



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

SMEs needs support to profit from digitalisation and the 4.0 age

UEAPME General Assembly welcomed Commissioner Oettinger to discuss digital single market and SMEs

Brussels, 16th December 2016 – UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller welcomed EU Commissioner Günther Oettinger, responsible for Digital Economy & Society, at yesterday's General Assembly of the European Craft and SME Association. After Mr Oettinger's presentation on the Digital Single Market initiative and its impact on SMEs, the debate with SME representatives from all over Europe focused on the potential benefits of this fast moving digital age, but also on the risks for smaller companies.



"SMEs are aware that using the opportunities of digitalisation will be crucial for innovation, job creating and growth in future", underlined UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller in the debate with Commissioner Oettinger at the UEAPME General Assembly. She continued by saying that "digitalisation can create new business opportunities for SMEs and can strengthen their competitiveness, but only if the right conditions are provided". Investments in ITC infrastructure and digital skills have to be at the focus of joint European efforts. "Europe cannot fall further behind other regions in the world, but must invest in catching-up with the best", stated President Rabmer-Koller as she demanded for more focused actions at all levels.

Therefore, the second phase of the European Funds for Strategic Investments and the review of the current Multiannual Financial Framework should give more focus towards digital competitiveness. Ms Rabmer-Koller expressed SMEs' expectations in Europe by saying that *"Significant resources are needed to modernise infrastructure, to invest in digital skills, and to support mobility and innovation"*.

Other than support for independent and accurate information and advisory services, SMEs in Europe also need fair competition and legal certainty as well as the necessary flexibility on labour markets to cope with the challenges of a digital world.

UEAPME and its member organisations are taking actions to face this digital challenge, which include awareness raising through projects like [CloudingSMEs](#), exchange of good practices and in the framework of social dialogue, where a [joint statement on digitalisation](#) with the other EU social partners has been adopted and future joint work will be done as part of the [EU Social Partners' Work Programme 2017](#).

**** 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](#) on Twitter.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:

Gerhard Huemer, Economic Policy Director, Tel. +32 (0)2 230 7599, Email: g.huemer@ueapme.com
Jenny Manin, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 (0)496 520 329, Email: pressoffice@ueapme.com