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SME UNION President Leitl demands politically binding Small Business Act

„The European Small Business Act has the potential to completely change European SME policy. To make this happen, the SBA needs to be more than a replicating exercise of what already exists. It must become a **politically binding act for the European Commission, Parliament and the Member States**”, demanded SME UNION President Christoph Leitl after the Small Business Act was presented yesterday by the European Commission. To guarantee an efficient use of the SBA in the future, Leitl demands an **inter-institutional agreement between the three mentioned institutions** that ensures the application of the ten principles of the SBA in European legislation and administration.

President Leitl pointed out the importance of the “Think Small First” principle which will be included irreversibly in EU legislation and administration with the SBA: “On the basis of the all-encompassing ‘Think Small First’ principle, any legal act should be drafted from the viewpoint of SMEs and meet the criteria of necessity, proportionality, ‘once only’ and subsidiarity. ”To ensure the lasting success of the SBA, the SME UNION asks for systematic and independent impact assessment procedures that document real progress in legislation and administration (including cost-benefit analyses for SMEs), and timely consultations of representative business organizations.

The SBA contains a lot of improvements for SMEs, from Better Regulation to special regulations concerning national funding or access to public tenders. “This could be a good **base and a first step towards a serious European SME policy**”, said President Leitl. “The SBA will contribute to the reduction of European bureaucracy by 25 percent. SMEs have great expectations. The EU SME policy must not let them down!” The head of the EPP business organization welcomed the **inclusion of core SME UNION demands** into the SBA such as the “**Erasmus for young entrepreneurs**” project, the special support for **women entrepreneurship**, the fight against **late payments** and the improvement of the EU **micro-credit** support schemes.

Leitl hailed the great cooperation with EU SME Commissioner Günter Verheugen for the joint fight for SMEs. Nevertheless, the **SME “Low” Level Group (LLG) to fight administrative burdens**, initiated by the SME UNION came up with an in-depth analysis of the EU Commission ‘priority areas’ for the measurement of administrative burdens deriving from information obligations. 21 concrete proposals to free European SMEs from unnecessary and burdensome red tape were hammered out by the SME UNION and partners in the last six months and were presented to Commission Vice-President Verheugen at the beginning of this month. “**Our concrete proposals now have to be included into the final version of the SBA**”, concluded SME UNION President Leitl.

Further information: sme@sme-union.org, www.sme-union.org; Tel: +32/2/233 38 38

SME UNION (Small and Medium Entrepreneurs Union) of the EPP (European People’s Party) is the network of pro-business Christian-Democrat, Conservative and Liberal politicians and political organizations. Its main objective is to help in shaping EU policy in a more SME friendly way. www.sme-union.org