

UEAPME Newsflash

UEAPME discusses SME priorities with DG REGIO

As part of the Multiannual Financial Framework post 2020 reflections, Secretary General Véronique Willems met DG REGIO Director-General Marc Lemaître to exchange views on UEAPME priorities for cohesion policy: access to finance for SMEs, investment priorities for SMEs in regions, simplification, flexibility, partnership, and involvement of SME organisations in political and operational processes at all levels. Mr Lemaître spoke of more results-orientated initiatives such as increasing SMEs' competitiveness, access to financial instruments (taking into account local specificities and territorial priorities by grouping existing instruments in financing platforms), and focus on innovation, digitalisation and access to new technologies. In terms of simplification, the priorities would be regarding the relationship between managing authorities and beneficiaries, application of the 'Once Only' principle, and more use of provisions such as simplified cost options.

Contact: [Hubert Delorme](#)

"Tangible goods": UEAPME emphasises SME key issues

In view of the upcoming vote in IMCO (Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee) on the proposed directive on certain aspects concerning contracts for the sales of goods, UEAPME seized the opportunity to publish an updated [position paper](#) and send new messages to the Members of the European Parliament. UEAPME reiterated the key problems for SMEs: the level of harmonisation, the length of the period of reversal of burden of proof, the possibility to insert a lifespan commercial guarantee, and the length of legal guarantees. SMEs need a balanced solution that can favour both consumers and businesses.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

UEAPME and AIM meet to discuss common priorities

Secretary General Véronique Willems met new [AIM](#) Director General Michelle Gibbons (European Brands Association). The meeting consisted of an exchange regarding both associations, the work carried out and respective policy priorities. The discussion also touched upon specific policy files important to both associations, such as the e-Privacy Regulation, unfair trading practices in the supply chain, and online platforms. Both associations agreed to continue the existing cooperation on topics of mutual interest.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

Current trends in cities can hamper circular economy uptake

Sustainable Development Director Guido Lena attended the two-day Circular Economy Stakeholder Dialogue organised by [CSR Europe](#) in the framework of the [R2π project](#). Regarding the current trends in cities, Mr Lena highlighted the danger that the growing market share of online commerce, coupled with the big commercial stores located in city outskirts, would be a barrier for circular economy uptake. These trends often create unbearable competition for micro and small businesses located in city centres and hence drives them out of the market with fewer jobs and loss of proximity shops and services for locals. This contributes to the desertification of city centres and pushes people to unsustainable patterns such as using cars whenever they need basic amenities. Consequently, Mr Lena urged the European Institutions to come up with political measures to safeguard the survival of proximity shops in city centres.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

Food Supply Chain: further steps to fight unfair trading practices

Secretary General Véronique Willems met with [Independent Retail Europe](#) Director General Else Groen to discuss SME involvement in the voluntary Supply Chain Initiative (SCI). Since the SCI saw light in 2013, 1200 companies signed up for it all over Europe. The principle is that an individual business or a group can complain about unfair trading practices of any kind via the platform and a mediation process then tries to resolve the situation. Moreover, SMEs do not even have to register as a member of the platform. A series of companies have agreed on fair trading practices to smooth relations from the outset, nevertheless SMEs remain the weakest link in the food supply chain. Therefore, the European Commission is planning on coming up with a minimal legislative proposal in April.

Contact: [Birte Day](#)

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

Facilitating innovation in traditional Business

President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller spoke at the "[Business Makeover](#)" conference, organised in Vienna by the [Envision project](#). She referred to the role of SMEs in Europe's economy and their importance for innovation and competitiveness. UEAPME's priorities to facilitate innovation in more traditional SMEs are access to finance and new technology, availability of skills, support through networks like clusters or supply chains, and support to manage change processes. As regards support, the Envision project provides a very useful online tool in eight languages, helping SMEs create a business, make a stress test, and change business model.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Standardisation: new sectoral approach for protective equipment

SBS has integrated a new sectoral approach for the Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), this covers products worn or held in order to protect the user against hazards. The approach also includes hygiene and sterilisation services for medical devices like reusables or textiles. The aim will be to ensure SMEs' compliance with European legislation and with relevant harmonised standards, especially in textile care services and protective clothing reprocessing, as well as ensure a smooth transition for SMEs from the Medical Devices Directives to the new regulations, and make sure that PPE manufacturers and textile care service providers are adequately represented at European level.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- The Belt & Road Initiative (30.01, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- Co-creating WEgate 2018 Seminar (31.01, contact [Doris Rabetge](#))

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