



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Europe should grasp opportunities of digitalisation

Social protection systems and labour markets need to be modernised to facilitate transitions

Brussels, 19th July 2018 – UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller participated in the Informal Employment and Social Affairs Council of the Austrian Presidency in Vienna on the issue of “Digitalisation, robotisation and new forms of work” with Commissioner Thyssen, Ministers and the European social partners. Digitalisation in the working world is already a reality, therefore adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit are more than ever key competences to be acquired in order to cope with new forms of work. SMEs can only thrive in an adequate and flexible regulatory environment, which includes labour market regulations and qualification measures to tackle skills shortage, especially in the digital era. Social protection systems should be adapted to facilitate transitions between different employment statuses, in particular from employee to self-employed. Finally, SMEs should be given the right framework in the field of technology, innovation, HR management, as well as digital skills.

“Even if some SMEs are frontrunners with new technologies and applications, many traditional Crafts and SMEs are adapting to digitalisation looking for relevant know-how and resources, and are also facing an inadequate regulatory environment. If the framework is not right to embrace the digital transformation, these traditional SMEs are at risk of disappearing and many jobs will be lost,” warned **UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller**.

“On the labour market, new forms of work, including self-employment and the development of the platform economy, require adequate regulations, which ensure the needed flexibility and security and adaptations of social protection systems in most Member States. Facilitating transitions and guaranteeing a basic social protection for all should be part of the Member States’ key objectives, as recently recommended by the Commission. However, it is equally relevant to create a B2B level playing field between self-employed and platforms, as rightly done in a first step with the Commission’s proposal for a regulation on fairness and transparency for business users of online intermediation services” recalled Ms Rabmer-Koller.

“Investing in digital skills for entrepreneurs and workers is and should be the priority. SMEs already do a lot with on the job training for upskilling and reskilling workers, but the EU can further incentivise them with the structural funds, such as the ESF. Continuous training is the shared responsibility of businesses, individuals and public authorities” said Ms Rabmer-Koller. *“The EU also needs to stimulate the modernisation of education and training systems, so that, in the near future, all formal qualifications be delivered with the adequate digital dimension”*.

She concluded by saying that *“It is key to best tackle these developments in various areas, such as legal, ethical and social dimensions, since innovation and digitalisation are the keys for future success of Europe.”*

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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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