



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

SMEs voice strong concerns on EP vote on work-life balance

SMEs and micro-companies need more realistic European legislation on work-life balance

Brussels, 11th July 2018 – UEAPME is highly concerned with the outcome of today’s vote on work-life balance in the European Parliament’s Employment Committee. From the outset, UEAPME expressed its disagreement with the Commission’s proposal on work-life balance due to the negative impact on employment and work organisation in small businesses. Despite some clear attempts by MEPs to mitigate the burden for SMEs, the Parliament’s report creates even more burdens, in particular for micro-companies (less than 10 employees). The very high payment levels demanded by the Parliament (80% of wages), the heavy formalisation of the right to request flexible working arrangements, the obligation for employers to respond to leave requests in writing, and four months of non-transferable parental leave are all factors not helping SMEs make things work on the ground. UEAPME now calls for realistic discussions for the trilogue with the Council to find a more reasonable approach.

The European Parliament has made efforts to ensure the implementation of the directive will take SMEs into account. “However,” commented **UEAPME Secretary General Véronique Willems**, “several major difficulties coming from the Commission’s proposal have been made even worse. These elements, that create the most substantial burdens for small and micro-companies, are the very high payment levels voted by MEPs, the heavy formalisation of the right to request flexible working arrangements, the obligation for employers to respond to all leave requests in writing, and four months of non-transferable parental leave for each parent”.

“The implementation of the current proposal will hamper work organisation and create many burdens for SMEs. Due to the high payment levels for people on leave, it will be very difficult to find adequate replacement of workers on leave, if they can even afford it. The immediate consequence will be a decrease of productivity and jobs creation by SMEs,” pursued Ms Willems. *“Smart work-life balance policies are needed, avoiding one-size-fits-all solutions, and recognising that the work organisation in SMEs is based on a joint understanding and mutual acceptance between the needs of enterprises and workers.”*

SMEs, which employ 67% of Europe’s workforce, work hard every day to reconcile the needs of their employees and those of the enterprise, as well as their consumers’ requests, to ensure a good work-life balance. UEAPME will continue to call for better policies, which are about incentives and measures such as childcare provision, support services for parents, removing tax-benefit disincentives for second earners, a balanced understanding of the interaction between the national labour market, industrial relations, cultural approaches, incentives and various leave policies.

Ahead of Parliament and Council negotiations starting after the summer, Ms Willems concluded by saying that “we sincerely hope for an outcome with effective solutions that really support SMEs, leaving room for discussions at the national level including social partners”.

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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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