint under control. The plans unveiled yesterday have the potential of really boosting crafts and SMEs’ activities, at least on paper. Of course, much will then depend on how the various programmes are put into practice, but the closest and most important hurdle at the moment is that the budget is approved without changes and cuts. We call on the Commission to stand firm by its proposals, which certainly deserve the agreement of Member States and of the European Parliament.”

“We are particularly pleased with the Commission’s plans to promote the competitiveness of SMEs. Our calls to simplify rules, reduce participation costs and accelerate award procedures were clearly taken on board, and the creation of a dedicated programme with an increased budget envelope is a clear reason to rejoice. SMEs’ competitiveness and innovation also feature prominently among the priorities for cohesion policy and structural funds, a point on which we have repeatedly insisted.”

“When it comes to research and innovation, we fully share the main components of the upcoming ‘Horizon 2020’ programme. However, it is difficult to properly assess the budget aspects at this stage, since no details were given on how funds will be divided among the programme’s ‘pillars’ and on the actual volume for SME-specific support actions. We shall follow closely the next steps on this important file. If the Commission manages to get this programme right, the whole post-2013 budget will look better than all its predecessors for SMEs.”

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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/>

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