

UEAPME Newsflash

Self-employed must have better access to social protection

Representing entrepreneurs and self-employed in Europe, and in response to the new Commission initiative as part of the Social Fairness Package, UEAPME [advocates](#) that all workers and self-employed have access to basic levels of social protection at an affordable cost. The focus should be on facilitating tailored access to social protection schemes at national level. UEAPME expresses its concern with a compulsory approach to almost all branches, as proposed by the European Commission, since it could jeopardise entrepreneurs' free choice. It is important that Member States remain free to organise their social protection systems and that differences between Member States be taken into account. The establishment of a European Labour Authority (the other proposal of the Social Fairness Package) should serve to further promote cross-border mobility and at the same time tackle fraud and abuse linked to it.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Social partners call for strengthening capacity building

At the final conference of a European Social partners' project on the role of the European Social Fund in supporting social dialogue, it clearly [emerged](#) that the ESF does not sufficiently support economic and social partners in many Member States, in particular SME organisation. Taking into account the increasing role of social partners in the European governance, ESF support – which is still the main financial tool for capacity building – is more and more required. Capacity building should contribute to: (i) ensuring a good social dialogue, (ii) supporting social partners' role in the European Semester in designing and implementing reforms, (iii) better connecting national and European social dialogue, and (iv) a better and more efficient use of the ESF. European social partners are also calling for a full respect of the partnership principle as defined in the code of conduct and of the specific role of social partners for a well-functioning and fair labour market.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

SME involvement in economic governance is still insufficient

For the second year in a row, the European Social Partners held a seminar on economic governance to assess progress of social partner's involvement in the European Semester. A lot of efforts have been made at European level with the strong support of the Commission, while national practices remain very diverse and too often not really satisfactory. Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis recalled that the process at national level should be more than timely and meaningful consultations of social partners. It is about their direct involvement in the design, implementation and ownership of reforms, in particular to cope with quickly changing labour markets. While respecting national social dialogue diversity, capacity building is highly necessary for responsive SME organisations. Being proactive in the European Semester should aim at adopting concrete measures for inclusive growth and employment and improving SME business environment.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Greening the economy will not happen without SMEs

At an [OECD](#) meeting on the Small Business Act assessment for Western Balkans and Turkey, Sustainable Development Director Guido Lena spoke about the challenges SMEs face when going green. He pointed out that a greener economy will not be achieved without the full involvement of SMEs and pleaded for transition not to happen overnight in order to allow SMEs to adapt and stay on the market. Mr Lena also highlighted the need for a favourable political and legislative framework facilitating the transition to a greener economy for SMEs, composed of awareness-raising, technical assistance at local level, improved access to finance for the upfront investments, upskilling of entrepreneurs and their employees, as well as capacity building for SME organisations, particularly at local level.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

Revitalising the European Agenda on SMEs

[Public Policy Exchange](#) organised a [symposium](#) on "Achieving a Business-friendly Environment in the EU: Revitalising the European Agenda on SMEs". Speaking at the event, Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx reminded the audience that, according to the SME performance review, the implementation of the Small Business Act is far from complete. The need for a dedicated SME programme, such as COSME, is therefore more than justified as is a visible, consistent, horizontal SME policy. This programme should cover all SMEs from all sectors. Mr Hendrickx concluded by explaining UEAPME's position that the EU SME definition is still perfectly fit for purpose.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Business and transatlantic leadership in the new economy

At the [Amcham](#) EU Transatlantic [conference](#), Secretary General Willems participated in the panel discussion on "Transatlantic leadership in the new economy: What role for business?". Ms Willems advocated that trade has a positive impact on SMEs, but also that the repercussions on locally active SMEs need to be taken into account. For SMEs to go on an international adventure, access to information is crucial, along with support in designing export strategies. This requires capacity building with their organisations to provide the necessary services and resonate SME needs in trade negotiations.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- [AECM & UEAPME event on SME financing: EU financial instruments post 2020](#) (19.04, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))

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