



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

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SME Policy: Candidate MEPs receive to do list for next term

Brussels, 28 May 2004 Two weeks ahead of the European Parliament elections, the European Crafts and SME community have made it clear to candidate MEPs that the concerns of 99% of enterprises in Europe must be taken on board during the next legislative term. Today, UEAPME and its member associations sent a document to candidate MEPs in which they outline the expectations of the SME community for the next five years.

European Crafts and SMEs see three essential pillars in which progress must be made during the next term.

1) The future European Parliament has to press for the finalisation of the European Internal Market. Despite progress made in the last twelve years, there are still daunting barriers to the completion of the Internal market especially for SMEs. Therefore, UEAPME expects the new MEPs to support:

- the creation of a single market for services by cutting red tape, harmonising quality requirements and improving the control of the requirements in the framework of the principle of origin
- the establishment of a common European Area of taxation by encouraging the harmonisation and simplification of administrative VAT obligations, by pressing for reforms of the company taxation systems in order to create a harmonised tax base, but without interfering with the tax-competition on rates and thresholds
- the set up of a Single European area of payment in order to facilitate cross-border payments

2) Future MEPs should contribute to create the best possible environment for crafts and SMEs. Four years after the adoption of the Charter for Small Enterprises, Europe’s economy still suffers from a burdensome business-environment. Therefore, Europe’s SMEs expect the next Parliament:

- to implement Basel II without unnecessary administrative burdens for smaller banks; the possibility of a partial use of the IBR approach (internal rating) and the full acceptance of existing guarantee schemes as collateral;
- to use the Multi Annual Programme for enterprises to promote entrepreneurship education through programmes targeted at schools, public authorities and the public in general
- to help Crafts and SMEs in creating a pool of mobile and well qualified employees by pushing for the development of an ERASMUS style programme for young workers and apprentices and by establishing a European statute for apprentices

3) The next European Parliament should avoid putting additional burdens on Crafts and SMEs with excessive social and environmental regulations.

SMEs need flexible labour markets. Flexible working time arrangements are essential for SMEs to increase their productivity and competitiveness. Therefore, SMEs expect the EP in relation to the working time directive:

- to ensure that the new proposal for working time will not reduce the current possibilities for flexible working time arrangements with the suppression of the opt out;

SMEs recognise the opportunities linked to environmental issues and accept the need for high quality standards, but most SMEs are not in a position to comply with the full range of administrative and technical obligations. Therefore, SMEs need the support of the Parliament:

- to simplify environmental legislation by adapting it to the size and the nature of the businesses;
- to carry out systematic business impact assessments on legislation being proposed
- to integrate SME policy in environmental issues and allow sustainable development.

“The aim of this initiative is twofold. We want to inform potential Members of the European Parliament about the vital issues for Europe’s SMEs. And we hope to encourage SME owners across Europe to vote for the European Parliament, as this institution has become one of the key institutions in the shaping of the EU business environment” **Paul Reckinger**, President of UEAPME, commented today.

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Note to editors: For further information, please contact Gerhard Huemer on tel +32 2 230 7599. The document can be downloaded at http://www.ueapme.com/docs/pos_papers/2004/040428_EP_final_en.doc

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