

# UEAPME Newsflash

## President Rabmer-Koller highlights UEAPME priorities at EESC

President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller was invited to [present](#) UEAPME's priorities at the EESC Employers' Group. In her intervention, she pointed to the current economic situation of SMEs and asked to better take into account the business reality of micro-companies as well as of traditional and family SMEs. At the mid-term of the current Commission, Europe has to go from words to actions and has to deliver on better regulation, on closing the skills gaps, and with measures to help SMEs tackle the digitalisation challenge. In addition, Ms Rabmer-Koller supported the latest initiatives to improve SME finance such as the extension of EFSI and simplifications for local banks. Last but not least, EESC and UEAPME agreed to further strengthen existing cooperation.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## SMEs need better economic conditions for more social fairness

Secretary General Véronique Willems intervened at the conference on the European Pillar of Social Rights. On fair working conditions, she highlighted entrepreneurship and SMEs as means to create jobs. This rapidly changing world requires flexible rules. She called to adapt existing rules rather than creating new ones. On social protection, a fluid transition between different statuses (e.g. employee and entrepreneur/self-employed) needs to be assured. Ms Willems therefore invited the EC to map the situation of self-employed in the Member States before taking action. Finally, UEAPME, BusinessEurope and 11 EU sectoral employer organisations presented a joint statement '[More competitiveness to sustain the social dimension of Europe](#)'.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Mid-term review: EU financial instruments need further improvement

Ahead of the mid-term review of COSME and InnoFin, UEAPME and [AECM](#) (European umbrella organisation of guarantee institutions) organised a [press breakfast](#) and a [conference](#) focussing on the EU financial instruments for SMEs. During the conference, access to finance was recognised as one of the major challenges for SMEs, and guarantee institutions are of the utmost importance to provide support for economically viable projects. In a joint [position paper](#), the two organisations put forward their requests for the mid-term review of these programmes. The main request is that counter-guarantees be provided under more favourable conditions than direct guarantees via banks, if they are offering similar instruments to those of intermediaries. Furthermore, the European legislator should ensure sufficient financial resources for COSME and InnoFin considering the current estimation for new COSME guarantee volumes is at least €6bn until the end of 2020.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## UEAPME replies to the REACH Refit Evaluation

UEAPME replied to the REACH Refit evaluation launched by the Commission. In its [position paper](#), UEAPME reported that although REACH improved the information concerning chemicals used in the EU, it also created a substantial increase in bureaucracy and costs for SMEs. Despite the fact that the new IT tools are a good attempt to relieve this situation, further reductions of paperwork and costs are necessary as well as more targeted support from public authorities. Moreover, UEAPME highlighted that it is increasingly obvious that individual SMEs are overwhelmed by the elaboration of an application for authorisation. In order to avoid these problems, it is urgent to find easier and more pragmatic ways for micro and small businesses to comply with REACH obligations, and hence also enable the establishment of a level playing field between large and small actors in the Internal Market.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

## Geo-blocking: UEAPME calls for EP intervention for SMEs

The Parliament's SME intergroup organised a breakfast meeting on the EP's position on Geoblocking with UEAPME and BusinessEurope. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx stated that preventing and prohibiting geo-blocking based on unjustified or unreasonable practices is well-founded and beneficial, both for consumers and traders. However, the enterprises' freedom to choose to distribute where they wish to do so has to be maintained. For SMEs who do not have the means to acquire expertise regarding consumer protection rules of non-targeted countries, it is crucial to build in adequate safeguards. MEP Róża Thun's draft opinion is a good attempt to ensure legal clarity in case of passive sale. Considering the Council and Commission's proposals created too much legal uncertainty, it is crucial that the European Parliament remedies this, he concluded.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## Banking regulations must be more favourable to SME finance

Last November, the EC published its [proposals](#) for the review of banking regulations (CRR and CRD4). At a [workshop](#) on proportionality of banking regulations organised by the European Saving Banks Group, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer said that the proposals do go in the right direction, but [not far enough](#). Mr Huemer welcomed the proposal to extend the SME Supporting Factor within the CRR and recognised the efforts made to make the disclosure and reporting requirements for smaller banks more proportionate. However, the size should not be the main or only criteria for simplified rules. The most crucial issue would be to make simpler rules for decentralised retail banks, which run less risky business

models and are essential for SME finance. According to UEAPME, they are the ones more suffering from heavy regulations. Finally, Mr Huemer supported the proposal to create a specific legal framework for new local credit unions or cooperatives. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

### **SBA follow-up meeting focusses on social files**

The quarterly SBA follow-up meeting, organised by DG GROW to discuss current files with the EU business organisations, mainly [dealt](#) with social files and participants were [updated](#) on the state of play of the Working Time Directive. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx stated that transparency and better understanding of the consequences of the EU Court of Justice (ECJ) rulings is a laudable objective. However, employer organisations go against a reinterpretation of the ECJ ruling by the EC. Moreover, DG EMPL's policy proposals on work-life balance were discussed. Mr Hendrickx highlighted that UEAPME fully supports the objective to promote female employment and entrepreneurship through more childcare and services instead of additional rights for leaves (e.g. parental, maternity). Indeed, more or longer leaves would not help and would increase the costs and burdens, especially for micro-enterprises.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

### **SME policy discussed with Bangladesh Think-Tank**

Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx met with [BUILD](#) CEO Ferdaus Ara Begum. Build (Business Initiative Leading Development) is a think-tank located in Bangladesh mandated to support local SMEs. The aim of the meeting was to discuss respective challenges and useful policies to support SMEs in Europe. Mr Hendricks presented the structure of UEAPME and its member organisations, the importance of the SMEs in Europe, the rationale behind the European SME definition, the main SME policies as well as the 'Think Small First' principle and the fight against administrative burdens and red-tape.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

#### **EVENTS AHEAD:**

- REACH 2018 SME Workshop (09-10.03, contact [Guido Lena](#))
- Preventive restructuring & second chance for entrepreneurs: what's in it for SMEs?" (28.02, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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