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MANIFESTO

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS 2019

UNIEP – The International Association of Painting Contractors in the Construction sector represents more than 60,000 businesses through its 18 Member Associations in 14 European Countries and employs around 280,000 Professional Painters.

UNIEP is a member of UEAPME – The European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises which is a recognised European Social Partner.

UNIEP draws the attention of the European Parliament on the political priorities for the Painters/Decorators in the building sector at the EU level in view of the elections of May 2019.

The main objective for the Painting Contractors in Europe remains to build-up the **best political and economic environment for SMEs**, in particular:

- Restoring the image of the profession through the improvement and the harmonization of European qualifications and promoting sectoral skills by equalizing school education with vocational training, supported by EU programmes;
- Making access to finance faster and easier for the European painting trade, especially with respect to SMEs investing in energetic refurbishment and digitalisation;
- Developing fair conditions for an increased competitiveness in Europe as a result of harmonized national employment standards and uniform/common rules;
- Preserving health and safety for all workers in the Union, by means of stricter and business-friendly environmental regulation in the workplace.

1) UNIEP recalls the importance of professional qualifications and vocational training at the same level of school education to restore the image of Painters and ensure new and qualified young people to the sector.

UNIEP points out that *vocational training at the same level as school education* comes closest to improving the performance, quality and attractiveness of the profession as well as to securing new and qualified young people to this sector. Education to entrepreneurship in the form of Vocational Training needs to be accorded greater focus and higher training should be much more valued in promoting the image of the painting and varnishing profession.

Likewise, steps forward in the *European Qualification Framework (EQF)* must be undertaken to render a much reliable instrument for recognizing qualifications in the sector. UNIEP is greatly convinced that the effectiveness and efficiency of education and training systems in the Member States should be improved *at the European Level* in order to raise the overall level of qualifications and quickly adapt to the needs of the labour market.

UNIEP also largely advocates for learning mobility in Europe for apprentices, vocational school pupils and prospective master craftsmen through its ongoing Erasmus+ projects. The EU Institutions should continue supporting Painting Contractors in promoting Vocational Training and mobility of apprentices *through Erasmus+ programme successors*, doubling/tripling those funds which showed to be essential for carrying out fundamental professional initiatives such as upgrading tutors' training, improving work-based learning systems and facilitating the insertion of the apprentice in the marketplace.

2) UNIEP calls for a faster and easier access to finance, especially for business start-ups and SMEs undertaking investments in Digitalisation and Energetic refurbishment.

As digitalisation is essential for painting companies, the EU should assist Painting Contractors in acquiring digital skills and UNIEP strongly calls on the European Institutions to financially support the sector in such transformation process. At this end, the post-2020 *Multiannual Financial Framework* shall help identifying the skills needed in digital construction, upskilling, empower workers, and co-finance sector initiatives to attract young people. At the same time, further sectorial financing is required to invest in IT infrastructure.

UNIEP also advocates start-up financing for the energetic refurbishment of indoor and outdoor buildings as an employment initiative in the craft sector.

3) UNIEP welcomes a proper functioning of the Internal market through the respect of fair conditions, uniform employment standards and national common rules.

UNIEP reminds the importance of free movement of people and services in achieving the future advance of the Common Market although warns about the respect of fair competition. Undeclared work and bogus self-employment still threaten fair competition and SMEs complying with the rules and respecting labour social rights are posed an unjust burden.

UNIEP welcomed the *Directive on posting of workers* which allows Member States to introduce further justified and proportionate control measures and administrative requirements. European Painting contractors also sustain the creation of the new *European Labour Authority* and believe in a competitive business environment that is based on a better control system through improved cooperation of National Social Security Bodies.

4) UNIEP draws the attention on the preservation of health and safety for workers by means of stricter and business-friendly environmental regulations in the workplace.

UNIEP remains actively committed to raising the awareness of our entrepreneurs, especially painting contractors and workers, on the risk and danger they may be exposed to at work. The association is convinced that the EU Institutions should persist in helping businesses – above all SME's – in their efforts to comply with the existing legislative framework, and put a bigger focus on results rather than paperwork.

UNIEP expressly stands against the decision to classify titanium dioxide as possibly carcinogenic: as studies have shown, in so far as the pigment is firmly anchored to the material matrix, there is no risk to processors and consumers. Moreover, strict dust limits have long existed for processing in industry and the pigment is treated in closed-production cycles.

The Secretary General
Patrizia Di Mauro

p.dimauro@uniep.eu
+32 (0)472 943883

