

The 5 biggest achievements for Crafts and SMEs in Europe

UEAPME is the agenda setter for SME policy in Europe. UEAPME has successfully acted to improve the environment for Crafts and SMEs in the European Union. These are the 5 biggest achievements for our members over the last 18 months:

Horizon 2020 will include a new SME Instrument to support innovation!



The next European Research and Innovation Programme (Horizon 2020) will provide an instrument to support the whole innovation cycle of SMEs, from the feasibility phase to application and investment (via financial instruments). Furthermore, the new programme will not only focus on top down research but also on market and societal innovation.

Structural Funds will better support financial instruments as from 2014!



The next generation of Structural Funds (2014-2020) can be better used to support financial instruments, e.g. SME loan, SME guarantees, Venture Capital, etc. Furthermore, it will be possible to combine Structural Funds money with other programmes, i.e. COSME or Horizon for financial instruments available for companies in the region.

SMEs became a priority in regional development policy!



The competitiveness of SMEs with a focus on the Small Business act will become a thematic priority in the next generation of Structural Funds (2014-2020). Furthermore, national partnership contracts, the smart specialisation strategy and regional operational programmes should allow a better involvement of regional SME organisations and a simplification of procedures.

Working time revision should provide more flexibility for SMEs!



During the European social partner negotiations on working time, the stakeholders including the EU Commission were persuaded about more flexibility for SMEs not covered by collective agreements. Even if the negotiations had failed, the commitment that these SMEs need access to a longer reference period for the calculation of working time to allow more flexible arrangements, will stay.

SMEs will benefit from support measures for energy audits!



The Energy Efficiency Directive foresees that energy audits will be mandatory for large enterprises and not for SMEs. For SMEs, assistance measures to cover the costs of an energy audit and of the implementation of the arising recommendations are foreseen in the Directive.

5 times “NO” to further burdens on Crafts and SMEs

UEAPME defends the interests of Crafts and SMEs in Europe. This includes avoiding costly and unnecessary new burdens from the EU Institutions and other stakeholders. These are the 5 most important regulations, which UEAPME put a stop to, in the interest of our members, during the last 18 months:

Basel III implementation will not increase costs of SME lending!



UEAPME achieved a reduction of the risk-weights for SME retail loans in the new Capital Requirement Directive, which avoids an increase of capital requirements for banks, if they provide loans to SMEs. For standard SME loans the capital requirement, i.e. the capital a bank has to hold, for an SME loan will stay at 6% and will not be increased to 7.9% as originally foreseen.

Stringent collection of e-waste does not apply to small retailers!



The revised Directive on Waste of Electric and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) introduced a new collection system based on the obligation of retailers to accept WEEE at no cost and with no link to the sale of a new product. The clause does not apply to retailers with less than 400 m² of sales area and hence, excludes most micro and small retailers from such strict obligation.

Quantifying the environmental footprint remains voluntary!



The EU-wide methodology to quantify the environmental impact of products and organisations presented recently by the European Commission will not be mandatory as originally planned. Thanks to this SMEs will not have to spend a lot of time and money to submit all their products and their businesses to these complicated and costly procedures.

SMEs will not have to pay for a longer maternity leave so far!



UEAPME blocked a new maternity leave directive aimed at extending the length of maternity leave to 20 weeks instead of 14 weeks as currently foreseen in the European legislation whilst providing full pay, as well as introducing paid paternity leave. This would not only have caused considerable costs for SMEs, but also impeded the employment of young women. The directive is now frozen by the Member States despite the European Parliament pressure.

No costly new legislation on work-related musculoskeletal disorders for SMEs!



UEAPME successfully stopped a new and broader ergonomics directive including work-related musculoskeletal disorders and an extension on manual handling of loads and work on visual display units. According to an impact assessment the new directive would have cost 3.7€ billion affecting 90% of SMEs. It would have been in contradiction with the aim of better regulation.