



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

SMEs welcome EU Skills Agenda for better and more relevant skills

Ensuring education on specific skills

Brussels, 10th June 2016 – Today, the Commission published its Agenda for better skills, improved employability and skills matches on the labour market. Such efforts are highly necessary to respond to the changing world of work and adapt education systems for more growth, jobs and social inclusion. Crafts and SMEs welcome the new Skills Agenda for Europe. Avoiding skills shortages and mismatches is one of the major SME concerns throughout Europe. More efforts on Education and Training reforms will be crucial to ensure that the skills delivered are relevant for the economy, especially SMEs, and for society. However the new skills guarantee might create expectations which will be difficult to meet unless supported by additional EU financial means.

Commenting on the Skills Agenda, **UEAPME Secretary General Peter Faross** said:

"UEAPME's priority is to make education systems more responsive to the labour market, and ensure that the skills taught are relevant for people's lives and for the economy. This starts with basic skills such as literacy and numeracy, but also digital skills. Digitalisation of society has a tremendous impact on what students need to learn, so we need to act fast."

"Making VET a first choice is essential. Work-based learning including cost-effective apprenticeships are crucial for employability of young people and competitiveness of the economy. Skills delivered by such systems are those most requested today by employers. This calls for a more active promotion of VET excellence also at higher level."

On the Skills Guarantee for low-skilled adults, *"an ageing population, persistent high unemployment and skills mismatches require decisive actions to upgrade basic skills among the less qualified workforce. However let's be careful not to create too high expectations with a 'guarantee' without providing additional financial means. Delivering basic skills is the primary responsibility of national E&T systems. SMEs cannot be held responsible for filling such skills gaps."*

On the European Qualification Framework, *"the EQF needs indeed to be further implemented as a consistent transparency tool to compare the content of qualifications in view of facilitating labour mobility. This requires a strong involvement of social partners at all levels."*

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing Crafts and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 64 member organisations covering about 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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