



“The voice of SMEs in Europe”

Press Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Spring Summit: time for action on energy policy and Lisbon goals

Brussels, 14 March 2008. UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, was pleased by the focus on concrete actions put by today's Spring Council conclusions on critical policy dossiers such as energy and climate change and the new “Lisbon strategy cycle” for 2008-2011. It warned, however, that it is now more than ever time for action to transform commitments into results.

“Contrary to what we have often seen in the past, this year's Spring Summit conclusions are refreshingly sober and result-oriented”, commented Secretary General **Andrea Benassi**, who congratulated the Slovenian Presidency of the EU for its achievements. *“Member States committed themselves to a legislative marathon on energy policy, and gave new impetus and their full support to the renewed Lisbon Strategy. In both cases, the Council's message was that Europe has no time to sit back and relax – and we can only share this proactive attitude”,* he continued.

- On **energy policy**, Mr Benassi welcomed the Council's commitment to reach political consensus within this year and have legislation in place by the end of this Parliament's and Commission's term. *“It is clear to us that completing the energy internal market, securing energy supply and fighting climate change are all interlinked objectives that cannot be dealt with separately”,* he said. *“However, a serious shake-up of the internal market in the energy sector remains the overarching priority for SMEs”.* Mr Benassi also agreed on the overall objectives of the energy package and on the need for adaptation measures for energy-intensive businesses, but stressed that the burden must be shared and the reality of smaller enterprises must be taken into account. The energy package offers challenges but also opportunities for SMEs, stressed Mr Benassi, especially in sectors such as building renovations where the potential is high both for energy savings and for employment. UEAPME also confirmed that it is willing and ready to discuss with the other European Social Partners the social consequences of climate change and energy dependency, as mentioned during yesterday's Tripartite Social Summit.

- On the **Lisbon Strategy**, the Council rightly insisted on implementation rather than setting new targets, according to UEAPME. In fact, the renewed Lisbon Strategy is delivering and the integrated Lisbon guidelines have improved coherence and ownership, said Mr Benassi, who called on Member States to avoid “cherry-picking” among the existing objectives and to strengthen the involvement of Social Partners in the Lisbon process at national level. As far as the “Community Lisbon Programme” is concerned, the upcoming “Small Business Act for Europe” must be prioritised as a key deliverable. *“Despite the undeniable progress made, Europe and its Member States should not rest on their laurels. The Small Business Act is a unique opportunity to make growth sustainable by fostering crafts and SMEs, which are Europe's biggest asset and should be treated as such. We look forward to reading the first concrete proposals in this respect”,* concluded Mr Benassi.

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 85 member organisations, which represent crafts and SMEs across Europe, covering over 12 million enterprises with 50 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information: <http://www.ueapme.com/>

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