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“The Voice of SMEs in Europe¹”

UEAPME WELCOMES WHITE PAPER ON SERVICES OF GENERAL INTEREST

The European craft and SME employers’ association supports the sectorial approach taken by the Commission

UEAPME, the European SME employers’ association, expressed its satisfaction with the Commission’s White Paper on Services of General Interest presented yesterday. In particular, the association is pleased with the Commission’s view that a horizontal framework directive for Services of General Interest would not add value compared to existing sector specific framework legislation.

Hans-Werner Müller, UEAPME’s Secretary General said “we are happy with the proposal. Indeed, in our view a framework directive would increase the legal uncertainty surrounding the provision of Services of General Interest due to its too broad principles.”

Furthermore the association argues that:

- the common elements that define the concept of Services of General Interest (universality, continuity, quality, affordability and consumer-protection) have different meanings in the different sectors in which they have to be applied. Hence, a one size fits all solution would prove to be too vague.
- a horizontal framework directive on Services of General Interest would weaken the effectiveness of the current sector and issues specific approach to Community action.
- a horizontal directive would dilute the Community’s focus on its crucial responsibilities (single market and fair competition) and counteract the existing State aid legislation, competition law and Public Procurement directive.

The association will continue to strive for further liberalisation of the provision of services of general interest and for the introduction of an European Regulator.

Note to editors: For further information, please contact Gerhard Huemer on tel +32 2 230 7599, download the UEAPME position paper at: http://www.ueapme.com/docs/pos_papers/2004/040127_SGI_final.doc

¹ UEAPME (**U**nion **E**uropéenne de l’**A**rtisanat et des **P**etites et **M**oyennes **E**ntreprises / **E**uropean **A**ssociation of **C**raft, **S**mall & **M**edium-sized **E**nterprises) is the European Social partner representing craft, trades and SMEs in Europe (EU and countries applying for accession to the EU). It represents, through 75 national and European sectoral federations, over 11 million small enterprises, which employ over 50 million people.