



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

The harm of Brexit must be minimised for SMEs

President Rabmer-Koller discusses market access and transition with EU Chief Negotiator Michel Barnier

Brussels, 19th June 2018 – At a bilateral meeting with Michel Barnier, EU Chief Negotiator on Brexit, UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller raised the concerns of SMEs as regards the state of play of Brexit negotiations: *"Of course we accept the decision taken by the people and politicians in the United Kingdom. However, the millions of companies directly and indirectly affected by a Brexit rightly expect clarification about the way forward."* Less than 10 months ahead of the announced Brexit, UEAPME reminds the negotiators that cross-border supply chains and customs procedures cannot be changed within days or weeks and SMEs need to know now with which regulatory situation they will be confronted after March 2019.

UEAPME foresees that, in a worst-case scenario where the UK leaves the Internal Market and the Customs Union without a new trade agreement, Europe may be confronted with a new economic crisis and reduced growth rates in Member States. **UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller** said that *"already over the course of last year, confidence of SMEs in the UK and its neighbouring countries went down and companies stopped investing as shown in the biannual UEAPME SME Barometer⁽¹⁾. These concerns will definitely increase, if there is no clear signal in the coming weeks, about the regulatory relations after the 29th March 2019."*

In order to minimise the negative impact on Europe's economy, growth, job creation and welfare, UEAPME requests a responsible approach towards SMEs. *"UEAPME appreciates the efforts for a transitional period during which the United Kingdom stays in the Single Market and the Customs Union as it allows for more time for SMEs to get prepared and more legal predictability"*, stated President Rabmer-Koller. *"I think it is in the interest of both sides to avoid uncertainty about the future and, in the worst case, a cliff-edge scenario, as this would result in a serious economic crisis in the UK, but also in some Member States of the EU27."*

As regards a definitive solution, the Ms Rabmer-Koller demands efforts to avoid burdens resulting from new border arrangements as far as possible. Politicians have to be aware that Crafts and SMEs will be those to most suffer from such burdens. *"Customs inspections on company sites or pre-certification for customs compliance may work for large businesses, but will in particular harm SMEs"*, Ms Rabmer-Koller put forward as concrete concern. Instead, SMEs expect e-governance applications with easy accessible multilingual internet portals and support structures, which could be provided by SME organisations. In addition, it is also of utmost importance for SMEs that trade in the services sector remain open and available at fair conditions to all parties.

Finally, Ms Rabmer-Koller thanked Michel Barnier for the transparent handling of the negotiation process and the efforts of his Brexit taskforce to consult with SME business organisations.

(1) <http://www.ueapme.com/spip.php?rubrique120>

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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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