



UNION EUROPEENNE DE L'ARTISANAT ET DES PETITES ET MOYENNES ENTREPRISES
EUROPÄISCHE UNION DES HANDWERKS UND DER KLEIN- UND MITTELBETRIEBE
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF CRAFT, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES
UNIONE EUROPEA DELL' ARTIGIANATO E DELLE PICCOLE E MEDIE IMPRESE

16 May 2002

UNICE AND UEAPME CALL ON EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT TO IMPROVE THE PROPOSAL ON ENVIRONMENTAL LIABILITY

In view of the 21 May public hearing in the European Parliament on the Commission's environmental liability proposal, UNICE and UEAPME urgently call on the legislator to devise a reasonable and manageable Community framework for environmental liability which is both quantifiable and insurable.

UNICE and UEAPME are deeply concerned about the proposal which would expose companies to unlimited liability claims for damage to biodiversity which is difficult to define and which is not quantifiable. As a consequence, companies, whether big or small, risk facing disproportionate and ruinous claims against which they may be unable to insure themselves.

The legislator should provide concrete measures aimed at avoiding disproportionate and ruinous claims and develop clear criteria for quantifying damage. In addition, the legislator should ascertain insurability. Insurability is an absolute pre-requisite for any form of liability. UNICE and UEAPME also call on the legislator not to undermine existing legislation by imposing liability for authorised activities and hinder innovation by imposing liability for activities which were not considered harmful when they took place.

The principle of legal certainty should be respected and a fair balance should be struck between the need to protect the environment and the need for business to create wealth and jobs in Europe. UNICE and UEAPME urgently call on the legislator to clarify and improve the Commission's proposal and devise a manageable Community framework for environmental liability which is quantifiable and insurable and which allows business to assess the risks involved and the extent to which their activities may be affected.

Note to the editor:

UNICE is the official voice of more than 16 million small, medium and large companies active in Europe, employing over 106 million people. Active in European affairs since 1958, UNICE's members are 34 central industrial and employers federations from 27 countries, working together to achieve growth and competitiveness in Europe.

UEAPME (Union Européenne de l'Artisanat et des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises / European Association of Craft, Small & Medium-sized Enterprises) is the employers' organisation representing craft, trades and SMEs in Europe (EU and countries applying for accession to the EU). It represents, through 70 national and European sectoral federations, over 10 million enterprises which employ over 50 million people (EU figures, based on the membership of 22 national full member organisations: 8 million enterprises; 35 million employees). It is non-profit seeking and non-partisan, and promotes the interests of its member organisations at European level.

For further information, please contact:

Erik Berggren: +32(0)2 237 65 55; www.unice.org

Guido Lena: +32(0)2 230 75 99; www.ueapme.com