

UEAPME Newsflash

The European SME definition is still fit for purpose

UEAPME issued a [position paper](#) opposing any changes regarding the SME definition. UEAPME members [feel](#) the SME definition is still fit to achieve its strategic and specific objectives. Indeed, it encompasses the SMEs that should be covered by it. The current thresholds should therefore not be changed and the staff headcount criterion should remain the major one. Including more companies will disadvantage micro, small and medium-sized enterprises that have less capacities and truly need support. When the underlying rationale of the SME definition is consistently applied at European level, it is sufficient to ensure participation in major EU policy programmes (e.g. Structural Funds) and to address difficulties faced by SMEs, in particular regarding access to finance. An extension of the SME definition (e.g. by raising the thresholds or widening the scope) would dilute the available support for SMEs.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

New formal information on working conditions: SMEs concerned

The European Commission [adopted](#) its proposal for the revision of the Written Statement Directive. In a first reaction, UEAPME criticised the fact that, by extending the existing minimum information package, employers will have to deliver far more information to all types of workers at the start of an employment contract, and this will create new red tape for Crafts and SMEs. In addition, by adding a list of rights, the Commission changed the nature and objectives of the directive, therefore not helping to reach a right balance between flexibility required by small businesses and security of workers. That being said, self-employed remain out of the scope of the directive, which is fully justified as they are their own employers.

Contact: [Liliane Voložinskis](#)

Simplification of Consumer Acquis needed

Following a DG Justice public consultation, UEAPME published its [position paper](#) on the targeted revision of EU consumer law directives. Although the current EU consumer law acquis is still fit for purpose, this does not mean that no changes at all to the acquis are needed or that improvements would not be required. There is a huge need to simplify the rules on the right of withdrawal as well as measures to avoid abuse by consumers. Also the information requirements of the different directives should be simplified, made clearer and transparent. As the complexity of the rules is the main reason for the unintentional non-compliance, the only solution is to invest in prevention and to better inform the traders and, if possible, make the rules more intuitive.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

UEAPME supports access to social protection

The social partners' consultation on access to social protection for all employment statuses is very relevant for SMEs due to rapid developments on the labour market. As the European organisation representing entrepreneurs and self-employed, UEAPME's [reply](#) advocates basic levels of social protection at a reasonable cost and subscribing to higher levels of protection on a voluntary basis. However, it is strictly up to Member States to design their social protection systems and decide on the mandatory or voluntary nature of different types and levels of social protection. The European level could facilitate exchange of best practices, and draw attention to possible gaps in social protection in the context of the European Semester. Premature solutions at EU level, that fail to grasp the complexity of the issue, have to be avoided. A tailored offer of social protection is another crucial aspect.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

UEAPME worried about 2018 REACH registration deadline

UEAPME [wrote](#) to the Commission and ECHA expressing concerns regarding the huge gap of substances already registered under REACH compared to the estimation for 2013-18, stating that every single substance can be crucial for many SMEs in different supply chains. UEAPME also stressed that the registration deadline might not be the success hoped for, despite the efforts of the Directors' Contact Group (DCG). In case of serious deficit in the substance account on 1st June, UEAPME pleaded for a more serious fall-back position, taking into account that many SMEs did not register simply due to regulatory overload. In his reply, ECHA Executive Director Geert Dancet agreed that the registration could only be deemed successful as long as a critical mass of SMEs fulfil their registration obligations, made reference to the support given by ECHA and its partners and referred to the [specific recommendations for SMEs adopted by the DCG](#).

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

UEAPME takes position on upcoming European Labour Authority

UEAPME [supports](#) fostering cross-border mobility and better enforcement of EU rules. This should be the main task of the future European Labour Authority (ELA). The ELA could become a "one stop shop" for information sharing, valid for businesses and mobile citizens. Reinforcing administrative capacity when necessary, sharing information and more coordination among Member States are welcome, but additional bureaucracy and overlap with existing structures should be avoided. The ELA's added value could also be a discussion board and a mediator, at the request of Member States. If the Authority has to become an agency, social partners should be involved in its governance. The European Social Security Number should support exchange of information on social security, reinforce transparency and tackle fraud, in particular in the case of posted workers. However, the costs should be as limited as possible for Member States and businesses.

Contact: [Liliane Voložinskis](#)

Migration & labour market: social partners and EC sign partnership

The European economic and social partners and the European Commission (Commissioners Marianne Thyssen and Dimitris Avramopoulos) [signed](#) the "[European Partnership for Integration](#) – Offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the European labour market". On this occasion, Secretary General Véronique Willems emphasised that migration in Europe is a fact. Integration is a necessity for the society and the economy and is the shared responsibility of multiple actors. Moreover, SMEs and their organisations already do a lot for integrating refugees in the labour market but they need stronger support. Last but not least, she stated that exchanging good practices and working more closely together at all levels is the right way forward.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Late Payment Directive need to be improved

The European Parliament's SME Intergroup held a breakfast discussion on the Late Payment Directive, hosted by [Intrum](#) and [FSB](#). As data show that the situation is not improving, Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx reminded the audience that in 2008 the Member States already agreed to pay their invoices within 30 days. Abuse of the verification period by the public authorities especially needs to be tackled. While late payment is a complex phenomenon that requires different types of measures, a legislative initiative to tackle the excessive payment periods due to power imbalances in B2B relations is deemed necessary.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Rethink your business \(model\)](#) - Envision (18.01, Vienna, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- [The Belt & Road Initiative](#) (30.01, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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