



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

UEAPME urges policy makers to strengthen SMEs

Right framework conditions for SMEs means investing in Europe's future

Brussels, 5th September 2018 – UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller discussed the Multiannual Financial Framework with Commissioner Günther Oettinger, emphasising that SMEs ask for a more dedicated investment in innovation, especially when using new technologies such as digitalisation. The proposal to set up a Digital Knowledge Centre was one of the topics discussed with IMCO Chair Anneleen Van Bossuyt. Moreover, President Rabmer-Koller highlighted the need to simplify the consumer acquis when discussing the New Deal for Consumers and ensuring fairness in the Single Digital Market by approving the Online Platforms proposal.

Meeting Commissioner Günther Oettinger, Ms Rabmer-Koller highlighted that the European budget should focus on the areas where European added value can be achieved. Moreover, the next MFF has to include support for necessary reforms in the form of incentives, but also a degree of conditionality that should be tied to the implementation of these reforms.

Ms Rabmer-Koller stressed that *"SMEs want more support for innovation, especially when using new technologies such as digitalisation. In this context, 'Horizon Europe' and Regional Funds should offer appropriate programme structures that are accessible to SMEs. SMEs also expect Europe to help address skill shortages and access to finance for business creation and innovation."*

In a meeting with IMCO Chair Anneleen Van Bossuyt, Ms Rabmer-Koller covered the topics of digitalisation, consumer law and online platforms. She underlined that more needs to be done to ensure a smooth digital transition for SMEs. *"They are a very heterogeneous group and require varying measures depending on their level of digitalisation. UEAPME therefore recommends the creation of a Digital Knowledge Centre bringing together experts in digitalisation, SME organisations and SMEs to facilitate the exchange on best practices, support programmes and relevant knowhow."* Other essential topics to be addressed are the access to data in the value chain and an adaptation of social protection systems to accommodate to the current trends of freelance and new forms of work.

On the New Deal for Consumers, Ms Rabmer-Koller reiterated that UEAPME has continuously pleaded to reduce formalities and simplify the acquis. However, the New Deal fails to achieve simplification of the existing legal framework. She emphasised that *"SMEs with no legal department are at risk of committing unintentional infringements because too much emphasis is put on enforcement and penalties. It is a proven fact that strict penalties do not guarantee better compliance, and financial sanctions should therefore only be appropriate if the violation was intentional."*

Another challenge for SMEs stems from online platforms, as they are often confronted with unfair contract terms and conditions when offering their products and services through these platforms. *"Guaranteeing the fairness and transparency of these platforms is of utmost importance,"* stated Ms Rabmer-Koller, *"the proposal on online platforms is a formalisation of common fair and transparent business practice and hence an important step forward in ensuring fairness in the Digital Single Market."*

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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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