

# UEAPME Newsflash

## SG Véronique Willems continues introductions with EU Institutions

In her first months as Secretary General, Véronique Willems met DG GROW's Director-General Lowri Evans, Deputy Director-General Irmfried Schwimann, Director Kristin Schreiber and other managers to discuss ongoing and future priorities. She put forward UEAPME's focus on traditional and micro enterprises and discussed late payment, better regulation and the SME test with them. Furthermore, they broached the topic of an upcoming joint UEAPME-European Commission SME Policy conference aimed at improving the visibility and to put a stronger edge on European SME Policy.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## UEAPME reiterates its position on Geo-blocking

Following the publication of the IMCO Draft Report in December, UEAPME updated its [position](#) on the proposal on geo-blocking. UEAPME remains convinced that the proposal will entail that SMEs pay for the consequences of some enterprises' wrong behaviour. The burden will be particularly high for SMEs wanting to only sell locally, and not cross-border. However, UEAPME acknowledges the efforts and attempt to find an acceptable solution for all parties. Indeed, the report recognises all difficulties companies may encounter in applying the regulation, and introduces valuable additions. The Regulation should explicitly guarantee that the trader would not be obliged to apply contractual rules and/or product specific rules based on the consumer's residence. Companies need to be reassured that the applicable law be determined by the market where the trader is normally operating. UEAPME calls on the EP to make the regulation acceptable for SMEs.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## Waste revision: UEAPME calls on EU Maltese Presidency

Following the recent EP ENVI Committee's vote on the revision of the main EU waste legislation, UEAPME sent a [letter](#) to the EU Maltese Presidency and started actions with its national organisations to act on their own governments. The aim being to maintain the positive results achieved and correct the drawbacks concerning the revision of the EU waste framework directive and the landfill directive. UEAPME advocated that the reference to 'small businesses' be maintained in the definition of municipal waste as well as the setting-up of a new threshold of 2 tons a year under which businesses transporting hazardous waste do not need to keep a register. UEAPME also pointed out that EPR (Extended Producer's Responsibility) is per se not the best system for SMEs – as it is linked to a lot of red tape and high costs – and supported the shared responsibility along the entire supply chain, including consumers, in the collection and management of waste.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

## Preconditions for pay rise in Europe

Alongside other employer organisations, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer [discussed](#) different aspects of a sustainable wage policy at the launching [conference](#) of the European Trade Union campaign "[Europe needs a pay rise](#)". After admitting that high purchasing power at regional level is also in the interest of SMEs, Mr Huemer referred to the trade-off between job creation and increase in wages. As general recommendations for a sustainable wage policy allowing pay rise, he put forward: (i) joint initiatives to increase productivity and competitiveness, (ii) improvements in efficiency in public sectors and services to gain leeway for wage increase in sectors faced with competition, and finally (ii) improve wage setting systems to avoid insider/outsider problems and increase the coverage of agreements and sustainability of wages.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Digitalisation: social partners discuss impacts on labour market

The European social partners organised a fact-finding seminar on digitalisation in Berlin to exchange practices and views with researchers, political decision makers, stakeholders, and sectoral and national social partners. The ongoing technological evolution will have a strong impact on employment through its deep and rapid pace of change. New forms of work (including platform work and more self-employment) as well as new business models are emerging. The main topics debated were anticipation of change and skills needs, work organisation, health and safety, mobile workers, and data protection. Many of these issues are best solved by social partners by finding the most appropriate balance between company, workers and customers' needs. Last but not least, infrastructure should be available for all citizens and all small businesses to avoid digital divide and ensure further job creation.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## SMEs are key actors for diversity at local level

At a meeting of the EU platform of Diversity Charters, Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer spoke about SME practices and challenges. In the current economy, attracting and retaining talented employees is a permanent challenge for SMEs. A wider recruitment base enhances productivity and innovation, helps to better respond to an enlarged customer base, and creates opportunities for internationalisation. However, with limited capacities and less formalised HR policies, micro-companies need support from intermediary bodies. Practical arrangements at company level are needed, rather than more legislation. Operating at local level, many SMEs already reflect the diversity of the population around. In the panel, Mr de Boer put forward that promoting diversity in the workplace should start with combating stereotypes, and goes through many practices, such as efforts to integrate disadvantaged groups.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

## ----- News from UEAPME Projects -----

**UEAPME gets involved in fighting bankruptcy**

Secretary General Véronique Willems participated in the kick-off meeting of the 3-year project 'Early Warning EU' in Denmark last week. The project is co-funded by COSME and is aimed to set-up a network of organisations in Europe that can help companies in difficulty and entrepreneurs after a bankruptcy situation (i.e. a second chance). The four target countries in the first phase are Greece, Poland, Italy and Spain, UEAPME members ATA (ES) and GSEVEE (GR) are involved in the project. UEAPME will contribute in developing policy recommendations and in communication activities. It is highly important to support entrepreneurs facing difficulties and/or bankruptcy. They need support in the challenges they encounter and in, for example, finding a new job or setting up a new company.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

**EVENTS AHEAD:**

- Preventive restructuring & second chance for entrepreneurs: what's in it for SMEs?" (28.02, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- REACH 2018 SME Workshop (09-10.03, contact [Guido Lena](#))
- [Business Transfer Conference](#) (17.03, Malta, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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