



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

UEAPME discusses youth unemployment and access to finance at the European Summit

Access to finance: the key for growth and jobs. Employment of young people has to become attractive to businesses

Brussels, 27 June 2013 – Young people's employability and access to loan finance both need to be improved throughout Europe. This was the main message put forward by Gunilla Almgren, President of UEAPME, the European craft and SME employers' organisation, through her intervention at the European Council today. The European Social Partners were invited to attend the meeting for the first time in their role as European Social Partner and took the opportunity to present important elements of their newly adopted social partners' joint framework of actions and discussed problems of access to finance for businesses.

"Small companies, the ones creating the majority of jobs in Europe, are very much suffering from the current recession, characterised by a lack of demand and a lack of access to finance in many Member States. Both factors translate into an increasing rate of unemployment, which created a dramatic situation as regards youth unemployment in some regions. It is therefore urgent to act swiftly and tackle this unacceptable situation," introduced **Gunilla Almgren**, UEAPME President, during her speech at the European Council on the topics of youth unemployment and access to finance.

Concerning youth unemployment, President Almgren recalled the two most important priorities for small companies enclosed in the social partners' newly adopted joint framework of actions: **"Improving the employability of young people with a focus on promoting vocational education and training systems, work-based learning and apprenticeship is truly essential; as is improving the labour market functioning and reducing labour cost in order to facilitate the hiring of young people.** European support should therefore be made conditional to the implementation of the country specific recommendation as regards employment."

Access to finance being the key to growth and jobs, small companies need more of it so as to enable them to commit to hiring young people. **"Loan finance access will not improve without additional public support and we therefore welcome the new proposal from the EC and EIB recommending using public money, especially from Structural Funds, to support securitisation of SME loans,** hence supporting the selling of SME loan portfolios to private investors if the freed capital is used for new loans to SMEs. Though, this requires further changes in the structural funds regulations, which has to be supported by the Council. However, it will depend on your national governments and regional structures to use the money from structural funds to provide such finance instruments, which can create high leverage effects," Almgren reminded the present Heads of States and Governments.

"It will be crucial for Europe to show its capacity in tackling these truly urgent problems. Therefore, the Council should not end before having delivered concrete actions to help young people and SMEs in Europe," she concluded.

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively 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](https://twitter.com/UEAPME) on Twitter.

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