

UEAPME Newsflash

Commissioner Thyssen addresses UEAPME reception

At the UEAPME annual reception at Chateau Sainte Anne, President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller introduced Secretary General Véronique Willems to representatives from the European Institutions, Social Partners and other stakeholders in Brussels. At this occasion, UEAPME's Board of Directors honoured former Secretary General Peter Faross and thanked him for his achievements for UEAPME. Another highlight of the evening was the keynote address from Commissioner Marianne Thyssen on the European Pillar of Social Rights. She promised to keep new legislation to a minimum and underlined that competitiveness, job creation and entrepreneurship have to be at the core of the pillar, which should also provide access to social protection for self-employed.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)



Policies need to cover diversity of SMEs and their needs

The European Economic and Social Committee organised a [hearing](#) with the European Social Partners on “Improving the effectiveness of EU policies for SMEs”. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx stated that, at EU level, there is an urgent need for visible, consistent, horizontal SME policy based on a reviewed and binding Small Business Act. The actual policies do not take into account the diversity and the different needs of SMEs. Traditional and micro enterprises are insufficiently taken into account and the ‘Think Small First’ principle is not applied. He also spoke up against attempts to review the European SME definition as there is no need for it and this would on the contrary completely erode the concept.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Sensitive approach needed in removing barriers for SME finance

At an [event](#) on removing information barriers of investment in SMEs, organised by the Centre of European Policy Studies and the European Capital Market Institute, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer focused on two current EC initiatives in the framework of the Capital Market Union. The first one targets improving the feedback given by banks to SMEs when they decline a credit application. Here, Mr Huemer argued in favour of national solutions – also respecting and responding to the different banking models – and against a European one size fits all regulation. UEAPME is currently working with the banking associations on core principles for such national solutions. As regards sharing of SME credit information, he insisted that SMEs must have the control over their data, and must be able to decide which finance provider can access such information.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Task force looks into links between circular and digital economies

Last week, Sustainable Development Adviser Rosa Solanes participated in the third meeting of the CEPS (Centre of European Policy Studies) Task Force analysing the role of business in the circular economy. The aim of the meeting was to exchange ideas on how the digital economy can help cope with the challenges of the circular economy. Digitalisation was presented as an enabler of the circular economy since it can improve the design of products, the way they are manufactured as well as their reuse and recycling. Likewise, gathering information along the supply chain becomes much easier thanks to digitalisation. In this context, Ms Solanes agreed that information alone is not a solution and explained that, for instance, in the case of construction and demolition waste (C&D waste), the sorting of waste is very difficult. Moreover, it is a challenge for construction SMEs to have specific parts of C&D waste collected.

Contact: [Rosa Solanes](#)

Covered bonds can support SME finance

At an S&D Group breakfast [event](#), hosted in the European Parliament by Group Vice-President Jeppe Kofod (DK), SME and financial market stakeholders discussed the role of covered bonds for micro finance, innovation and job creation with MEPs and Commission officials. Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer explained that giving banks the possibility to refinance themselves with bonds covered by SME loans can only work if the loan portfolio is of low risk and highly collateralised, i.e. by mortgages. Mr Huemer is therefore not convinced that covered bonds are an instrument able to support the financing of innovation, which is riskier by nature. However, in some countries, such bonds allow banks to provide classical loans to small enterprises and new regulation – currently on the agenda of the Capital Market Union – should not endanger this instrument by changing the risk profile of such bonds.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

----- News from UEAPME Sector Fora -----

Access to road transport: current legislation needs revising

The Transport Forum published its [position](#) on access to the profession of road transport operator and on access to the international road haulage market. The paper points out the necessity to completely abolish the existence of "letterbox companies" by ensuring harmonised application and coherent enforcement of the existing EU rules. The Forum attaches great value to the use of the Electronic Register of Roadtransport Undertakings for collecting data on the fulfilment of conditions for an effective and stable establishment in a Member State. As a policy option, the position highlights the importance of revising the current legislation addressing cabotage operations through more specific rules. No further liberalisation of cabotage until the additional implementation of a strengthened legal social framework is recommended. Concerning the use of digital tachograph equipped with GNSS, the Forum calls for more controls on its use and for additional clarifications of its technical and functional requirements.

Contact: [Patrizia di Mauro](#)

Construction: EBC is looking for a new Secretary General

UEAPME construction member organisation EBC (European Builders Confederation) is recruiting a new Secretary General to lead its Brussels team as from May. More details [here](#).

Contact: [Riccardo Viaggi](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- Preventive restructuring & second chance for entrepreneurs: what's in it for SMEs?" (28.02, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- REACH 2018 SME Workshop (09-10.03, contact [Guido Lena](#))

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