



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

## **SMEs call for a different approach on work-life balance**

*The EU directive will create high burdens and costs for SMEs; the real obstacle is the lack of adequate care*

Brussels, 19 July 2017 – Today, at the informal Ministers' Meeting for Labour and Social affairs in Tallinn, Secretary General Véronique Willems explains why UEAPME rejects the proposal on work-life balance. While the Commission wants to expand the amount of leaves at high costs which entail taking people out of the labour market, the SME employers would like to see more focus on investments in support services so that men and women have a real choice. In a position paper<sup>(1)</sup> presented, UEAPME criticises that the proposal does not take into account the reality of SMEs and the impact on their work organisation. As Ms Willems explained in Tallinn, this will be at the expense of entrepreneurs and jeopardise their own work-life balance. Therefore UEAPME calls for a different approach which focusses on the amount and quality of support services and care facilities to give parents and care-givers a real choice for their working and private lives.

Commenting on the work-life balance discussions, **UEAPME Secretary General Véronique Willems** stated:

*"We support the objectives of promoting equal opportunities, a good work-life balance, and increasing female labour market participation. However, the proposal does not take into account the reality of small businesses, the impact on work organisation, and hence employment opportunities and job creation."*

*"The proposal on the Work-Life Balance Directive expands all sorts of leave opportunities for employees (women and men). This will decrease women's participation in the labour market and also confront SMEs in particular with substantial costs and burdens."*

*"UEAPME rejects the additional pressure put on SMEs due to the increased flexibility needed for working arrangements and leaves. This will be at the expense of entrepreneurs who have to compensate for the absence of employees and hence jeopardise their own work-life balance."*

*"UEAPME's way forward would be to invest in support services and care infrastructure for parents and carers. The availability of accessible, affordable, and quality (child) care facilities and services is paramount to giving parents and care-givers a real choice for their working and private lives."*

*"We are really concerned with the costs and burdens the Commission's proposal will put on small businesses. Imagine a company with 4 or 5 employees (which is the average size in Europe) each having very specific skills. If half take leaves for a longer period, the business will end up in serious difficulties. The company does not have the means to substitute everyone, and the first to suffer are the employer and the remaining employees."*

(1) [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME\\_position\\_on\\_Work-life\\_Balance\\_Directive.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/UEAPME_position_on_Work-life_Balance_Directive.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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