



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

SMEs welcome EU Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships

Proposal a good basis for boosting apprenticeship in Crafts and SMEs

Brussels, 5th October 2017 – UEAPME welcomes today's Commission proposal of a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. Crafts and SMEs, as main providers of apprenticeship in Europe, support the proposal, which includes many of their requests with regard to the support that is needed, the demand-led approach, the time to be spent in the company, and their involvement in the governance of apprenticeship systems. UEAPME has consistently put forward there requests in the past and more recently in the joint work of social partners and Member States on this issue. This work has now proven a good basis for the proposal, since it is based on real needs of employers and learners, and expressed through true partnership. Apprenticeship is beneficial for Crafts and SMEs since it not only enhances the possibility of good employment for young people, but also responds to the skills needs of the businesses.

In the past years, UEAPME has worked hard to promote and improve apprenticeship as one of the most advanced forms of effective vocational education and training (VET) in Europe. **Secretary General Véronique Willems** expresses her satisfaction regarding the new proposal: *"Apprenticeship is the best pathway for young people to get a job, and for small businesses to recruit skilled workers. It is good to see that so many of our requests have been taken on board. Crafts and SMEs need the right framework conditions for providing more apprenticeship placements."*

These conditions entail having support structures in place to help, for example with matching of students and enterprises, handling the paperwork, and designing curricula and training arrangements.

Secretary General Véronique Willems said that the proposed framework takes these elements well on board: *"In particular, the criterion that at least half of the apprenticeship should take place in the workplace is the best recognition that businesses are genuine learning environments, and not only schools. This is important for UEAPME."*

During the whole process towards this framework, UEAPME has repeatedly advocated that for apprenticeship to be attractive for employers, strong cooperation is required between the world of business and the world of education and training at all levels. This means in particular the involvement of social partners in the design, governance and implementation of apprenticeship as proposed by the Commission. Ms Willems added, *"The involvement of SME organisations in the partnership will highly contribute to further motivating Crafts and SMEs to invest and engage in apprenticeship and fully grasp its benefits"*.

Ms Willems said that *"UEAPME appreciates the criteria for the framework conditions, and in particular the support to be provided for small, medium size and micro companies as well as mobility as a component of apprenticeships."* This will definitely help increase the image and esteem of VET for young people and their parents. *"However, some questions still remain regarding the criteria for learning and working conditions. For social protection and for work, health and safety conditions, the criteria are unclear and may create issues at national level. The next step should be making this a reality on the ground, and expanding apprenticeship to all sectors and levels of education with a focus on Higher VET."* concluded Ms Willems.

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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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