



## **“The voice of SMEs in Europe”**

### **Press Release**

FOR IMMEDIATE ISSUE

#### **Flexicurity must be a cornerstone for economic development**

**Brussels, 19 January 2006** Flexicurity is vital for economic development but stakeholders must take a broad approach to meet the security needs of workers, according to UEAPME, the European small and medium business organisation, at a meeting with European Social Affairs ministers in Austria today (Thursday).

“Security is a precondition for increasing flexibility but there is a need for all stakeholders to engage in the provision of security. Small businesses are not always able to provide the same kind of security at company level as large businesses, which have comprehensive training programmes, flexible leave of absence schemes and other tools at their disposal. Other stakeholders – be they government, employers organisations, chambers of commerce, trade unions or other intermediaries – must therefore play a role in ensuring that all members of the workforce remain active,” said **Hans-Werner Müller**, Secretary General of UEAPME.

“The security aspect of flexicurity should not just imply security within one sector, the workforce must be equipped to be adaptable and given the opportunity to acquire transferable skills, so that mobility between sectors and regions is possible.

“There is a general acceptance of the need for social and economic reforms in the EU but these two types of reform must go hand-in-hand. Forging ahead with economic reforms without the necessary social reforms will limit mobility in the labour market and hinders job creation, while implementing social reforms without a more dynamic economy will just lead to an increase in unemployment.”

Small businesses are particularly reliant on flexible working arrangements in order to survive and to remain competitive. This is true of all aspects of employment law, from contracts to working time. One concrete step in this direction would be to ensure the current revision of the Working Time Directive enables small businesses to stay flexible. UEAPME called on the Austrian Presidency to ensure inactive ‘on call’ time is not regarded as working time, that the reference period for working time be set at one year and that the option for the opt-out be retained both by individual and collective agreement.

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

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

Further information:

Richard More O’Ferrall, Press and Communications Officer

Tel: +32 2 230 7599/ GSM: +32 477 44 38 42

Email: [pressoffice@ueapme.com](mailto:pressoffice@ueapme.com) Web: [www.ueapme.com/pressroom](http://www.ueapme.com/pressroom)