



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Environmental liability: SMEs hampered by outcome of EP plenary vote**

**Brussels, 15th May 2003.** UEAPME, the European association of crafts and SMEs, deeply regrets the outcome of the vote in yesterday’s plenary on environmental liability at the European Parliament. The principle of Sustainable Development is, today, at the heart of every major political decision. Yet, sustainable development consists in striking a balance between environment, social and economic interests and yesterday’s vote only took the environmental considerations into account. “The approach is very ambitious and tries to cover too much too soon and could in effect prove unworkable. Isn’t the best the enemy of the good?” **Guido Lena**, UEAPME’s director for environmental affairs commented.

The future Directive leaves too much discretion to the Member States, which will inevitably lead to distortions among Member States. This applies inter alia to financial security. The decision as to whether low risk activities should be covered by the compulsory insurance obligation should be an EU decision and not a national one.

UEAPME also has reservations as to the approach adopted regarding compulsory insurance. As the future Directive currently stands compulsory insurance will apply to all activities within 6 years. Yet, there is currently no certainty as to whether insurances or other forms of financial security will be available and if so at what price. The possibility for Member States to establish thresholds in relation to any insurance requirements offers no further guarantees to SMEs as this will be decided at Member State and not at EU level.

Finally, on the issue of exemptions, UEAPME regrets the decision to relegate permits and state of the art to mitigating factors considering that good agricultural and forestry practices have been maintained.

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