



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

European leaders must avoid putting growth at risk

SMEs request reassurance on trade, clarifications on Brexit, and investments in human resources at Tripartite Social Summit

Brussels, 16th October 2018 – At the Tripartite Social Summit dealing with ‘Reinforcing competitiveness, sustainable job creation and social fairness in the EU’, UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller put forward the fact that competitiveness should be tackled in a global context, since current political uncertainties – such as the trade conflicts, protectionism, Brexit, and skills shortage – have a direct impact on SME expectations and further developments. SMEs should be reassured through decisive measures such as investing in human resources, clarifications of Brexit, and guaranteeing access to markets. Therefore, President Rabmer-Koller asks the Heads of State and the European Institution for timely action to avoid increasing uncertainty turns into economic downturns.

Commenting on the importance of tackling the skills shortages and mismatches, **UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller** said *"This is more and more a problem in all Member States, there is a real need for investments in human resources at all ages with a renewed focus on basic skills. Education and training policies should be adapted to the labour market requirements, especially for digitalisation. This has to be fostered by the European Union with a strong commitment of social partners."*

On competitiveness, she referred to the UEAPME "Crafts and SME Barometer" that confirms that economic growth is at a high level in Europe, but a slowdown is expected by the end of the year. Furthermore, since Brexit has been on the political agenda, the level of confidence of SMEs from countries directly impacted decreased. She hence called for *"clear solutions for our SMEs concerning Brexit, and encouraging employment through labour market reforms to sustain SMEs' current economic recovery."*

Moreover, Europe needs a more entrepreneurial society with the right social approach. *"Social fairness should therefore be for all, workers and entrepreneurs alike, which includes access to social protection for self-employed under fair conditions,"* she stated. In a fast-changing labour market, supporting smooth transitions between different work status is a key component of social fairness.

As part of solutions to deal with all of the above, the next Multiannual Financial Framework must support investments in the necessary infrastructure, in innovation and digitalisation and in the development of the required skills. *"That is why we call for a quick adoption of the next MFF since it will be a decisive step for investment in the EU and in SMEs,"* underlined Ms Rabmer-Koller.

Last but not least, she emphasised that *"As the source of the majority of jobs, SMEs are entitled to particular attention through actions, not only in words, as is too often the case."*

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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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