

CoR and European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) join forces to defend a strong cohesion policy after 2020

European SMEs Association's President Rabmer-Koller signs up to the #CohesionAlliance, President Lambertz: 'business sector and social partners crucial to promote a bottom-up Europe'

The President of the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME), Ulrike Rabmer-Koller, signed up to the demand for a strong cohesion policy after 2020 put forward by the [#CohesionAlliance](#). In a meeting on 21 March in Brussels, the CoR President and the UEAPME President jointly called for the European Social Pillar and the future EU growth strategy to be shaped and delivered involving local actors.

The #CohesionAlliance is a coalition of those who believe that EU cohesion policy must continue to be a pillar of the EU's future. The Alliance was created through cooperation between the leading European associations of cities and regions and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR). It demands that the EU budget after 2020 makes cohesion policy stronger, more effective, visible and available for every region in the European Union.

*" Since its launch in October, the Alliance has received increasing attention and support. It involves now local and regional government representing more than 90% of the EU27 population. In this context, UEAPME's decision to team up to defend a strong cohesion policy represents a strategic asset for the Alliance, boosting the involvement of the business sector and the social partners", said **President Lambertz** during the meeting.*

" The reforms needed to accelerate Europe's recovery have to take place at national and regional level and must be accompanied by a well-designed cohesion policy. In the aim of reinforcing our bottom-up approach I met the Committee of the Regions' President Karl-Heinz Lambertz to sign the #CohesionAlliance for a strong EU cohesion policy beyond 2020. Through this signature, we are sending a strong political signal to the institutions at all levels that SMEs and local and regional authorities have a common interest to a close partnership ," said **Ms Rabmer-Koller**.

This joint call is particularly important in light of the proposals emerged in the context of the preparatory work for the next Multiannual Financial Framework – the financial plan setting expenditure ceilings for all EU policies in the years 2021-2027. Some options envisage for EU's investment policies a serious risk of cuts and centralisation. This is why the mobilisation of all stakeholders has been a key objective of the CoR work in the last year.

The declaration of the Cohesion Alliance, signed by more than 4000 signatories, will be handed over to EU Budget Commissioner Gunther Oettinger, on 22 March.

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