

UEAPME Newsflash

EMU deepening requires more convergence

At the [Macroeconomic Dialogue](#) meeting, the European Social Partners discussed the next steps to deepen the Monetary Union with EC Vice-President Dombrovskis, Euro Group President Dijsselbloem, the ECB and the Troika Finance Ministers. Secretary General Véronique Willems agreed that there is a need to further deepen the Monetary Union and asked for a better involvement of Social Partners in the governance process, especially in the European Semester. On fiscal rules, she asked for more of a quality approach supporting structural reforms and investment in future growth, only looking at quantitative data is not sufficient. Finally, on a financial stabilisation function, she put forward doubts that such a project will get the political support before reaching more economic and social convergence between Member States and insisted that such an instrument be conditional to the implementation of jointly agreed reforms in order to avoid moral hazard.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Future cooperation discussed with Environment Commissioner

Secretary General Véronique Willems and EC Commissioner Karmenu Vella (Environment) met to discuss future cooperation to better embed SMEs in sustainability and in the circular economy action plan. Ms Willems highlighted that, to enable SMEs to fully grasp the opportunities of new markets and create greener jobs, pre-conditions have to be set up at all levels to provide SMEs with information, technical assistance, easier access to finance, relevant skills for entrepreneurs and workers as well as further capacity building for SME organisations. Referring to the Commission's initiative to foster green jobs with the involvement of the EU Social Partners, she added that job greening needs to be cross-sectoral, impacting the whole of the society and economy if the EU wants to achieve its objectives of climate emissions cuts. Key elements of this process is to make SMEs more aware of the various possibilities through concrete examples of success stories.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

Social Partners discuss second mobility package with VP Šefčovič

EC Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič invited the European Social Partners to discuss the second mobility package. Secretary General Véronique Willems emphasised that a disruptive evolution wave in the mobility sector (e-cars, drones, driverless cars, ...) is to be expected as well as the importance of the matter. There is therefore an urgent need to secure the necessary infrastructure and to make serious investments in the development and training of related skills. Furthermore, she underlined that the focus should not only be on SMEs active in the mobility sector, but that SMEs in other sectors also need support in the process. Ms Willems was accompanied by member organisation UETR's Secretary General Marco Digioia who put forward technical remarks specific to the transport sector.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

SME Category: better supporting SMEs

Secretary General Véronique Willems spoke at the meeting of the SME Category of the EESC on "How to better support SMEs during the financial period 2020-2027". She recalled the [declaration](#) of 7 business organisations made last year at the EESC roundtable on SME Policy and covered the SME needs (e.g. access to finance, skilled staff, access to markets) and challenges (digitalisation, globalisation and greening of the economy). She emphasised that, to tackle these needs, the 'Think Small First' principle needs to be applied at all times and that the diversity within the SME group needs to be considered. Furthermore, the problems in the SMEs' life cycle need to be addressed and support established to exchange best practices and for capacity building.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

Review of capital requirements to improve bank financing for SMEs

At a [breakfast meeting](#) of the European Parliament's SME Intergroup, hosted by [EACB](#), MEP Peter Simon's upcoming report on the review of capital requirements for banks was discussed between Mr Simon and representatives from SMEs, banks and the European Commission. Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer explained the relevance of small decentralised banking structures for small companies' access to finance, and welcomed the Commission's proposal to prolong and extend the SME Supporting Factor and to introduce some proportionality measures for small banks. However, Mr Huemer asked to not only use the size of banks, but also the riskiness of their business model when simplifying reporting and disclosure requirements. Finally, he underlined the increasing importance of Credit Unions for SME finance, especially in countries where only large commercial banks are left.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Lessons learnt for integration of refugees on the labour market

With the increased flow of migration towards Europe in recent years, a conference was held at the EESC to take stock of policy developments and learn lessons for the future. As refugees also bring opportunities, effective integration remains a challenge for many SMEs, in terms of a lack of knowledge of the host country language, insufficient skills levels, the impact of traumatic experiences of refugees, and legal uncertainty. Companies need support to make integration a success. Many efforts to integrate refugees, such as fast-track schemes or effective outreach of Public Employment Services, may also have a lasting effect for the integration of other groups in society. UEAPME members insisted on the need for bringing all stakeholders together at local, regional, and national level, including governments, social partners, and civil society organisations. Tailored approaches are crucial to encompass the needs of refugees and businesses.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

A second chance for entrepreneurs and the insolvency directive

At the SME Europe breakfast meeting on "A Second Chance for Entrepreneurs", Secretary General Véronique Willems voiced UEAPME's conviction that business organisations do not only have to be there for their members when they are successful but also when they are facing difficulties. Taking this into account, UEAPME supports the objectives in the proposal for the directive on insolvency. Nevertheless, some fine-tuning has to be made to balance the interests of debtors and creditors. Ms Willems referred to the importance of early prevention, which starts with good preparation before setting-up a company. The mechanisms need to be provided for entrepreneurs in order to help them face difficulties, such as the [Early Warning Europe](#) project, as well as a second chance for bankrupt entrepreneurs. It is important to give them guidance to learn from failure and be able to continue with their professional lives.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

SMEs need support for VET mobility

At a lunch seminar at the Flanders-Europe Liaison Agency (Vleeva), Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer discussed challenges and opportunities of mobility in Vocational Education and Training (VET) with students, teachers, coordinators, managers, and policy makers from the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany. The opportunities are immense for individual development and employability of students, and also for many transversal competences needed on the labour market. However, the obstacles are still high for SMEs to participate. VET being very different from higher education, due to its intrinsic work-based learning nature, cooperation and sustainable partnerships are essential between all stakeholders to understand each other's needs. Since they are crucial stakeholders in the sending and receiving of students, small companies need practical support before, during, and after mobility experiences to make them feasible, and help them see the added value.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

SME lobbying discussed with Dutch entrepreneurs

A delegation from Platform Promotional Products (PPP), member of UEAPME Dutch member MKB-Nederland, visited Brussels and the UEAPME secretariat. PPP represents the interest of the promotional industry in the Netherlands. Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx and the entrepreneurs discussed their daily concerns in the internal market and especially product safety and compliance with product quality standards of non-EU products brought to the internal market, e.g. via Alibaba and other platforms. Moreover, Mr Hendrickx explained how SME lobbying works in Brussels and presented the UEAPME activities in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility and late payment.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- SBS-UNIZO seminar (14.11, contact [Tessa Delville](#))
- Resource Efficiency in the Manufacturing Industry (24.11, Berlin, contact [Guido Lena](#))
- General Data Protection Regulation (27.11, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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