



*“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”*

## **Europe's SMEs are already pioneers for sustainability**

***President Rabmer-Koller at G7 Environment Ministers Meeting: No new commitments for Europe's businesses***

Brussels, 12<sup>th</sup> June 2017 – Yesterday, UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller participated in a side event of the G7 Environment Ministers Meeting, where for the first time SMEs have been invited. The event, organised by the Italian Government in Bologna, aimed at presenting the vision of companies on sustainable development. Ms Rabmer-Koller reiterated that many SMEs have already committed themselves to environment friendly services and production processes and see this as a factor for competitiveness. Therefore, SMEs are pioneers for sustainability and in order to keep this dynamic, it is of the utmost importance that the ideas and commitments materialise from the companies' side and not be prescribed by law. SME can also in future contribute to climate and environment protection, but they need less bureaucratic burden and access to skills, resources and finance. Harmonised international standards and assessment instruments can create added value and synergies. However, from an SME point of view, such standards must stay voluntary.

UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller offers the following quotes:

*“A multitude of companies, not just internationally active corporations but also many SMEs acting at national level, have already committed themselves voluntarily to sustainable economic practices. Sustainability is a competitive factor for these companies. It is important to emphasise that the ideas and the commitment come from the individual companies and are not prescribed by law.”*

*“From the point of view of European businesses, harmonised standards for sustainability based on international standards can create added value when they are voluntary. In the future, we should strengthen the synergies between different assessment instruments rather than create new commitments.”*

*“However, the application of such standards must be voluntary. We can see a clear trend towards additional legally binding standards and multinational companies are forcing SMEs more and more into compulsory responsibilities. For this reason, we clearly oppose new commitments, since Europe's companies are pioneers in sustainability. This is true not only for environmental concerns, but also for social challenges, such as the respect of human rights.”*

*“Therefore, Europe does not need new commitments and obligations, because we are already at the forefront as regards sustainability. What is needed for a successful climate policy are positive incentives and we need to create a win-win situation for ecology and economy.”*

*“SMEs, as the engine of the European economy and the driving force for innovation, growth and jobs. They also play an important role in climate change and sustainable development. But we have to ensure the right environment for them. SMEs should not suffer from unnecessary bureaucratic burdens and need access to skills, resources and finance.”*

\*\*\*\* 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](mailto:g.huemer@ueapme.com)

Jenny Manin, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 496 52 03 29, Email: [pressoffice@ueapme.com](mailto:pressoffice@ueapme.com)