

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Higher vocational qualifications to meet the skills needs of SMEs

In the context of the Erasmus+ project QA HiVETnet, UEAPME [organised](#) an EU conference focussing on qualifications for SMEs. The aim of the project is to reinforce trust in Higher Vocational Education and Training (VET) through EU Guidelines on Quality Assurance in Higher VET. In the project, Higher VET refers to tertiary vocational training outside the traditional academic system. It is mainly used for upskilling learners with initial VET qualifications and/or with a long-standing work experience. The skills gap on the labour market results in a skills shortage, and hence a crucial need to align education and training programmes toward company needs. This means getting the right balance between theoretical, professional and vocational skills combined with transversal ones. The project's approach should help ensure parity of esteem between Higher VET and academic education, and contribute to better recognition of Higher VET and VET excellence.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Mobility Package: applicable rules need to be enforced

Secretary General Véronique Willems and the other EU Social Partners participated in the discussion on the Mobility Package, organised by EC Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič. Ms Willems recalled the need for enforcing the currently applicable rules and for the creation of a single level playing field in the international haulage sector. In terms of social matters, she favoured European solutions over Member States' unilateral measures and pleaded for a wider approach cutting rather than creating additional administrative burdens. Concerning road charging, she underlined that a harmonisation of rules is needed, together with a common European framework linked to the use of the TEN-T (trans-European transport network) infrastructure. Finally, addressing the point of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, namely the alternative propulsion of vehicles, she suggested a technology-neutral approach in which all alternatives are considered.

Contact: [Patrizia di Mauro](#)

## SME feedback from banks discussed with VP Dombrovskis

EC Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis [met](#) with representatives from SME and bank associations to discuss the progress made on improving feedback given by banks to SMEs when a credit application is declined. This is part of the Capital Market Union Action Plan to improve access to finance for SMEs. The EC supports a self-regulatory approach as suggested by stakeholders from both side. The aim is that stakeholders agree on a set of "High-level Principles" to be implemented by the partners at national level. At the meeting, Secretary General Véronique Willems reiterated the importance of such feedback for SMEs and welcomed the progress made so far. However, such principles are only the beginning of a process and SMEs will only profit from them if they are effectively implemented at national and regional level. Therefore, Ms Willems [asked](#) for the Commission's support to foster implementation and ensure monitoring and evaluation of their impact.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Energy Efficiency: UEAPME welcomes obligation scheme prolongation

The Sustainable Development Committee approved its [position paper](#) on the proposal for a revised directive on Energy Efficiency. One of the main issues the paper addresses is the energy efficiency obligation scheme. UEAPME welcomes the scheme's prolongation after 2020 as well as the possibility granted to Member States to choose between energy savings obligations, policy measures, and a combination of both. Likewise, UEAPME welcomes the fact that the Commission's text keeps SMEs exempted from mandatory energy audits. Last but not least, UEAPME seizes the occasion to call for a realistic energy efficiency target accompanied by support measures in order to put in place the energy efficiency improvements.

Contact: [Rosa Solanes](#)

## UEAPME welcomes new OSHA focus on micro-companies

OSHA (EU Agency for Safety and Health at Work) organised a [conference](#) aimed at better identifying the needs of micro and small enterprises (MSEs) to comply with the employers' risk assessment obligation (EU Directive on health and safety at work). At the final round table, Director Social Affairs Liliane Volozinskis welcomed the EU efforts to better take into account MSEs' reality when it comes to the EU social acquis implementation in this field. The [online OIRA tool](#) developed so far does not fully reach out MSEs because it does not fit their business reality. Simpler tools, more tailored to the sector and company size, and more awareness raising are needed. To further support MSEs, and hence build trust and credibility, strong partnerships with OSH authorities, SME organisations, insurances and sectoral organisations are required. This is the basis to fully exploit the OIRA (Online Interactive Risk Assessment) potential for OSH prevention in micro-companies.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Review Digital Single Market needs more SME focus

The EESC's Single Market Observatory discussed the recently published "[Digital Single Market Mid-Term Review](#)". Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx welcomed this early discussion. He reminded the audience of the negative consequences of the geo-blocking and the digital contracts proposal for SMEs. Mr Hendrickx also welcomed the Commission's initiative to address unfair contractual clauses and trading practices in online platforms as requested by UEAPME. Work on the access to and re-use of non-personal data should be speeded up. As the 2013 Cyber Security Strategy did not include any action for SMEs, this should be remedied in the review. Finally, he highlighted the role of intermediary SME

organisations helping entrepreneurs make their enterprise digital proficient.

Contact [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Good economic governance requires real SME involvement

The EU Social Partners held a seminar on economic governance in the EU to assess the involvement of social partners at EU and national level and possible improvements. Structural reforms are needed at national level to adapt to labour market developments, and social partners have to take ownership of such reforms. National practices are diverse, requiring a more coordinated process. Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer highlighted why the real involvement of SME organisations is essential to ensure their support for reforms and effective implementation on the ground. Real involvement is more than process and timely and meaningful consultations. While respecting national social dialogue diversity, capacity building is highly necessary to create strong SME organisations. The aim is for them to be pro-active in the European Semester and in the implementation of measures having a direct and indirect impact on the labour market.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

## Future European rural development policy: SMEs matter

In the context of the work on the revision of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and Rural Development post 2020, Regional Policy Senior Advisor Hubert Delorme participated in the Steering Group of the European Rural Network. The Network has worked on the implementation of the 10 priorities of the Action Plan of the Cork Declaration and on the future of LEADER/CLLD programme. He underlined the vital role non-farming SMEs play in rural areas and stressed the importance of SMEs in the implementation of the priorities Action Plan. More specifically, he underlined the crucial importance of Priority 8 "Enhancing Rural Governance". Finally, he requested an economic evaluation of SMEs' involvement in the LEADER actions as well as a reflection on the SME dimension in the future of the European Cohesion policy post 2020.

Contact: [Hubert Delorme](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- Brussels Economic Forum (01.06, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)) - [Registration](#)
- AECM: Global Conference on Guarantee Institutions for SME Financing (02.06, Madrid, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)) [Registration](#)
- East Invest 2 Annual Conference (21.06, Kyiv, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- Research & Innovation - Shaping our Future - High-Level Group Pascal Lamy (03.07, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)) [Registration](#)

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