

# UEAPME Newsflash

## SMEs are fully committed to integrate refugees

At the [2<sup>nd</sup> High-level dialogue](#) on Skills and Migration, Secretary General Véronique Willems explained that integration of refugees into the labour market is a necessity but full integration goes far beyond. The meeting focussed on labour market integration of refugees and was organised by the European Commission following its [initiative](#) to support labour market integration. Moreover, she explained that SMEs are open to diversity and ready to make the best use of all refugees' talents, including supporting them as entrepreneurs. She also recognised some major challenges such as: lack of language knowledge, difficulty to fully assess their existing skills, rigidities in legal frameworks (which can put employers in difficult situations), and last but not least the need for external support for refugees suffering from trauma. Finally, Ms Willems insisted on a multi-stakeholder approach at local level, which is the only realistic way to make it happen.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## SMEs are key for successfully greening the economy

During the Green Week, the EU Social Partners published a [joint statement](#) on tapping the potential of greening the economy for jobs creation. In a panel of the Green Jobs Summit, chaired by EU Commissioner Karmenu Vella Sustainable Development Director Guido Lena highlighted that SMEs have a preponderant role for jobs and growth and therefore, without their full involvement, greening the economy and the transition to circular economy cannot succeed. To do so, a favourable framework should be set up at EU and national level to support SMEs based on easier access to specific financing, support for reskilling and upskilling, information and technical assistance as well as a reduction of red tape through the 'Think Small First' principle. Moreover, SME organisations at national level should be supported through capacity building schemes in order to strengthen their role towards SMEs in the transition to the circular economy.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

## UEAPME presents SME demands on Renewables

UEAPME published a [position paper](#) on the Revision of the Renewables Directive outlining the most important SME demands in the field of renewable energy. UEAPME welcomes that the Commission's proposal tries to empower consumers and SMEs to self-consume and feed their renewable energy into the grid. Among other issues, the paper advocates for a stable regulatory framework on support schemes as well as for simplified administrative procedures when small renewable energy projects are put in place.

Contact: [Rosa Solanes](#)

## Discussion about Social Rights needs holistic approach

The EU Social Partners were invited to a joint meeting of the Employment and Social Protection Committee to discuss the recent [Country Specific Recommendations](#) and the [EU Pillar of Social Rights package](#) (EPSR) with Member States representatives. On the recommendations, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer welcomed the focus on private and public investments, but asked for more efforts to strengthen the social partners' capacity to conduct wage agreements in line with productivity and competitiveness. Stronger associations involved in the implementation of the recommendations would also contribute to improving reform processes. On the EPSR package, he warned against an isolated debate about [social dimension](#), it needs a holistic approach including the economic dimension, taking into account the single market, globalisation and fiscal policy. Finally, more paid leave will not contribute to an increase of women's participation in labour markets.

Contact: [Arnold De Boer](#)

## How SMEs can profit from equity guarantees

At the [AECM](#) annual [event](#) in Madrid, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer discussed [supporting micro companies and SMEs with equity guarantees](#) in a global context. Indeed, starting a new business or transferring an existing business in most parts of the world entails facing difficulties to get financed. Often, traditional loans are not available or are not the best instruments to finance such risky projects, which also includes innovation. Therefore, guarantees for equity finance can help to support such companies. However, Mr Huemer argued that classical equity instruments (like venture capital or business angel investments) should not be the only ones supported, because such investments often result in losing control to external investors. Therefore, UEAPME demands guarantees to also be provided to quasi-equity instruments like subordinated or participating loans where the owner can keep control over its business.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Which policy should apply to family and traditional businesses?

The European Economic and Social Committee organised a [hearing](#) in Thessaloniki on "Family and traditional businesses in regional development". Referring to the 1994 Recommendation on transfers, the European Charter for Small Enterprises and the SBA, Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx stressed that policy solutions have already been agreed upon many years ago, however there seems to be no political will to implement them. The heterogeneity of SMEs can be tackled by applying the 'Think Small First' principle and not by changing the SME definition. In addition, there is a need for a more dynamic support policy for these enterprises and capacity building for their organisations.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Taxation: aiming for competitiveness and fairness

At a [public hearing](#) organised by [EESC](#), “a favourable tax system for fair competition and growth” was discussed. Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer underlined that taxes on production factors like labour and investment hinder economic growth in Europe and should be shifted to less harmful tax bases. He also argued against eliminating tax competition, because it is an important factor to push the public sector’s efficiency. On fairness, Mr Huemer agreed with the [analysis](#) presented by the European Commission and showing higher effective tax rates for SMEs compared to multinationals. He also asked for more efforts to avoid tax fraud and avoidance including sanctions for tax havens and companies using them without creating unnecessary additional burdens for SMEs. However, it is not enough to complain about companies using legal loopholes, it is up to regulators to close them down.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## EaFA looking ahead for more attractiveness of apprenticeship

The EU Alliance for Apprenticeships (EaFA) [celebrated](#) its 4 years in Malta. UEAPME, as EU Social Partner and signatory party in Leipzig in 2013, was invited to the round table “Towards an EU Framework on Quality and Effective Apprenticeships”. Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis recalled that it is necessary to act at system level where Crafts Chambers and SME organisations should have an active role. In addition, more supportive measures and services at local level for a good return on investment are highly needed to make apprenticeship more attractive for micro-companies, especially in countries not having a well rooted tradition. On the future EU Framework for Apprenticeships, she explained that what matters for SMEs is quality and effectiveness of apprenticeship outcomes. Such a framework should focus on the right governance with social partners’ involvement, be broad and flexible enough to be adapted to each Member States’ reality.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Romanian Industrial policy in EU perspective

A [conference](#) on “Romanian Industry vs European Industry” was organised in Bucarest at the initiative of MEP Maria Grapini (S&D). Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx stressed that an industrial policy has to target the whole supply chain, focusing on SMEs, building on a strong standardisation system and recognising the role of traditional manufacturing by Crafts and SMEs. Furthermore, he emphasised that access to resources and energy under competitive conditions and digitalisation are equally important. He also reminded the audience about the conclusions of the [“White Charter of Romanian SMEs on Romania’s integration into the EU and the absorption of structural funds”](#) published by UEAPME Romanian member organisation CNIPMMR.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- 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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