

# UEAPME Newsflash

## UEAPME unveils report on its 30 years and on SME finance

At the Administrative Council that took place in Warsaw on 20 May, UEAPME unveiled a publication on its 30 years and on SMEs' access to finance, a joint initiative taken with the UniCredit banking group and the OECD. Entitled "[SMEs in Europe: interest representation and access to finance between past, present and future](#)", the book opens with a first part dedicated to the main achievements of UEAPME in the past 30 years, such as reuniting SME organisations, becoming a recognised and full-fledged European Social Partner and creating a powerful SME representative in the standardisation arena. The second and third part deal respectively with the current and future scenario on access to finance, with contributions from the UniCredit group on its activities on the field, on the banking sector perspective and on the country situation in Italy and Poland, as well as from the OECD on the evaluation of the policy decisions made during the crisis, on emerging best practices and on future study areas. Contact: [Francesco Longu](#)

## Business organisations meet the EC on consumer rights

Last week in Brussels, Secretary General Andrea Benassi joined his counterparts from Businesseurope, Eurochambres and Eurocommerce in a meeting on the consumer rights directive with Director General Françoise Le Bail and Civil Justice Director Paraskevi Michou from the European Commission's DG Justice. While supporting full harmonisation in the field, the four expressed their concerns on withdrawal periods and the associated costs and conditions as well as on the rules for contracts negotiated outside the trader's shop. The text stipulates that all such contracts are subject to a 14 days withdrawal period and onerous information requirements, even when the client established the business contact. In the current "trialogue" between Commission, Council and Parliament it is even discussed whether the currently envisaged exceptions for craftsmen are to be kept. All this could lead to more burdens for SMEs and to less choice, higher prices and longer delivery times for consumers, said Mr Benassi, calling for making a distinction between solicited and unsolicited visits. Contact: [Sabine Erkens](#)

## ECOFIS tackles economic governance and taxation issues

A meeting of the UEAPME Economic and Fiscal Affairs Committee (ECOFIS) took place in Brussels last week. Karl Pichelmann from the European Commission's DG ECFIN updated participants on the reasons, aims and functioning of the new economic governance measures taken in the EU and in the Euro zone after the crisis. Europe's response to the downturn aimed at stabilising financial markets and improving supervision mechanisms. It also includes the European Economic Recovery Plan, the so-called "Euro Plus" pact and the "Annual Growth Survey". Participants also exchanged views on the current economic situation, reconfirming the existing differences in economic performance between Europe's centre and periphery, before moving on to discuss taxation policy issues and the next generation of programmes for SME finance and for R&D&I. Our Study Group met later on the same day. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## ADR schemes are useful but must remain strictly voluntary

UEAPME recently replied to a consultation by the European Commission on alternative dispute resolution (ADR) for issues related to commercial transactions and practices in the EU. While speaking in favour of ADR as a less expensive and faster alternative to traditional court cases, UEAPME warned that its use must remain strictly voluntary and that its application must be limited to individual cases, as opposed to collective dispute resolutions. UEAPME also stressed that ADR should be applied to B2B, B2C and other kinds of commercial transactions, while introducing safeguards to avoid "frivolous" claims. The knowledge of consumers and businesses of the available alternative dispute resolution schemes must be raised in order to increase their use, for instance through the use of digital channels. Moreover, UEAPME also commented on other aspects such as funding, claims for e-commerce transactions, cross-border disputes, costs for the parties and the independence of ADR schemes. [Read more](#) or contact [Sabine Erkens](#)

## VET: attractiveness and excellence must be raised, say SMEs

The Hungarian Presidency organised a [conference on the attractiveness and excellence of vocational education and training](#) last week in Budapest. Education and Training Director Liliane Volozinskis recalled the engagement and investments of crafts and SMEs in VET, notably through apprenticeship. However, the role of VET is underestimated despite its strong economic and social value. Action must be taken to raise its attractiveness and excellence and to follow up on the Bruges communiqué deliverables, notably working on the quality of VET and VET systems linked to the labour market, creating flexible learning pathways for students, fostering lifelong learning and learning mobility opportunities abroad, improving the image of VET to combat stereotypes and setting up incentives for young people and small companies, she said. The crisis has triggered new challenges with a political momentum for VET, which should help to reach full parity of esteem between VET and general education. All Member States must grasp this opportunity, she concluded. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## SBA review and entrepreneurship discussed in Warsaw

A conference on "[the future of training and consulting for young SMEs](#)" took place in Warsaw last week as part of "SME-TraiNet", an EU-funded project to support SMEs in the critical phase between their third and fifth year of operation including UEAPME and several of its members as partners. Employment and Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis spoke on [entrepreneurship as a priority for the EU](#), stressing the need for coordination and convergence between policies on labour market, enterprise, innovation, education and training to promote the creation of enterprises of all kinds, from traditional companies to innovative start-ups. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke on [the review of the Small Business Act](#)

[and on its consequences for the future EU policies](#). The fact that the SBA is not legally binding makes its contents fully dependent on political will, he stressed, while the impact of its review will depend on one hand on its uptake at EU, national, regional and local level and on the other on the availability of resources for all the actions foreseen by the text. Contact: [Ludger Fischer](#)

**EVENTS AHEAD:**

- [Conference on the application of the directive on misleading and comparative advertising \(24/05, contact \[Luc Hendrickx\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [SBA conference “Mobilising SMEs for the future of Europe” \(Budapest, 24-25/05, contact \[Luc Hendrickx\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [Launch of the 2011 European Payment Index \(26/05, contact \[Luc Hendrickx\]\(#\)\)](#)
- [Conference on modernisation of EU public procurement policy \(30/06, contact \[Gerhard Huemer\]\(#\)\)](#)

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