



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Current policies not sufficient to enable SMEs to grow and create jobs

UEAPME asks for new financial instruments and for reforms to make investments in real economy more attractive

Brussels, 20th March 2014 – At the Tripartite Social Summit today, UEAPME President Gunilla Almgren explained that the anti-crisis policies have so far not succeeded in bringing Europe’s economy back to sustainable growth allowing companies to create new jobs and ensure social stability. Referring to the results of the EU SME Barometer – conducted by UEAPME, the European Craft and SME employers’ organisation – President Almgren demonstrated that SMEs are specifically suffering from low internal demand and lack of access to finance. It is only if we create an attractive environment for investors and companies to channel the huge amount of cheap money available into real economy investments that Europe will be able to grow again and reduce the unacceptably large unemployment rate. This therefore requires new financial instruments for SMEs, a re-design of industrial policy aiming to increase SME competitiveness as well as more efforts to implement reforms on products and labour markets.

“Our main concern today is that our small companies are unable to finance their investments to start the recovery we are all waiting for,” stated President **Gunilla Almgren** when referring to the extensive amount of cheap money available but not reaching SMEs as there is no investment in the real economy. *“We need a shift of financial spending towards the real economy,”* she continued, *“without additional efforts to provide access to finance to SMEs, there will be no job-rich economy”*. President Almgren closed this topic by reminding participants of the fact that SMEs still suffer from late payments by public authorities and larger enterprises.

On energy policy, she mentioned that *“energy prices are crucial for SME competitiveness and competitiveness is crucial for a European recovery.”* She went on to say that *“the SME dimension needs to be integrated to all EU policies and should therefore be at the centre of a renewed European industrial policy.”*

President Almgren’s message was supported by the results of the UEAPME EU SME Barometer⁽¹⁾, published earlier this week, and which she used to explain that *“contrary to last year’s SME expectations, the ongoing downturn did not come to a halt in 2013. There is no definite certainty that recovery will take place throughout 2014 and there will especially be no additional employment in the SME sector.”* She went on to say that *“the SME sector is lagging behind the slight recovery we encounter for the economy as a whole as they depend more so on internal demand than larger companies and suffer from lack of access to finance.”*

As for social partner participation, President Almgren stated that it should be common sense that it is insufficient to involve social partners only in the implementation of reforms. One can only expect ownership and commitments from social partners if they are involved in the whole process starting with the design of a policy, the formulation of recommendations and reform programmes as well as their implementation.

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(1) The full survey results of the EU SME Barometer can be downloaded [here](#)

EDITORS’ NOTES: The **EU Craft and SME Barometer** builds on the results of surveys conducted by UEAPME members in different regions all over Europe. The **SME Business Climate Index** is an average of companies that have reported positive or stable business situations and expect a positive or stable development for the next period. It can range from 100 (all positive or neutral) to 0 (all negative).

UEAPME is the employers’ organisation representing 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](#) on Twitter.

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