

# UEAPME Newsflash

## **ILO focuses on inequalities and role of social dialogue**

At an International Labour Organisation (ILO) conference on “Inequalities and the World of Work – What Role for Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue”, Secretary General Veronique Willems stated that equality and strong purchasing power are essential for SMEs. Key factors influencing inequalities are not limited to wages but include social protection and tax systems, education and skills, as well as services to support to combine work and private life. Ms Willems confirmed the major role of social dialogue and collective bargaining to reduce inequalities and gave examples of EU social dialogue contribution (Inclusive Labour Markets and Active Ageing agreements, Framework of Actions on Youth Employment). She concluded by saying that the best way to have SMEs covered by collective bargaining is to involve them in social dialogue at all levels, and this requires support for capacity building for strong, autonomous and representative SME organisations. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## **Digital Working Group tackles policy priorities**

In the Digital Working Group meeting, the first part of the discussion focused on the current and upcoming priorities of the Digital Agenda: VAT e-commerce package, Digital Contracts and European Data Economy. The group especially discussed the digital contracts proposals. UEAPME and member organisations are currently assessing the tabled amendments and plan to address MEPs on the most critical issues for SMEs, i.e. the scope of application, the level of harmonisation and the reversal of the burden of proof. The second part of the discussion was centred on the Services Package and in particular on the proportionality test. Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## **H2020 is a success for SMEs, further improvements needed**

Commissioner Carlos Moedas and EC Research and Innovation Director General Robert-Jan Smits met with European stakeholder organisations to discuss the [performance and further simplification of Horizon 2020](#). At the event, the results of an [H2020 Simplification Survey](#) were presented and the Commissioner explained the next simplification steps foreseen: bottom-up approach for the SME instrument, pilots on lump-sum finance instead of cost-refunding and the use of normal accounting practice. Speaking at the event, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer welcomed the bottom-up approach, but asked for better advice structures at national level to increase the success rates and criticised the open access to research data as a barrier for companies where competition with projects close to commercialisation. Finally, he asked to continue with the SME instruments for the next programme period. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## **UEAPME presents views on pension adequacy challenges**

At the Social Protection Committee (SPC) Age Working Group, Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer presented UEAPME's views on current challenges for pension adequacy. With an ageing population, changing labour markets and persistent unemployment, a good policy mix and reforms are needed to mitigate pressure on social security systems and guarantee their sustainability. Relying on state pensions is no longer sufficient to ensure adequate coverage. Policy responses should cover increasing effective retirement age. On pension coverage for self-employed, Mr De Boer stressed that focus should be on their needs, including facilitating access to minimum protection instead of applying social rules for workers to them. As contributions, coverage and take-up by self-employed differ widely across Member States, a European mapping is highly necessary as already requested by UEAPME. Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

## **Positive corporate culture needs to be created to reduce stigma of failure**

UEAPME, ACCA (Association of Chartered Certified Accountants) and BusinessEurope organised a [conference](#) on “Preventive restructuring and second chance for entrepreneurs: what's in it for SMEs?”, supported by the Maltese Presidency. Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx positively [welcomed](#) the proposal for a directive as a fine-tuned balance between the rights of creditors and the interests of the debtor. Prevention should receive the main attention and should focus on businesses that can be helped without having to resort to restructuring measures. Therefore UEAPME is also partner in the ‘Early Warning EU’ project ([see previous Newsflash article](#)). Honest entrepreneurs should be discharged within one year. He also called on Member States to fulfil their promises made in the SBA in 2008 to promote a positive attitude towards a second chance and stressed the need to support entrepreneurs in difficulties and after a bankruptcy. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## **SMEs need to be included in Public-Private Cooperation**

Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx spoke at a [conference](#) on “Public-Private Cooperation in Economic Development and Job Creation, the role of Local Authorities”. The event was organised in Rome in the framework of the [LADDER](#) project by Movimento Europeo Italia and ALDA (EU Association for Local Democracy) and hosted by CNA. Mr Hendrickx highlighted the role of SMEs for the European economy and society. He also advocated for the application of the “Multilevel Governance” in order to ensure the participation of the real economic and social actors, especially SMEs. In addition, a partnership culture has to be implemented as well as the application of the SBA principles and especially the ‘Think Small First’ principles. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Craft Chamber Cote d'Armor visit UEAPME

In the context of a study visit to the European Institutions, the newly elected Board of the "Chambre des Métiers et de l'Artisanat des Côtes d'Armor" (Côte d'Armor Craft and SME Chamber) led by the Brittany's Regional Chamber President Louis Noël met with UEAPME. Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx presented the functioning of UEAPME and SBS. The participants had a lively exchange of views on the necessity of representing and defending the interests of crafts at European level and how this is done, as well as on the definition of SMEs and Crafts at European and national level.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

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

## East Invest 2 holds its SME Academy in Ukraine

The second round of the SME Academies of the [East Invest 2](#) project started with an SME training session in Lviv (Ukraine). 30 very interested Ukrainian SME participants attended and were trained on DCFTA (Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area), marketing, technical standards, export readiness and participation in trade fairs. The opening session included the head of the economic department of the Lviv state administration, the representative of the EBRD office in Lviv (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development) and the vice-president of the Lviv Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The objective of these Academies is to offer SMEs from the Eastern Partnership countries a better understanding of the EU, therefore aiming at making them more competitive and better prepared to develop business with the EU. The courses were given by EU experts as well as Ukrainian experts trained in the 'train the trainers' session ([see previous Newsflash article](#)).

Contact: [Doris Rabetge](#)

## R2π website is live

The [R2π](#) project website is up and running. The project examines ways to shift from the broad concept of a Circular Economy to one of Circular Economy Business Models. The R2π acronym uses mathematical terms representing the project's concept "transition from linear 2 circular" (the R represents the linear "radius" and the π symbolises the circle). UEAPME is a partner in the project and has the following roles: (i) contribute to validate the recommendations to extend the general taking up of circular economy thanks to the implication of its own network, (ii) advertising the organisation of the Green Alley Collaboration Space, hosting joint projects/initiatives for collaboration between circular economy start-ups and larger players as well as workshops to incite larger organisations to seek inspiration from those circular economy start-ups, and (iii) disseminating information on the development and results of the project inside and outside its network.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- REACH 2018 SME Workshop (09-10.03, contact [Guido Lena](#))
- [Business Transfer Conference](#) (17.03, Malta, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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