



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

For successful future of Europe SMEs need better framework conditions

President Rabmer-Koller meets Internal Market Commissioner Bienkowska

Brussels, 23rd May 2017 – The Commission's proposals to further develop the Internal Market and support Start-ups, the improvement of the framework conditions for SMEs, and the White Paper on the future of Europe were at the centre of a meeting between UEAPME⁽¹⁾ President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller and Internal Market Commissioner Elzbieta Bienkowska today in Vienna.

"The fragmentation of the internal market hinders SMEs and start-ups in their growth. Other major problems are: access to finance, regulatory and bureaucratic burden, different tax systems as well as the challenges of digitalisation", stressed UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller in the talk with Internal Market Commissioner Bienkowska.

The EU Commission as well as Member States must therefore much more take into account the needs of SMEs in the development of European legislation, Ms Rabmer-Koller said that: *"SMEs must be the reference for economic policies at EU level. Words must be followed by deeds."* It is also important that the focus of EU policies be set more strongly again on traditional SMEs and family businesses. *"SMEs are especially the ones creating sustainable jobs and offering vocational training, and they are therefore indispensable if Europe wants to be a business region."*

Ms Rabmer-Koller also demanded to strengthen the parts in the next Innovation and Research Framework Programme (FP9) which support entrepreneurial research and innovation activities. For that, especially sufficient financial resources and simpler access for SMEs have to be ensured. *"Supporting research, development and innovation is the best possibility to increase competitiveness and the research and innovation performance in science and economy in the EU. And research and innovation clearly are among the areas in which "more Europe" is of advantage for all",* said Ms Rabmer-Koller.

With regard to the White Paper on the future of Europe, Ms Rabmer-Koller informed Commissioner Bienkowska that UEAPME and its members have started an active dialogue with SMEs about the EU, to inquire about their expectations, needs and problems. *"One thing is already clear, when further developing the EU, we need to shape the internal market to be more business friendly and we need to be serious about cutting red tape."*

(1) the European SME Employers' Association

**** END ****

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.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Gerhard Huemer, Economic Policy Director, Tel. +32 2 230 75 99, Email: g.huemer@ueapme.com
Jenny Manin, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 496 52 03 29, Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com