



Brussels, 12 March 2008

Lisbon Goals high on Spring Council Agenda, but biggest EU SME organization still excluded from Tripartite Social Summit

The annual European Spring Council which takes place this Thursday and Friday in Brussels will discuss the important Lisbon Agenda and the better regulation initiative of the European Commission. SME UNION President Leitl signaled that the Member States have to unconditionally support these goals now. **“It will be crucial that the goal of a reduction of administrative burdens for SMEs of 25% until 2012 will be a ‘net’ reduction.** Efforts on reducing administrative burdens by net 25% should be stepped up, in line with the European Council Conclusions of March 2007” explained President Leitl. “With the right hand the European Commission cuts down bureaucracy while at the same time with the left hand it introduces new burdens for EU businesses. Therefore a net goal is so important and has to be agreed on”, summarized the President of EPP’s business organization.

In the framework of the EU Spring summit the **Tripartite Social Summit** is regularly organized and aims to ensure the effective participation of the social partners in implementing the EU’s economic and social policies. “The EU wants to recognize the social partners’ crucial role in modernization and managing change at all levels. The participants in the Tripartite Social Summit are up to now organizations such as the European Trade Union (ETUC), BUSINESSEUROPE (industry), UEAPME (handcrafts), CEEP (public employers), heads of government of the current and two subsequent EU Presidencies and the European Commission. “It is a **unique scandal** that still in this process the Association of European Chambers of Commerce and Industry (EUROCHAMBRES), the **biggest EU SME umbrella organization and social partner** representing 19 million member enterprises with 140 million employees is **excluded** from this dialogue”, points out Leitl.

“Not only the **Tripartite Social Summit is weakened** by this fact but also all statements in favor of SMEs by EU politicians and business representatives remain without any value”, eludes the President. “The Tripartite Social Summit remains a **‘gathering with rips but without the backbone’**. The **alliance of big business with trade unions does not reflect the real situation of the European economy** and the SME UNION will do everything to correct this situation as soon as possible” reiterated Leitl.

The SME UNION is currently contributing to the **Small Business Act (SBA)** initiative and to the **administrative burden** high level group, but on the entrepreneurial level. “On both issues **concrete results have to be on the table by June**, if this Commission still plans to realistically implement these measures”, underlined President Leitl. “If the EU institutions will continue to ignore the biggest SME representation at the Tripartite Social Summit, it will be impossible to reach these important goals together”, concluded the SME UNION President.

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The SME UNION (Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Union) of the EPP (European People’s Party) is the business organization of the EPP and network of pro-business Christian-Democrat, Conservative and Center Right politicians and political organizations. As officially recognized EPP Association its main objective is to shape EU policy in a more SME friendly way. www.sme-union.org