



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

## **SMEs are still the driving force of European economy**

*UEAPME discusses actions to tackle hurdles in the single market*

**Brussels, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2017 – “Entrepreneurs need a stimulating environment without unnecessary administrative burdens, where people with the right skills can cooperate to ensure the development of SMEs and where these skills provide access to the resources required to run their business” stated UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller on the occasion of the European SME Assembly 2017.**

The SME Assembly, organised by the European Commission, is the flagship event of the European SME week since 2012. During these three days, SME policy and decision makers and entrepreneurs gather to network, exchange best practises and formulate proposals how to create the best possible environment for SMEs. UEAPME fully supports this event and considers it to be an opportunity for its member organisations to exchange views on European and national/regional policies to strengthen SMEs.

The event puts crafts and SMEs in the well-deserved spotlight. The “Annual Report on European SMEs 2016/2017”, presented at the SME Assembly by the European Commission, confirms the economic and societal importance of SMEs once again. Representing 99.8% of all the enterprises in the non-financial sector, SMEs employ 93 million people, account for 67% of total employment and generate 57% of the added value. Moreover, 93% of SMEs are micro enterprises, employing less than 10 persons. While authorities tend to focus on high-tech and innovative companies, the reality is that over 90% of new enterprises are created in the traditional sectors. The report this year specifically focuses on the important role the self-employed take on in the European economy. Amounting to 30.6 million, they account for 14% of employment (by creating a job for themselves) and at least 20% of firms created by self-employed succeed in increasing employment by more than 5 employees.

*“UEAPME will work together in a constructive way with the Commission to build an SME-friendly environment. Specific action is especially required to prepare the smallest enterprises in the field of digitisation, greening the economy and taking on globalisation. Awareness raising campaigns amongst SMEs, as well as capacity building of their organisations, are the most efficient tools to create a level playing field for our SMEs” commented President Rabmer-Koller.*

The European single market was created 25 years ago and business has profited from the free movement of goods, services, capital and workers. Nevertheless, SMEs still encounter hurdles when developing cross-border business, some of them have been there since the start of the single market, others are newly arising. At the SME Assembly, UEAPME will discuss with participants remaining or newly arising barriers SMEs face when conducting cross-border business in the single market. During the policy session devoted to this topic, UEAPME will collect concrete examples of actions participants consider useful to tackle these barriers.

\*\*\*\* 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](https://twitter.com/UEAPME) on Twitter.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT:**

Luc Hendrickx, Enterprise Policy Director, Tel. +32 2 230 75 99, Email: [l.hendrickx@ueapme.com](mailto:l.hendrickx@ueapme.com)

Jenny Manin, Press and Communications Officer, Tel. +32 496 52 03 29, Email: [pressoffice@ueapme.com](mailto:pressoffice@ueapme.com)