

UEAPME Newsflash

Economic and social progress cannot happen without SMEs



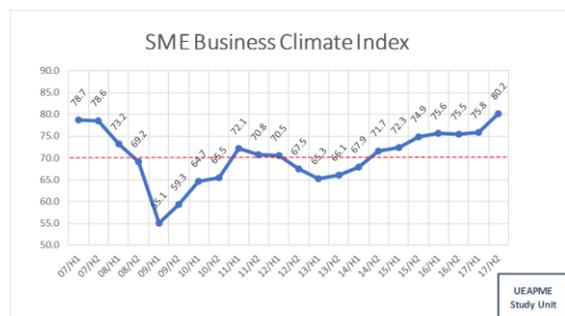
At the Tripartite Social Summit focussing on 'Delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights' (EPSR), President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller [put forward](#) the fact that we need a strong economy and growth to achieve social progress. However, SMEs are still facing [barriers](#) to growth: incomplete single market, rigid labour markets, and lack of finance for riskier projects. She also emphasised that the main current challenge on the labour market is the skills shortage. On the delivery of the EPSR, the main responsibility remains at national and regional level. UEAPME advocates for a bottom-up approach to deliver results, taking into account the needs of SMEs and with stimulus from the Multiannual Financial Framework.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

EU SME Barometer: SMEs growth stabilised at high levels

President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller [presented](#) the latest [SME Barometer](#) to the leaders of the European Institutions at the Tripartite Social Summit. Thanks to strong domestic demand, SMEs maintained high levels of confidence towards the current business environment and expect a future of stability. As a [result](#), the SME Climate Index has risen to 81.6 points, the highest level on record. Despite recent improvements in the economic outlook of Southern Europe, the North-South divide still persists, whereas uncertainty over Brexit widens the gap between the UK, its close partners and the rest of Europe. All sectors show stable growth, with positive figures for investment and employment. However, growth lost momentum compared to last semester, especially in construction and personal services, which may be a first sign of labour shortage for some qualifications.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)



Reinforcing EU Cohesion policy post 2020

UEAPME and the Committee of the Regions (CoR) [signed](#) the 'Cohesion Alliance for a strong EU Cohesion policy post 2020', reflecting the paramount importance of the regional development. The Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) will determine the financial resources available to support SMEs and implement policy actions for SMEs as well as bring added value to Europe. The MFF should grant SMEs with a better access to innovation and skills. For this to work, support of a well-designed cohesion policy is also needed. Through the signature of the alliance, UEAPME and the CoR are [sending](#) a strong political signal to the Institutions that SMEs and local and regional authorities have a common interest to a close partnership. The Committee of the Regions supports this partnership approach and a strong involvement of SME experts, the signature of the Alliance underlines this fact.

Contact: [Birte Day](#)

Digital WG takes comprehensive approach to SMEs & digitalisation

Secretary General Véronique Willems opened the first meeting of the Digital Working Group dedicated to the UEAPME annual theme. The first part of the discussion was devoted to the impact of digitalisation on all policy domains and SMEs sectors. Digital transformation is happening rapidly and SMEs need the right legislation and support measures to cope with it. This is why UEAPME decided to dedicate further attention on the topic and chose "digitalisation" as the 2018 annual theme. UEAPME is elaborating a comprehensive policy paper on digitalisation and has already published a [brochure](#) on best practices, a living document that will include more practices during the year. The second part of the meeting focused on technical discussion of specific legislative files currently debated or soon to be published, such as e-Privacy, online platforms and free flow of data.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

Migrant entrepreneurship: a good pathway for integration

At a workshop [organised](#) by the Migrant Entrepreneurship Growth Agenda (MEGA), Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer joined a panel discussion aiming at supporting migrant entrepreneurship. Many UEAPME members are active, ranging from mentoring activities to organising training on national company/labour law or digital competences, facilitating business networking, drafting business plans, and raising awareness. As recognised in the [Partnership for Integration](#), integration on the labour market requires a multi-stakeholder approach. Entrepreneurship needs to be recognised and boosted as a worthy employment and career path. Migrant entrepreneurs have a lot to offer to the European economy, but need specialised support in order to overcome obstacles and capitalise on their potential. The right legal framework including access to self-employment is needed.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

Data protection: SME obligations & challenges

At the “Workshop on Data Protection and Financial Regulation”, organised by [AECM](#) (European Association of Guarantee Institutions), Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx presented the main obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation for SMEs and organisations as well as the main challenges for them. He also focussed on possible future work for the organisation, such as the drafting of a Code of Conduct and certification.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EU SME Policy discussed with Austrian SMEs

President Ulrike Rabmer Koller initiated a [workshop](#), organised by UEAPME Austrian member organisation WKO, to examine current European SME policy from the Austrian SMEs’ point of view. Ms Rabmer-Koller opened the event by saying that the European Union and the Single Market have advantages for SMEs. However, the discussion on a huge variety of topics (e.g. posting of workers, digitalisation, skill shortage, regulatory burdens, consumer protection and environment policy) showed that SME needs and concerns are too often ignored in daily policy making. During the debate with representatives from national and European Institutions, SME owners put forward many concrete problems they have with implementing the current European rules. At the wrap-up session, Secretary General Véronique Willems promised to include the workshop’s results in the future UEAPME policy and underlined the importance of support structure.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Finnish delegation visits UEAPME

UEAPME member FFE (Finish Federation of Enterprises) organised a two-day course (Pomo III) for a group of entrepreneurs from the local and regional associations. The goal of the course was to broaden the entrepreneurs’ knowledge of EU-decision making and advocacy work of FFE in Brussels. It included a visit to the UEAPME premises and meetings with relevant Brussels stakeholders, namely Commission officials and MEPs. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx explained the mission and the functioning of UEAPME as well as the main challenges and files at European level for SMEs, such as digitalisation, consumer protection and privacy rules.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

News from UEAPME Projects

Consumer Law Ready website launched in all languages

The website of the [Consumer Law Ready](#) project was launched in all European languages. UEAPME, BEUC and EURO-CHAMBRES are the partners of the project. Thanks to Consumer Law Ready, European SMEs now have access to a wide range of online information and training tools enabling them to better understand and apply European consumer rights legislation. Through guides, videos, quizzes and e-tests, small businesses in all Member States will be able to navigate through complex European consumer legislation with more ease. The website and online training materials are tailored for each country and available in all EU languages. UEAPME’s members also participated in the organisation of local trainings to train SMEs’ advisers on consumer law.

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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UEAPME Newsflash
Compiled by: [Jenny Manin](#)
Press and communications officer
Phone: +32 2 230 7599
Mobile: +32 496 520 329