



*“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”*

## **Skills shortages: a threat for SMEs**

*European Vocational Skills Week, a good occasion to address skills shortages and mismatches*

**Brussels, 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2017** – The 2<sup>nd</sup> European Vocational Skills Week is a real opportunity to showcase the high value of Vocational Education and Training in Europe. It is a unique opportunity to promote and recognise the importance of vocational skills acquired on the job through national, regional and local events taking place across Europe, many of them organised by UEAPME members.

On the occasion of the Skills Week, **Secretary General Véronique Willems** said: *“People – young and old – with hands-on experience will benefit from vocational skills for their entire professional career, either as entrepreneurs or as skilled workers. SMEs are looking for them to remain competitive and ensure their future growth”.*

Crafts and SMEs need the right skills to develop their business. The UEAPME SME Barometer<sup>(1)</sup> recently indicated that SMEs have put forward the skills shortages and mismatches as having a negative impact on growth and job creation within their companies.

Secretary General Véronique Willems urged to improve the current situation. *“We are observing growing skills shortages holding back the growth prospects of small businesses. For their recruitment, Crafts and SMEs rely on modern education systems adapted to the needs of the labour market. Action is necessary, to make sure that those sectors and companies confronted with technological changes, globalisation and greening the economy, can continue to create jobs”* she said.

Vocational education and training (VET), especially in dual systems where training takes place in companies, is the most adequate way for learners to acquire the skills needed on the labour market. They learn practical and technical skills, as well as highly relevant soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and adaptability. Ms Willems added *“VET highly contributes to individual development and adequately prepares for tomorrow’s labour market. Also, many VET graduates turn into successful entrepreneurs”.*

UEAPME proposes several solutions to boost the quality and image of VET through excellence and innovation. *“We need to improve the bridges between vocational training and general education at all levels. It will also be vital to expand VET towards higher levels of education in line with labour market trends. The Vocational Skills Week is a good opportunity to think about the future of vocational training in Europe. This is crucial at a time of changing labour markets. Let’s make the best of it for the future of our economy”*, concluded Ms Willems.

(1) [http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/171018\\_Barometer\\_17H2.pdf](http://www.ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/171018_Barometer_17H2.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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