



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

UEAPME supports access to social protection for all

Gaps for self-employed have to be addressed while respecting the freedom of choice and providing an adequate offer

Brussels, 19th June 2018 – UEAPME supports access to social protection for all, including self-employed. Following the European Commission's proposal for a Council recommendation on access to social protection for workers and self-employed, UEAPME publishes the SME priorities in this context. Labour markets are changing and social protection for all is necessary. However, self-employed must have a certain degree of freedom to choose what they want and need. UEAPME has strong concerns with the mandatory approach to nearly all areas of social protection in the draft recommendation. Social protection of self-employed needs to be improved, Member States should offer the possibility of higher levels of protection at a reasonable cost. For this, more flexibility at national level must be ensured. Indeed, tailored offers that are adapted to the needs of the various groups of self-employed are essential. Moreover, UEAPME believes Member States should explore policy avenues for adapting their social protection systems in a sustainable manner. Entrepreneurship and self-employment need to be supported in the modern economy.

Modernising the social protection systems in Europe is needed to make them sustainable, future-proof, and respond to labour market developments and the consequent challenges. UEAPME supports the fact that this is addressed at European level, but insists that the design and adaptation be for the Member States. In this view, UEAPME advocates and promotes that entrepreneurs/self-employed have access to basic levels of social protection at a reasonable cost. Member States should therefore facilitate the access to higher protection levels on a flexible and voluntary basis, including an adequate offer for the self-employed. **UEAPME Secretary General Véronique Willems** stated that *"the obstacles for becoming and being an entrepreneur are already very high in Europe; the possibility to be insured as much as one wants is one thing, but if the offer is too expensive, no entrepreneur/self-employed will be able to afford it!"*

In the context of a changing labour market, Member States need to explore adequate policy options in cooperation with social partners. UEAPME hence emphasises the need for business organisations representing SMEs and self-employed to be closely involved in the process. Furthermore, Ms Willems insisted that *"the strict competence of Member States in matters of designing and improving their social protection systems in coherence with their labour market organisation and industrial relations systems is respected."*

Entrepreneurship and self-employment need to be supported to enable contribution to innovation, growth, and job creation. UEAPME believes that all working people, whether employee or self-employed, should be able to operate with confidence in the modern economy. To facilitate this, *"UEAPME's priorities are facilitating transitions, tackling the rigidity of labour markets, lowering non-wage labour costs, providing more clarity on statuses, transparency on rights and obligations in work and B2B contracts, and fostering entrepreneurship,"* concluded Ms Willems

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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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