



## ***“The voice of SMEs in Europe”***

### **Press Release**

IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

#### **Parliament must alter unrealistic proposal on sun radiation**

**Brussels, 13 June 2005** UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, is calling on the European Parliament to amend the excessive and impractical provisions of a proposed Directive on optical radiation ahead of a crucial vote by the Employment and Social Affairs Committee on Wednesday (15 June).

“The current proposal places completely unrealistic and onerous obligations on firms with employees working outdoors and is a perfect example of the type of unnecessary regulation that reinforces the negative public perception of the EU,” said **UEAPME Director of Sectorial Policy Oliver Loebel**.

“Unless the directive is amended and natural sources of radiation (i.e. sunlight) are removed from its scope, it will be impossible for small businesses to comply with its provisions. It could also lead to serious uncertainty about legal liability for illnesses related to natural radiation sources.”

“It is impracticable to expect a small construction or catering firm to make daily assessments on the potential health impact of the forecast meteorological conditions on their employees. Most businesses have neither the resources nor, more importantly, the expertise to undertake such scientific analysis,” explained Mr Loebel.

Under the proposals, all employers with staff working outdoors would be forced to make daily ‘risk assessments’ of the levels of UV radiation to which their employees could be exposed. This would mean assembling complex meteorological information and analysing its implications for employees, which for a non-expert would be impossible.

On the basis of this assessment, the employer is then supposed to devise an action plan to minimise the potential health and safety risk to its employees, requiring a degree of technical and medical expertise that is clearly not realistic for the vast majority of small employers. It could also create a great degree of uncertainty about the legal liability in the case of diseases caused, in part, by exposure to natural sources of radiation.

UEAPME is calling on the Parliament to return to remove natural sources of radiation (sunlight etc.) from the directive’s scope. This would still enable the proposal to cover artificial radiation, such as x-rays and lasers.

“As it stands, this directive is completely unworkable. It places completely impractical demands on employers, which go beyond the realms of what is possible for most SMEs. It is imperative that the European Parliament recognises this and amends the proposal to make it more rational,” concluded Mr Loebel.

\*\*\*\*\* End \*\*\*\*\*

**EDITORS’ NOTE:** UEAPME is the employer’s organisation representing the interests of crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 78 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across the whole of Europe, covering over 11 million enterprises with nearly 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner.

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