



*"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"*

## **Small Business Act: commitments are finally becoming actions, survey finds**

*Similar average but different performance on administration for Commission and Parliament; all 10 SBA policy areas trending upwards*

Brussels, 13 November 2012 – For the very first time since its adoption, policymakers at EU and national level are finally making progress on the commitments made in 2008 with the Small Business Act. This was the main outcome of a survey conducted by UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, which was released today ahead of the SME Assembly in Cyprus later this week (1). Our "SBA Implementation Scoreboard" recorded steps forward across all the ten surveyed policy areas related to the Small Business Act. Results were particularly positive for public procurement, promotion of entrepreneurship and State aid. When it comes to the respect of the "Think Small First" principle, the European Commission and the European Parliament fared quite similarly on average in our "Think Small Test". However, while both institutions are close by on business support, the Commission is ahead on the legislation chapter and quite behind on administration. Moreover, both remain below the average index measuring Member States' performance, which is 5 points ahead.

*"For the first time ever, our survey has recorded improvements across all the spectrum of policies linked to the Small Business Act. Member States are finally acting to meet the commitments made and the expectations raised in 2008", said Gerhard Huemer, Director of the UEAPME Study Unit. "Progress on public procurement reached double digits, with very positive results in addition for State aid and entrepreneurship. Respect for the 'Think Small First' principle also seems to be widespread. Then again, the Commission still has some way to go to simplify the administrative requirements linked to the contracts and projects that it finances, and both Commission and Parliament remain below the EU average."*

This year's **Think Small Test**, which measures the level of respect for the "Think Small First" principle in the areas of legislation, administration and business support services, recorded similar average results for Commission (50%) and Parliament (51.1%). Both received higher scores compared to last year for business support, which can be explained by our members' positive reaction to the legislative proposals for several programmes for 2014-2020. On the other hand, the administration score worsened for the third time in a row for the Commission, leaving an impressive 18-point gap with the EP. This is due to the difficulties experienced by our experts in carrying out contracts managed by the EC under different programmes. *"There is clearly ample room for improvement for the Commission on this aspect"*, commented Mr Huemer. Both institutions also recorded a lower index compared to the average of all participating Member States, which stands at 56.4%. *"This can be justified by the higher expectations put by our experts on the EU institutions, which are perceived as the driving forces behind the creation and the implementation of the 'Think Small First' principle"*, Mr Huemer explained.

When it comes to putting into practice the commitments of the Small Business Act, the 2012 **SBA Implementation Scoreboard** recorded positive results compared to 2011 for all the ten policy areas under consideration. Public procurement marked the highest improvement with +14.6%, possibly as the result of the new proposals in the field made by the European Commission at the end of 2011. The deployment of new growth enhancing measures as means to overcome the economic crisis placed State aid as the second best improvement with +5.2%, tying with promoting entrepreneurship. The lowest increases were recorded for "second chance" policies (+1.7%) and internationalisation (+1.6%).

The average of the SBA Scoreboard results in each Member State increased this year by +4.4% and stands at 50.2%, narrowing the gap with the Think Small Test average (56.4%). *"A higher average on the respect of the 'Think Small First' principle is somehow to be expected. After all, it is definitely easier to hold consultations with SMEs than to improve SME policies on precise policy issues. However, the fact that the gap between our two indexes is narrowing confirms our analysis: Member States are finally taking concrete actions to implement the Small Business Act measures. Despite their tight budgets, many national governments have realised that SMEs are the way out of the crisis"*, concluded Mr Huemer.

\*\*\*\* END \*\*\*\*

(1) The full results and country sheets can be found at <http://www.ueapme.com/spip.php?rubrique121>

**EDITORS' NOTES:** UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has more than 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:**

Gerhard Huemer, Study Unit Director, Tel. +32 (0)2 230 7599, Email: [g.huemer@ueapme.com](mailto:g.huemer@ueapme.com)

Francesco Longu, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 (0)496 520 329, Email: [pressoffice@ueapme.com](mailto:pressoffice@ueapme.com)