

UEAPME Newsflash

Digitalisation is crucial for SMEs' competitiveness

At meetings with Commissioners Bieńkowska and Thyssen, President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller [emphasised](#) that entrepreneurs need an enabling legal framework and environment with adequate support structures to guide their company through digital transformation. Therefore, UEAPME calls for increasing measures on skills development, financial support, capacity building, an appropriate infrastructure and standardisation. On this occasion, Ms Rabmer-Koller also handed over the [UEAPME brochure](#) containing best practices on support for digital transformation from member organisations. Digital transformation is a big challenge for SMEs today. Companies lagging behind risk losing their competitiveness power in the digital single market. UEAPME calls for a comprehensive and coherent approach among all Commission initiatives and services, encompassing an enabling legal framework as well as setting up an environment with the adequate support structures.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

New working conditions puts too much red tape on SMEs

In the newly adopted [position](#) on the proposal for a directive on transparent and predictable working conditions, UEAPME [expressed](#) serious concerns about the red tape and complexity of the new directive. The aim of the directive is not only to inform workers of the conditions applicable to an employment relationship, but also to ensure new rights (such as the predictability of work). For UEAPME, even if modernisation is justified, the Commission's approach to it goes too far. The new obligation for employers to deliver far more information to all types of workers at the start of an employment contract does not take into account the necessary need for simplification of legislation, in particular for SMEs. The self-employed remain out of the scope of the directive, which is fully justified as they are their own employers, but the new definition of workers might challenge this.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

REACH: UEAPME proposes rule for fee-cost sharing

Secretary General Willems [wrote](#) to DG GROW Director General Lowri Evans regarding the REACH fee regulation (EC N° 340/2008) that the Commission is about to propose amending. The amendment concerns some authorisation-related fees and the fact that the wording of the regulation does not explain exactly how the fees should be shared between the co-applicants. In practice, the lack of clarity of the new wording would oblige applicants to agree on their shares, whereas experience in REACH data sharing processes has clearly shown that such negotiations often end in a discrimination of the smaller participants, which should be avoided. UEAPME therefore proposed that this problem be addressed by implementing a rule for fee cost sharing in line with the existing SME fee reduction and this rule should be included in the fee regulation.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

Next MFF should focus on competitiveness, jobs and growth

At the [ECOFIS](#) Committee meeting, members received the first results from the upcoming EU SME Barometer and exchanged views on the overall quite positive economic situation of SMEs. At a discussion about the financial future of the EU, members agreed that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) should focus on competitiveness, jobs and growth. Furthermore, the committee members adopted a position paper criticising the European Commission's approach for the Single EU VAT area and made a first assessment on the VAT SME Scheme and the proposal for more flexible VAT rates. Finally, participants were informed of the last [Macro Economic Dialogue](#) and exchanged views on the EMU deepening, financial market regulations and the EU Industrial Policy Strategy.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Successful UEAPME Workshop at EU Industry Day

During the EU Industry Day 2018, UEAPME organised a [workshop](#) on "Facilitating the up-take of new technologies by traditional SMEs". At the event, SME owners, supporting intermediaries and European Commission representatives discussed the main challenges and needs of SMEs when up-taking new technologies, good practices for how to support them and what can be done at European level to improve the situation. The main challenges for SMEs that came up are access to skills, finance, technologies and new markets. Furthermore, participants argued that gold plating and differences in implementing EU directives are true barriers for innovation and hence asked for more fairness between SMEs and dominant market players. As regards support measures, SMEs and intermediaries asked for continuation of the existing programmes like COSME, Horizon and ESIF with an additional focus on digitalisation and greening of the economy.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

UEAPME at OECD Ministerial on SMEs & Entrepreneurship

Vice-President Alban Maggiar [represented](#) UEAPME at the [OECD Ministerial 2018](#) in Mexico on “[Strengthening SMEs & Entrepreneurship for Productivity and Inclusive Growth](#)”. At a stakeholder session on “The importance of SMEs for globalisation, growth and inclusiveness”, with Belgian Deputy Prime Minister Kris Peeters (former UEAPME Vice-President), the Costa Rican Labour Minister and a trade unionist, Mr Maggiar spoke about obstacles SMEs face to seize the opportunities of global markets by referring to complex and often unknown regulations, rules biased towards the interest of large companies, lack of resources and language barriers. Therefore, SMEs need easy access to online information, tailor-made consultancy services and access to trade defence measures for SMEs. Furthermore, Mr Maggiar agreed that SMEs often lack resources to be represented at global level and welcomed the OECD initiatives to involve SMEs in their work.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

News from UEAPME Projects

Consumer Law Ready: Belgian national training

UEAPME Belgian member organisation UNIZO organised the [national training](#) of local trainers on consumer legislation for SMEs in the framework of the “[Consumer Law Ready](#)” project. The project is funded by the European Union and led by BEUC (European Consumer Organisation), in cooperation with UEAPME and EUROCHAMBRES. It aims to stimulate the understanding and compliance of micro and small enterprises with consumer and marketing law, especially in online trade. The participants came from the UNIZO helpdesks, national sectorial organisations as well as consumer organisations, the Consumer Ombudsman and officials.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- [AECM & UEAPME event on SME financing: EU financial instruments post 2020](#) (19.04, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))

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