



“The voice of crafts and SMEs in Europe”

Ahead of EU elections: Policy achievements for SMEs have been assessed

Positive results on SME support programmes, less positive on regulations and consultations, new SME policy approaches needed

Brussels, 5 March 2014 – Today, at the joint UEAPME and EP SME Intergroup conference, chaired by EP Vice President Othmar Karas, the EU policy achievements for SMEs over the last five years were assessed and strategies for future SME policy were discussed. UEAPME Director Gerhard Huemer presented an overall positive but not so enthusiastic picture of these achievements for Crafts and SMEs between 2010 and 2014. Indeed, over 60% demands made by UEAPME have been fully or at least partially implemented. However, the situation has also worsened in some cases, further creating a difficult business environment for SMEs. Furthermore, assessment of the implementation of UEAPME requests shows more positive results for SME support programmes as compared to policy recommendations in the interest of SMEs or to improvements on consultation of business organisations. Regarding the future, UEAPME Secretary General Peter Faross emphasised that Europe will not recover without prospering Crafts and SMEs and demanded that an SME dimension be included in all policy areas.

A [study](#) evaluating achievements for Crafts and SMEs on a wide range of policy proposals – put forward by UEAPME at the beginning of the current terms of both the European Commission and European Parliament in 2009 – shows that: 11% our demands have been fully implemented, progress has been made on another 50%, whereas nothing has happened for 38% and a worsening of the situation for 2% was observed.

On the positive side of this picture, we find the standardisation system review, the new contract with the European Commission for Small Business Standard, the improved access of SMEs to structural and investment funds, including better involvement of SME organisations in programming and easier support for financial instruments, the creation of a specific SME instrument in Horizon 2020. Furthermore, progress was made on late payment regulations, access to public procurement, reduction of risk-weights for SME retail loans in the Capital Requirement Regulation (Basel III) and on the final agreement on a European Patent. However, on the negative side, there are two dossiers where SMEs are confronted with a worsening of the situation: maternity leave where discussions are not yet closed and on seasonal workers where a new and burdensome directive has been adopted.

As regards the future, UEAPME Secretary General Peter Faross underlined that *“the current rather macro-economic approach to tackle the crisis has to go hand-in-hand with a micro-economic approach supporting SME competitiveness in order to improve their business environment as Europe will not be able to enter this long awaited recovery phase without strong SMEs.”*

Recovery is an absolute necessity that can only be achieved through strong SMEs; UEAPME is therefore demanding that small businesses be at the centre of industrial policy. To make an actual recovery happen, Crafts and SMEs request structural reforms, efforts towards re-industrialisation as well as a shift of financial spending towards the real economy. Never has there been so much cheap money in Europe; however, the money is not invested in the real economy and SMEs are not benefiting from it. Better access to finance for SMEs is, hence, a key policy requirement.

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EDITORS' NOTES: UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing exclusively crafts, trades and SMEs from the EU and accession countries at European level. UEAPME has 80 member organisations covering over 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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