

UEAPME Newsflash

Deepening of the EMU needs a realistic approach

At a conference on the Economic and Monetary Union organised in the framework of the Austrian Presidency of the European Union in Linz (AT), President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller [discussed](#) the deepening and convergence of the EMU with the main players in the reform process. During her intervention, she explained the situation for small businesses and put forward the main challenges European SMEs face in the context of the ongoing debate regarding the Monetary Union: (i) access to finance; (ii) deficits in public investments, especially in IT infrastructure, qualification, and research and innovation; (iii) missing structural reforms to increase competitiveness; and (iv) economic and social stability in case of external shocks to avoid a dramatic decrease of domestic demand.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Cooperation between social and traditional enterprises

At the conference "Creating value together", organised in the follow-up of the Social Business Initiative, Secretary General Véronique Willems discussed the results of the study on cooperation between social economy enterprises and traditional enterprises. She highlighted the need for a level playing field for all companies and put forward the fact that SMEs have a social characteristic as well since they operate in the local civil society. Cooperation should be approached from a unifying point of view rather than emphasising differences.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

Company law: making the best of digital solutions

BusinessEurope, [ACCA](#) (UEAPME associate member) and UEAPME organised a [conference](#) on 'EU company law "upgraded" package: making the best of digital solutions and cross-border mobility' in presence of Commissioner Věra Jourová. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx [welcomed](#) the digital proposal as it fulfils the SME expectations in the field. He insisted on setting the highest possible European standards and ex ante identity checks. In order to avoid "forum shopping", a genuine link with the Member State in which a company is registered should be required. He also insisted on the need for performant e-government solutions at national level to make digitalisation a success. Moreover, UEAPME published a [position](#) on the topic, underlining that the proposal fits in the policy to reduce the administrative burdens for SMEs and contributes to a better business environment. UEAPME would welcome a fast adoption of this proposal.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Platform proposals discussed with S&D Group

The European Parliament's S&D Group organised a [conference](#) on the online platforms. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx thanked the Commission for this timely initiative to ensure fair and honest business relations. He stressed that guaranteeing transparency is not sufficient as it does not resolve unfair trading practices due to the unequal bargaining power between businesses and platforms. Further improvements are needed: a ban on parity clauses and on brand-bidding, better access to data, free of charge access to complaint handling systems. In addition, mediation should remain voluntary. Finally, Mr Hendrickx called on the European Parliament for a quick adoption of the proposal.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Tackling gender segregation in education and occupations

At a seminar organised by the European social partners and [EIGE](#), the urgency to tackle gender segregation was confirmed. Segregation in education/career choices is a persisting phenomenon, preventing equal participation on the labour market, and contributes to gender gaps in pay and pensions. Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer highlighted that with the current skills shortages in SMEs and changing labour market, emerging sectors also create opportunities. Aside from promoting female entrepreneurship, campaigns are needed to boost the interest of women in ICT and STEM education and that of men in sectors of education, healthcare and welfare. Work-based learning can bring education closer to the labour market and help promote sectors where shortages exist. Mr De Boer highlighted how SMEs promote diversity for raising awareness to avoid reinforcement of stereotypes, with support of business organisations, e.g. recruitment/promotions.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

EU-Japan cooperation on future of work

The [17th EU-Japan symposium](#) was dedicated to the future of work and new forms of employment. Japanese and European Institutions, social partners, researchers and experts exchanged evidence and practices of new forms of employment. Japan and Europe have similar trends on diversification of employment due to technological changes and ageing populations. While unemployment in Japan is inexistent, telework, casual work or certain types of self-employment are emerging. In Europe, more diversified forms exist, e.g. with platform work. Jan Dannenbring from UEAPME member ZDH presented the German case on new self-employed in the crafts sector. New forms of employment offer opportunities for higher employment with more flexibility, requested by employers and workers. However on both sides, authorities and social partners are reflecting on how to best accompany the evolution and in particular how to facilitate access to social protection.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

----- News from UEAPME Sector Fora -----

Transport: state of play and near future of mobility

At the Transport Forum meeting, members discussed the state of play on the 1st Mobility Package. The main points covered were posted workers, cabotage, and resting and driving time. Furthermore, the Forum members started a discussion about the Mobility Package 2 & 3 which could introduce new methods and technologies of mobility in the rather near future and therefore be of the utmost importance for businesses and society equally.

Contact: [Dieter Grohmann](#)

Unfair trading practices are a real problem for SMEs

At the UEAPME Food Forum, participants discussed SME issues in the food sector and, in particular, the unfair trading practices (UTPs) and related legislative proposal. In general, as stated in the [position paper](#), UEAPME agrees with the proposal to protect SME suppliers in the food chain from unfair practices and is in favor of fast adoption of the UTP rules. Late payment is just one of the unfair practices that are a true burden to SMEs. Another topic discussed was the participation in the voluntary supply chain initiative as an additional measure for better trading practices.

Contact: [Birte Day](#)

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