



"The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe"

Better involvement of SMEs in governance discussed with VP Dombrovskis

UEAPME President Rabmer-Koller asks Commission to support capacity building of SME associations



Brussels, 11th February – Yesterday afternoon, Ulrike Rabmer-Koller President of UEAPME¹⁾ met EC Vice President Valdis Dombrovskis to discuss better involvement of SME Employers' Associations in economic governance at European and national level. Rabmer-Koller welcomed the Juncker Commission's boost efforts to increase participation and ownership of social partners in European policy processes, like the European Semester. However, SME employers' organisations, especially, often lack the resources to effectively represent their members in social dialogue, consultations and social negotiations. Therefore, Rabmer-Koller asks for an EU programme to support capacity building for SME associations to make them stronger, more representative and more proactive as social partners. Further items discussed were posting of workers and the practical problems SMEs will face with the implementation of the "equal-pay for equal-work" principle.

In her discussion with EC Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis, **UEAPME President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller** underlined the importance of better involving Social Partners in economic governance and in the European Semester process. *"Exchanging views on the current economic and social situation of a country and about needed reforms between the European Commission national governments and social partners can contribute to increasing ownership and supporting reform processes"*, explained Rabmer-Koller. However, even if two-thirds of Europe's private workforce is employed by SMEs and 80% of new jobs throughout the crisis have been created by SMEs, SME employers' associations often have neither the capacity nor the resources to adequately represent them in social dialogue. Furthermore, SME associations are not recognised as social partners in some countries and are rarely included in consultative bodies. For this reason, *"UEAPME is asking for a targeted programme to support capacity building of SME associations"*, explained Rabmer-Koller, *"and to consistently involve SME representatives in advisory groups such as high-level groups"*. The current approach of the European Social Dialogue budget accessible to employers only allows time-limited projects, which is not sufficient to create stable and sustainable structures. The European Commission currently provides such financial support for consumer organisations, trade unions, and NGOs active in the field of environment to strengthen their voice in policy processes. *"If the Commission wants an adequate representation of SMEs at national and European level, including the 20 million micro enterprises, it will be necessary to think about similar support measures, especially targeted to those Member States, where SMEs struggle to organise themselves"*, justified Rabmer-Koller her demand for structural support.

On posting of workers, Rabmer-Koller asked for a pragmatic solution to real problems. UEAPME is also concerned with undeclared work, letter box companies and abuses of posting which undermine social standards. This has to be tackled to create level-playing fields for all companies and to secure social stability. *However, control measures should not become so bureaucratic that they hinder small companies to do cross-border services delivery, even in the case of emergencies or urgent repair work"*, explained Rabmer-Koller and asked for *"more common sense and less ideology in the debate."* Additionally, she questioned how the principle of equal pay for equal work at the same place for posted workers can be implemented in practice.

¹⁾ the European Employers Association for SMEs

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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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