



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

MFF proposal sends positive signal, but needs sharpening

Member States should support overall proposal and give priority to innovation and investment

Brussels, 2nd May 2018 – In a first reaction on today’s European Commission proposal for the next Multiannual Financial Framework, UEAPME called it a positive signal for European businesses and welcomes the increase in support to investment in future growth and jobs. With such measures, the European Union can contribute to make Europe more competitive and a better place to live, but this will depend on which concrete priorities are supported within the different budget lines. For example, cohesion policy will only succeed in supporting convergence if it focuses on innovation, qualification and improves the competitiveness of SMEs. A strong single market can only be achieved if SMEs are supported to participate and use the advantages of the common market. UEAPME also supports the budget increase for Erasmus, but its goal can only be reached if young future entrepreneurs and apprentices can also profit from it and not just students.

“UEAPME sees in the European Commission’s proposal for the EU Post-2020 Budget a positive sign for Europe’s businesses”, said UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller in a first reaction on the MFF proposal. “However, to translate these ambitions into practice, UEAPME calls on Member States to ensure a strong focus on innovation, investment and SMEs, when it comes to the definition of the concrete programmes and actions.”

The overall aims of the proposed budget can only be achieved if the European Commission gives priority to competitiveness, innovation and investments in future growth, within the different budget lines and with the upcoming programmes. *“If European cohesion policy aims for more coherence and wants to support less developed regions to catch-up, the regional funds will have to provide dedicated support to allow SMEs to innovation, to take-up new technologies and to close the skills gap,”* argued Ms Rabmer-Koller in the context of a reorientation of cohesion policy. The same is true for the new budget line for “Single Market, Innovation and Digitalisation”, where it needs new a strong programme for SMEs supporting small companies to benefit from the single market and their access to finance.

SMEs have similar concerns on the future Research and Innovation Programme (FP9). *“The success of the programme depends not only on the amount of money spent, even UEAPME welcomes its increase, but also on its success in transforming knowledge into business opportunities”,* reminded Ms Rabmer-Koller and asked for *“dedicated support instruments for highly innovative SMEs and start-ups, ones allowing them to roll out their innovation projects in Europe and not in other parts of the world.”*

UEAPME also supports the significant increase foreseen for the Erasmus programme, which is an important tool against anti-European voices. *“However, Erasmus will only achieve its goals if young future entrepreneurs and apprentices also have access to the programme and not just students,”* said Ms Rabmer-Koller.

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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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