



*"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"*

## **Heads of State need to deliver now on youth expectations for jobs, say SMEs**

*The urgency of the situation must push for immediate national implementation of EU Youth Employment initiative*

Paris, 12 November 2013 –Gunilla Almgren, UEAPME President, represented Crafts and SMEs in Paris during the conference where Heads of State and Labour Ministers joined for a follow-up and first assessment of the initiatives taken since the Berlin meet-up in July. She recalled that tackling youth unemployment has to remain the key priority in Europe and emphasised the urgency of the situation and the lack of change since Berlin. UEAPME insisted that implementation of Youth employment programmes and support to SMEs must be put at the top of the list of priorities for Member States. Youth unemployment has steadily increased since the first meeting four months ago and focus therefore needs to be placed on bettering the situation, through vocational training and facilitating the hiring process. All in all, the message was that immediate action needs to be taken by national governments as from right now.

At the Second Youth Employment Conference in Paris, four months after the event in Berlin, UEAPME President **Gunilla Almgren** focused her intervention on the fact that urgent action needs to be taken by governments as from right now: *"We are in a crucial situation when it comes to fighting youth unemployment, it is a matter of economic, social and human urgency to provide our young generation with better perspectives for their future. Indeed, the Youth Guarantee was adopted in February this year but still nothing concrete has changed at national level. The fact that there is no visibility on actions only creates further frustration, as it leads to a lost generation and a negative impact on the vision of Europe."* The problem literally resides in the fact that the Multiannual Financial Framework adoption has yet to be finalised, meaning that the money is not actually available to fund the €6bn Youth Employment Initiative as agreed upon in June. Ms Almgren therefore urged Heads of State and Ministers to get their act together now, to take their responsibility in this issue and to adopt national plans to tackle youth unemployment and use the EU funds as quickly as possible.

Along these lines, Ms Almgren put forward the necessity to foster growth and job creation and to improve employability of young people, as previously identified in the Social Partners' Framework of Actions on Youth Employment. This has to be done through promotion of vocational education and training, work-based learning and apprenticeships.

Another condition to solve this problem is to facilitate the hiring of young people by small companies, through specific agreements and targeted incentives reducing labour costs. *"Not only do we need to make young people more hireable through training and apprenticeships, we also need to create the right conditions on the labour market to make SMEs able to employ young people"*, said Ms Almgren.

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**EDITORS' NOTES:** UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 80 member organisations covering over 12 million enterprises with 55 million employees. UEAPME is a European Social Partner. For further information please visit <http://www.ueapme.com/> or follow [@UEAPME](https://twitter.com/UEAPME) on Twitter.

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