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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE:

Focus shifting to Austrian Presidency to deliver EU growth

Brussels, 17 November 2005 The forthcoming Austrian Presidency must put the EU’s growth and jobs strategy back on track and pick up the pieces on crucial legislative proposals, the European small and medium business organisation UEAPME told Austria’s Economic Minister Martin Bartenstein at a meeting in Vienna this week.

“We are emerging from a Presidency that promised much but has failed to deliver in key areas to date. The onus is on the Austrian Presidency to pick up the baton and make real progress on crucial legislative proposals, like the Working Time Directive and the Services Directive, as well as progressing the reform agenda at EU level,” said UEAPME President **Paul Reckinger**.

“After the initial momentum generated by the refocusing of the Lisbon Strategy, the urgency seems to have dissipated. The much-heralded national reform plans were tardily submitted and a number of Member States are still shirking the crucial task of explaining the benefits of the necessary economic reforms to their publics. We are looking to the forthcoming presidency to breathe some life into the EU reform agenda.”

UEAPME is looking to the Austrian Presidency to make progress on two crucial legislative proposals, which will have a seismic impact on business, to restore investor confidence in the EU:

- The saga concerning the Working Time Directive must be brought to a close. This means approving a 12-month reference period; clearly differentiating between ‘on-call’ time and working time; and maintaining both the individual and collective opt-out.
- The controversial Services Directive must be made workable. This means finding a balance between market liberalisation and the standards of service provision and consumer protection. To ensure this, the right to supervision and enforcement of standards must rest with the country of destination. This would include complying with all standards governing the affected service sector, such as planning laws and rules on below-cost-selling, as well as environmental and employment standards.

“The Commission has made major progress in jump-starting the better regulation initiative but without the complete support of the Member States and their commitment to its implementation, particularly in the area of legislative simplification, it risks being sidelined. Leadership from the Austrian Presidency and the introduction of greater coordination in the Council would help ensure the mass of complicated regulation can be untangled without delay,” concluded Mr Müller.

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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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