



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

EU-Budget Post-2020 has to provide strong support to SMEs

Support for SMEs is crucial for competitiveness, innovation, growth, job creation and social stability

Brussels, 26th April 2018 – Ahead of the European Commission’s expected decision on its proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), UEAPME publishes the SME priorities⁽¹⁾ as regards the European budget for the next 7 years. According to UEAPME, the next MFF has to aim for making Europe more competitive and a better place to live in instead of trying to protect old and inefficient structures. European programmes have to provide European added value and should incentivise the implementation of needed reforms or make support conditional to the implementation of such reforms. According to the UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer Koller, SMEs do expect better support for innovation (specifically the take-up of new technologies like digitalisation), to tackle the skills gaps and to provide access to finance. In order to increase the impact of limited resources, UEAPME supports the provision of financial instruments whenever appropriate, but insists that grants are needed in areas like research, training and for SME advisory and support services. Finally, SMEs will support any initiative to make future programmes more transparent, easier accessible and less bureaucratic.

“The next MFF has to give a clear signal that the support to SMEs and SME policy is a priority for the European Union,” said **UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller**. SMEs want to see a clear cut programme for SMEs in the new structure of the MFF dedicated to the support of SME finance, SME policy development and SME advisory services. Ms Rabmer-Koller especially underlined the support for all forms of SME finance as currently provided by COSME and for the SME advisory service provided by the European Enterprise Network, which should improve its services in the future by better involving SME associations in all Member States.

As regards regionally managed programmes, Ms Rabmer-Koller reminds that *“cohesion and regional development funds are the main source for support to SMEs and this is why these funds have to stay available for all regions in Europe.”* UEAPME suggests that these funds (1) have a specific focus on innovation, skills and implementation of new technologies, (2) provide the needed flexibility to respond to the real needs of different regions, (3) involve regional economic and social partners in the decision about operational programmes, and (4) have simplified administrative procedures to allow all types of SMEs to profit from these programmes.

On the future programme for research and innovation, Ms Rabmer-Koller says *“that the next framework programme has to prove that Europe really wants to transfer our excellent knowledge base into economic success, which will need a continuation of the successful SME instrument by providing support to innovation project with a European dimension”*.

In addition, Ms Rabmer-Koller underlines the importance of financial instruments for the current recovery of SMEs in Europe and explains that *“SMEs also need the different types of financial instruments in the future to access the needed forms of finance”*. UEAPME argues for flexibility to respond to different market needs, but at the same time supports the idea of streamlining the operational implementation of the different instruments in the interest of all intermediaries and of SMEs as final beneficiaries.

(1) https://ueapme.com/IMG/pdf/180426_UEAPME_position_on_the_next_Multiannual_Financial_Framework.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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