

# UEAPME Newsflash

## **"Protypos" award goes to EC Vice President Verheugen**

The "Protypos" award, which celebrates and recognises the activities of personalities who played a significant role in promoting the cause of SMEs in the standardisation arena, was assigned in Brussels on 2 July. Organised by NOR-MAPME and awarded by President Hans-Werner Müller, the 2009 Protypos prize went to EC Vice President Günter Verheugen, in recognition of his long-standing commitment towards European crafts and SMEs. Commissioner Verheugen's attention to SMEs was recently re-confirmed in the Small Business Act. The text makes a clear reference to the need to promote SMEs' participation and defence of their interests in standardisation and to improve SMEs' information on, and use of, European standards. It also urges European standardisation bodies to reduce the cost of access to standards and to publish abstracts with unrestricted access and in different languages, making it less expensive for SMEs to obtain access to standards. [Read more](#) or contact [Karine Iffour](#)

## **EU social partners assess positively their stress agreement**

The European Commission organised a conference on the lessons learned from the European Social Partner's autonomous framework agreement on work-related stress in Brussels on 2 July. The aim was to assess the implementation of the [agreement](#) signed in 2004, also in the light of the Social Partners' [report](#) published in 2008. Employment and Social Policy Director Liliane Volozinskis spoke at the event. It is too early to measure the impact of the agreement since its implementation is still ongoing in some Member States, she stressed. However, the overall evaluation of the agreement is positive and its added value is clear, since it does not set strict rules but provides a step by step method to identify, prevent and manage work-related stress and propose solutions well adapted to SMEs. Speaking specifically about SMEs, the main difficulties encountered in the implementation seem to be linked to risk assessment and its related costs, to the subjective dimension of stress and to external factors. A successful management of work-related stress cannot be achieved only by legislative means, continued Ms Volozinskis. Easy to understand and easy to apply tools are equally important to raise awareness about the issue and to facilitate the correct evaluation of work-related stress, she concluded. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## **European patent system is too expensive and uncertain**

The Brussels-based think-tank Bruegel organised this week an event to launch a new publication by senior fellow Bruno van Pottelsberghe on "[The European patent system and why it doesn't work](#)". According to the study, filing for patents in Europe is prohibitively expensive, mainly due to translation requirements and renewal fees. This is especially true for SMEs, independent inventors and universities. Moreover, high litigation costs and differing legal systems mean that legal certainty is far from being guaranteed. Speaking at the event, Legal Affairs Counsel Maria Cimaglia backed the report's main findings and recommendations, especially the necessity to increase the uptake of patents in small businesses by reducing costs and legal complexities. Under the present system, obtaining and defending a patent can easily lead to financial problems for small businesses, she stressed, since SMEs have to rely on external experts and cannot afford to pay in advance for litigation procedures. The Community patent would largely solve the present impasse, coupled with simplified translation requirements and a centralised appeal court, she concluded. Contact: [Maria Cimaglia](#)

## **OECD and UEAPME discuss cooperation possibilities**

Study Unit Director Gerhard Huemer was invited this week by the OECD to visit its Paris headquarters and meet officials from the SME and Entrepreneurship as well as from the Statistics divisions. The meeting aimed at exploring possibilities for future cooperation and was a follow-up to UEAPME's participation in the OECD Working Party on SMEs and Entrepreneurship in Warsaw earlier this month. Mr Huemer presented the main indicators and key results of the recently created UEAPME Study Unit, namely the [EU Craft and SME Barometer](#) and the [SBA Implementation Scoreboard](#). The OECD reception was very positive, especially on the Barometer as this product provides forward-looking and up-to-date data that can be used to measure developments over business cycles. Representatives from the OECD will attend the next meeting of the UEAPME Study Group. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## **Food Forum: salt, labelling, statistics on the agenda**

The UEAPME Food Forum met in Brussels on 1 July. The European Commission's attempts to restrict salt use in food were discussed with Stephanie Bodenbach from the EC's DG Health and Consumer Protection (SANCO). Participants also enjoyed a presentation on the so-called "food improvement agents" such as vitamins and enzymes by Wim Debeuckelaere from the same DG. They were then updated on the state of play and current developments on the labelling dossier. All members of the Forum agreed to contribute to collecting examples of the consequences of the proposed labelling regulation for food producing SMEs. These examples will then be sent to newly elected MEPs to raise their awareness on this crucial subject for SMEs in the sector. The day before, a Food Forum delegation met DG SANCO officials to discuss the EC statistics on small food producing firms, which only count 300.000 SMEs instead of the more than 4 million and a half existing. The need to elaborate labelling guidelines once the new legislation comes into force was as well discussed. The previous positive experience on hygiene guidelines greatly helped to increase SME compliance with the new rules, stressed delegates. Contact: [Ludger Fischer](#)

## Social dialogue in the spotlight at BSP final conference

More than 250 partners from 18 different projects met in this week in Split, Croatia, for the [final conference](#) of the BSP III programme run by the European Commission. Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke at the event on [SME FIT II](#), the project run by UEAPME that led to more than 60 events and 500 people being trained in each target country. In particular, Mr Benassi concentrated on the project activities dealing with the promotion of social dialogue, which he personally attended several times. Social dialogue is clearly a tool that must be fully exploited by SMEs to improve the functioning of the labour market and to tackle the economic and social challenges they face, notably in the present crisis, stressed Mr Benassi. Contact: [Iris Marlovits](#)

## From Andrea Benassi's agenda: Italy, UK, Croatia, Germany

**22/06:** Last week in Rome, Secretary General Andrea Benassi met the Secretary General of our Italian member CNA Sergio Silvestrini to discuss about the future restructuring of UEAPME Committees. On the same day, he met Giovanni di Leva, Director General of our member Artigiancassa, to advise the bank on how to further cooperation with the European institutions.

**24/06:** In London, in the premises of our member ACCA, Mr Benassi met the most important British organisations representing SMEs to discuss a possible future membership of UEAPME. He also met Andy Love MP, a member of the House of Commons All Party Parliamentary Group on SMEs.

**26/06:** In Brussels, the Secretary General spoke at the final conference of a joint EU-funded project by the European Social Partners to support social partners in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) and candidate countries to engage in effective dialogue at national and EU level (*see previous issue*).

**29-30/06:** Mr Benassi was in Split for the final conference of the BSP III programme run by the European Commission (*see above*).

**02/07:** In Aachen, Mr Benassi attended the CHIO Ceremony, part of the World Equestrian Festival organised by UEAPME Vice President Dieter Philipp during which the "Prize of Craftsmen" was awarded on behalf of the local Crafts Chamber.

➤ For questions on Mr Benassi's agenda, please contact the [UEAPME Secretariat](#)

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