



*"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"*

## **EU common challenges will not be solved without SMEs**

*SMEs are recovering but the right framework conditions for competitiveness are needed to create jobs*

Brussels, 19<sup>th</sup> October 2016 – Today, at the Tripartite Social Summit, the European Social Partners met with the Presidents of European Council and Commission, as well as with the Troika of Head of States, to discuss the current EU common challenges: growth, jobs and fairness. UEAPME<sup>(1)</sup> President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller focused her intervention on recalling that SMEs, as the backbone of the economy, can only create jobs with a boost in investments and with the right framework conditions for competitiveness. More flexible working patterns will be crucial to seize the opportunities related to digitalisation. Additionally, the refugee crisis is still topical and good economic perspectives are needed to facilitate the refugees' integration across Europe. Finally, a stronger involvement of Social Partners in the European Semester process is necessary for ownership of reforms. Therefore, capacity building, especially for SME associations in some Member States, is a precondition to a new start for social dialogue.

After the Tripartite Social Dialogue meeting, **UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller** stated:

*"Our latest EU SME Barometer<sup>(2)</sup> shows that SMEs' recovery continues despite obvious uncertainties notably due to the Brexit. There is new optimism for micro-enterprises and for the construction sector. This new optimism should foster new investments which in turn should boost growth and job creation. It is therefore crucial to ensure that SMEs can finance their investment projects. This is why I appreciate President Juncker's European Investment funds' support to SME finance and why I asked him to increase the SME window in the planned prolongation. However, we must not overburden our regional banks given that they will remain the number one source of finance for SMEs."*

The general challenges to overcome are still the low growth and lack of investments, very high unemployment rates, migration and new challenges due to digitalisation. On these subjects, including the upcoming Brexit negotiations, the EU Social Partners issued a joint statement<sup>(3)</sup> ahead of the Summit.

*"In this context, the European Pillar of Social Rights should support labour market reforms through benchmarks. The social acquis is broad enough, adding new regulatory burdens will hamper the SME development. Furthermore, the necessary reforms for improving the functioning of national labour markets will require more ownership and involvement from national social partners. This is one of the key outcomes of the joint statement 'A new start for social dialogue'<sup>(4)</sup> signed in June with the Commission, Council and EU Social Partners. As part of the necessary efforts, social partners' capacity building should be enhanced notably for our SME organisations to fully play their role."*

(1) the European SME Employer Association

(2) The full survey results can be downloaded at [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/160314\\_Barometer16H2.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/160314_Barometer16H2.pdf)

(3) EU Social Partners' joint statement: [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/2016-10-18\\_Statement\\_of\\_the\\_European\\_Social\\_Partners.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/2016-10-18_Statement_of_the_European_Social_Partners.pdf)

(4) A new start for social dialogue statement: [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/Quadrupartite\\_Statement\\_-\\_A\\_New\\_Start\\_for\\_Social\\_Dialogue.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/Quadrupartite_Statement_-_A_New_Start_for_Social_Dialogue.pdf)

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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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