



Europe takes action to promote non-discrimination and diversity in small and medium-sized enterprises

Limassol, 29.09.2006 - For two days in September, Limassol is to become the centre of the promotion of diversity in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). On 29th and 30th September, representatives from over 140 enterprises and business associations from all 25 EU Member States will meet for the "EU Conference – The Benefits of Diversity and Inclusion for Small and Medium-Sized Businesses 2006". It will be opened by the Cypriot Minister of Labour and Social Insurance, H.E. Antonis Vassiliou, and Lenia Samuel, Deputy Director General, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission. This conference offers a unique platform for exchanging experiences in implementing diversity and non-discrimination initiatives within SMEs.

SMEs are a huge asset to Europe, employing around 75 million people and accounting for 99 per cent of all enterprises within the EU. As diversity policies are often only practiced in larger companies employing more than 250 people, the European Commission identified a need within the SME community for more information about this important issue. The conference has been designed to be as interactive and practical as possible: the information tool, "**Diversity at work – 8 steps for small and medium-sized businesses**", which will be launched at the conference, provides hands-on guidance on how to ensure diversity becomes an integral part of the business strategy for SMEs. Additionally, an exhibition on good practice examples from diverse companies will serve as a central point for business exchange. Delegates have the opportunity to learn how to develop a diversity strategy in an interactive way in 3 workshops and diversity training sessions.

"Diversity is reflected across all sectors of society, but perhaps nowhere more so than at the workplace. Therefore, it is essential that SMEs know about European antidiscrimination rules and are aware of the benefits diversity strategies can bring to their businesses," says Lenia Samuel, Deputy Director General, Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, European Commission. "The idea of this conference is to respond to the information needs of SMEs by providing hands-on training and presenting some very practical tools on how to start to value diversity in their workplace. We hope therefore that through this conference participants learn from each other and their experiences."

Following an invitation by the Cypriot government, the conference is taking place in Cyprus. It forms part of the EU-wide campaign "For Diversity. Against Discrimination", an information initiative financed by



For Diversity



Against Discrimination

the European Commission about people's right to equality and protection from discrimination, especially in employment. The campaign truck that is currently touring Europe will also visit the conference in Limassol on the way to its final destination in Pafos, Cyprus, where a "Diversity Day" with entertainment, games and roundtable discussions will await visitors on 1st October.

Press photos will be available at 14:00 CET on the website www.conference.stop-discrimination.info

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