

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Deepening of EMU discussed with VP Dombrovskis

EC Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis invited the European Social Partners to [exchange views](#) on the next steps for deepening the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). Following the [5 Presidents' Report](#) in 2015, the European Commission published a [reflection paper](#) on the subject in May and plans to put forward a proposal with the next steps beginning of December. During the debate, Secretary General Véronique Willems referred to UEAPME's position in its [contribution to the Future of Europe debate](#). Even if UEAPME supports a further integration of the EMU, Ms Willems pointed out that more coherence and some risk reduction will be necessary to make it politically feasible. Furthermore, she insisted that any kind of financial stabilisation has to be conditional to the needed reforms, and asked for better involvement of social partners in the European Semester process (especially at national level) and for support to increase the capacity of SME organisations to contribute to this process.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Member organisations and EC talk data protection for SMEs

Exclusively for UEAPME and its member organisations, the European Commission organised a workshop aimed at explaining the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) to SMEs and their representatives. The GDPR will come into force in May 2018 and many SMEs feel unready and still have open questions on how they need to adapt to comply. The workshop's aim was to answer and clarify some of the commonly asked questions, and tackle the misunderstandings linked to this Regulation. The discussion touched upon the scope of application, the new obligations for SMEs, the right of individuals, the issue of consent, data processing and when a data protection officer will be needed. Welcoming participants with some introductory remarks, Secretary General Véronique Willems thanked the EC's Data Protection Unit for the good cooperation and attention towards SMEs as well as the numerous members who travelled to Brussels to attend the meeting.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## Simplification of tax regimes and fighting tax fraud

Secretary General Véronique Willems met with DG TAXUD Director General Stephen Quest to discuss SME priorities as regards the European Commission's current tax policy agenda. Taxes not paid by fraudulent tax payers or due to aggressive tax planning have to be compensated by SMEs and other compliant tax payers. In addition, SMEs see the 28 different and highly complex tax regimes as the main barrier for cross-border businesses. Therefore, simplification and fighting tax fraud and tax avoidance are a priority for SMEs. At the meeting, Ms Willems put forward the SME concerns about the new proposals for a definitive VAT regime – as they may become burdensome, costly and risky for SMEs – and explained UEAPME's [expectations](#) for the review of the VAT SME Scheme. Furthermore, she raised concerns about the impact of a too flexible VAT rate regime for the internal market and welcomed the upcoming extension of the One-Stop Shop to e-commerce.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Legal Affairs Committee focuses on current files & 2018 priorities

At the Legal Affairs Committee, many political and legislative files were discussed among UEAPME members. Important points of discussion were the fitness check of Consumer Law, the draft recommendations for better presentation of information to consumers, the contract rules for online purchases of digital content and tangible goods, the adoption of the geo-blocking regulation, the services e-card proposal, insolvency, and collective redress. The Committee also discussed its work programme for 2018 and the priority files to focus on.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## Cohesion Policy post 2020: priorities must respect SME needs

At the Structured Dialogue on European Structural and Investment Funds, the Commission announced its political priorities for the future post 2020 Structural Funds. In particular, the Commission emphasised the need to strengthen the integrated approach at territorial level with a better consideration of local approach, integration of local needs and involvement of the public and private actors at all levels. A greater margin should be given to regional authorities to determine the measures to be put in place in their territories as well as the beneficiary areas. Cohesion Policy Senior Advisor Hubert Delorme emphasised the importance of these priorities for SMEs and that all SMEs are concerned, regardless of their region. Furthermore, he underlined the need to strengthen the partnership and the Code of Conduct with economic and social stakeholders, particularly with regional SME organisations, which should also benefit from capacity building measures.

Contact: [Hubert Delorme](#)

## The next research programme must aim for innovation

Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer met with representatives from the Commission's DG Research & Innovation to discuss lessons learnt from Horizon 2020 and first ideas for the next framework programme FP9. Mr Huemer referred to UEAPME's [position](#) and underlined that, in order to create European added value, the next programme must aim for more impact on society and competitiveness, i.e. FP9 has to focus on innovation. As an EU programme has to focus on an EU project, he asked for more complementarity between FP9, innovation support and the State aid rules for national programmes. The current oversubscription of the H2020 SME Instrument should be tackled by better advisory structures at national level and by accepting the "Seal of Excellence" as proof for being a project of European interest. Finally, he asked for better integration of phase 2 (grants) and phase 3 (financial instruments) to better facilitate SME innovation projects.  
Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Employee Training: a new priority for social partners

Employers and trade unions from Poland, Germany, Denmark and Portugal got together in Warsaw to discuss the challenges and opportunities of further training of employees. Existing skills shortages, but also digitisation, greening of the economy, and ageing workforce require reflection and adequate solutions. Education and training systems need to better respond to labour market needs. [Ursyn Car](#), a company affiliated to UEAPME Polish member organisation [ZRP](#), presented the challenges for SMEs through practical examples. To tackle skills shortages and to remain competitive SMEs rely on further training of their employees. But to be successful, vocational training systems need to be adapted to the SMEs' needs in order to see added value and return on investment. Easing access to funding opportunities and reducing red tape are still the pre-conditions for more investments in skills, in particular for small businesses.  
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