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SME UNION President Leitl and EU Commissioner Verheugen agree on concrete proposals to address concerns of SMEs in three months, not in three years

“EU Commission Vice-President Verheugen and I fully agree that the efforts to address the concerns of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Europe have to speed up”, said SME UNION President Christoph Leitl after his meeting with Günter Verheugen on Tuesday in Strasbourg. Commissioner Verheugen is in charge of enterprise and industry. The SME UNION, the business organization of the EPP, urges the European Commission to propose a Small Business Act (SBA) in order to provide binding guidelines and provisions tailored especially for SMEs.

“The SBA should draw together different existing provisions and introduce new ones for small businesses in various policies and laws. Commissioner Verheugen and I agreed that we will aim at reducing administrative burdens for SMEs, to increase their participation in EU programs, to insure their share in public procurement, to give them easier access to standardization and to reduce obstacles to cross-border trade”, explained President Leitl. SME UNION President Leitl underlined that “small is beautiful, but too small is often not helpful for receiving support. SMEs are often too small in Europe and they are sometimes less innovative, have less exports and employ less people compared to the US.” Therefore, the “Think Small First” principle should be a guiding principle in all relevant legislation and law-making. Vice-President Verheugen had an open ear for President Leitl’s suggestions and vowed to take them into account in his future actions and initiatives.

Leitl and Verheugen also discussed the progress made in the fight against red tape: To support and stimulate the Commission’s „High Level Expert Group” for Better Regulation, the SME UNION together with EUROCHAMBRES and Jade - has set up a „Low” Level Group of real entrepreneurs.

„The SME UNION fully supports the Better regulation initiative of the European Commission”, emphasized President Leitl. The Commission wants to cut the red tape burden by 25 percent by 2012. Leitl wants to go even further: He demands to cut the administrative burden by 25 percent on a net worth with 2008 as the basis year. „This would be a real figure, not a pseudo-figure” 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