



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EMAS positive for SMEs but must be simplified for micro-businesses

Brussels, 8 March 2005 EMAS, the EU voluntary environmental management scheme, brings overall benefits to businesses, according to a European conference hosted jointly by UEAPME, the European association for small and medium business and crafts, and its UK member, the Forum of Private Business in London yesterday (Monday). However, evidence from micro-businesses operating in the UK indicates that the implementation of the scheme must be made simpler if small firms are to take full advantage of its benefits.

“UEAPME has been calling for the scheme to be made more straightforward for small businesses for some years. This conference has brought forward first-hand evidence to support this claim,” said UEAPME Director of Environmental Affairs Guido Lena. “The European institutions and the Member States must bear this in mind in the upcoming revision of the EMAS Regulation”.

At the conference, CMR, an EMAS-registered micro business operating in the UK mobile phone recycling sector, highlighted that the implementation of EMAS should be made less bureaucratic and less costly in order to make the scheme more successful. In addition, there was general agreement that the scheme, by which businesses are certified as having eco-friendly operations, had to be better promoted and that its visibility at national level should be increased.

“It is in everyone’s interest to have a properly functioning EMAS. SMEs have much to gain from having an EMAS certification. More importantly, however, the EU has an obligation to ensure that its SMEs can respond to the major environmental challenges, like climate change, and EMAS is an important measure in this regard,” continued Mr Lena.

The need to improve the incentives for SMEs to become involved in the scheme was highlighted, particularly through the introduction of different regulatory relief measures (such as fast-tracks to obtain and maintain permits) and the greater use of market instruments (such as tax breaks). The possibility of implementing EMAS in a staged approach and linking it with a progressive reduction of insurance premiums for small business was also strongly recommended.

Given the links EMAS has with other important EU environmental policy initiatives, efforts to make the scheme more small business-friendly will make SMEs more capable of responding to the big environmental challenges faced by the Union.

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