



Key messages – President Petri Salminen

Today, I would like to focus on two main issues from the perspective of SMEs and Crafts.

First of all, I would like to mention the difficulty to hire and retain staff. I acknowledge the publication today of two important initiatives by the Commission: the Action Plan for Labour and Skills Shortages and the Reinforced Framework for Traineeships, which will support the work that we are doing at national level. Projections show that there is only that much we can do with our domestic workforce. The need to attract talents from abroad is becoming more and more pressing and we have to deploy all our capacity to recruit internationally.

In our view, attracting talents from third-countries should go hand in hand with activating and integrating those already living in the EU and are able to work. We want concrete actions to be taken by Member States and the EU, social partners and companies in line with the Action Plan and the rapid deployment of the EU Talent Pool. As SMEUnited, we will cooperate with our members to ensure that the added value and the potential of the Talent Pool will be well grasped by SMEs organisations in all EU countries.

Secondly, I would like to reflect on a fundamental question. We represent entrepreneurs from all over Europe. Those who take the risk every day to launch a company, a company that possibly will hire 4 or 5 employees in average: how come that our 22.7 million

micro-companies still have to comply with the legislation made for the 43,112 big companies in Europe?

European economy is mainly driven by SMEs, and policy-makers also stress this at every occasion. However we do not see the specificities of our companies taken well into account in legislation and policy-making.

And how come that their representatives still do not sit at the tables where the design of major reforms for the economy and the labour market is taking place?

We call for a serious and clear political commitment from the Member States to ensure that SMEs can be where the decisions are taken, co-design them and receive all the support for their implementation on the ground.

A distributed network of SMEs secures an independent value chain for European industry, moreover small companies offer good working conditions, they are essential to European society and also contribute to European security.

Finally, must recreate a constructive social dialogue, where each side speaks up and constructively works on finding the adequate solutions for the economy. Social dialogue is the only tool in our democracies to find a balanced outcome when issues arise. Disruptive actions should be the last resort, especially considering their negative impact on companies that are already struggling in the current difficult economic context.

Thank you!