



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

EP's vote on protection of self-employed respects needs of SMEs

Brussels, 18 May 2010 – UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, welcomed the vote on the adoption of the report at second reading on equal treatment between men and women for self-employed and assisting spouses at the European Parliament's plenary today (Tuesday). According to UEAPME, the proposal presents a balanced outcome and will contribute to boosting female entrepreneurship, as well as ensuring a more equal treatment between self-employed men and women. Moreover, the European Parliament has taken into account the needs of SMEs providing a direct right to social security for assisting spouses, but refraining from making it mandatory by leaving it to Member States to decide on voluntary or obligatory measures. Furthermore, the new right to maternity leave is adapted to the specific needs of self-employed and assisting spouses, thus avoiding in particular a compulsory part of leave and "a one size fits all" approach. Finally, UEAPME welcomes that the Parliament has insisted on the cross-sectoral nature of the text, which is highly relevant to SMEs and crafts. UEAPME now calls on the Council to swiftly adopt the current text as it stands.

Social Affairs Director **Liliane Volozinskis** commented as follows:

"Today's vote represents an important step aimed at encouraging and supporting female entrepreneurship which currently stands at only 30% in Europe. Based on the equal treatment principle the proposal for a new directive would substitute and modernise the current rules by repealing the 86/613/EEC directive."

"On the creation of a new direct right for social security for assisting spouses, including for life partners, we are pleased to see that our efforts were successful in persuading the Parliament to leave it to Member States to decide according to subsidiarity whether to make it mandatory or voluntary."

"On maternity provisions for self-employed and assisting spouses, UEAPME supports the creation of a new right at European level of maternity leave specifically adapted to the needs of self-employed and assisting spouses. This includes a maternity allowance to cover work interruptions. We welcome in particular that the direct and explicit link to the pregnant workers' directive for employees has been removed avoiding a compulsory part of leave which would not have been in line with entrepreneurial activities."

"For obvious reasons it is also important to keep the cross-sectoral nature of the proposal and not to solely limit it to the agricultural sector and therefore water it down, as recommended by Council. This horizontal approach is crucial for crafts and SMEs."

"Finally, UEAPME calls on the Council to rapidly conclude on the text at second reading and to put the new rules into place. The proposal is indeed very pertinent in today's difficult economic climate, for enterprises and job creation and to fostering long-term growth."

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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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