

UEAPME

Annual Report 2006



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Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Brussels
www.ueapme.com
info@ueapme.com

Edited by Francesco Longu
Layout by Melle Hofman

ABOUT UEAPME

UEAPME is the employers' organisation representing the interests of European crafts, trades and SMEs at EU level. UEAPME is a recognised European Social Partner and acts on behalf of crafts and SMEs in the European Social Dialogue and in discussions with the EU institutions. It is a non-profit seeking and non-partisan organisation.

As the European SME umbrella organisation, UEAPME incorporates 84 member organisations consisting of national cross-sectorial SME federations, European branch federations and other associate members, which support the SME family. UEAPME represents more than 12 million enterprises, which employ nearly 50 million people across Europe.

OUR AIMS

The main objectives of UEAPME, as the voice of crafts, trades and SMEs in Europe, include:

- Monitoring the EU policy and legislative process and keeping its members informed on all policy matters of relevance to crafts, trades and SMEs;
- Representing and promoting the interests, needs and opinions of its member organisations to the EU institutions and other international organisations. UEAPME is currently represented in more than 40 consultative committees set up by the European institutions, including several High Level Committees and Working Groups;
 - Supporting its members academically, technically and legally on all areas of EU policy;
 - Supporting the idea of European integration and contributing to European co-operation.



Foreword by the President

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure for me to present you with our annual report for 2006, the last of my four years as President of UEAPME.

I believe that these years have marked important developments for UEAPME: the organisation is now stronger and better prepared to face the future challenges in the competitive Brussels arena. As from 2007 UEAPME will have a new President, Mr Georg Toifl, to whom I make my best wishes for a successful mandate, a new Board of Directors and new, modern statutes, enabling the ever increasing number of members to react quickly and according to their real representation. At the same time, I am happy that other European organisations, which UEAPME helped to set up, are more and more considered as a reference in their sector. I refer in particular to NORMAPME, which celebrated 10 years of activity in 2006.

It is not easy to concentrate in a few sentences all the work and commitment displayed by UEAPME in a year. One of the most important moments was the SME Summit, our usual political reflection get-together, which took place in Graz in April under the Austrian Presidency and discussed the European social model. I should also mention the meeting with Mrs. Tarja Halonen, President of Finland, in October under the Finnish presidency of the EU. These were important opportunities for UEAPME to discuss and present its own political priorities on the main files with a high impact on craft businesses and SMEs at EU level. And this brings me to talk about our relations with the European Institutions, which were further improved in 2006.

For instance, UEAPME was deeply involved in the work carried out by the European Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry on the two preparatory events leading to the 4th European conference on craft and small business, to be held in April 2007 in Stuttgart. The first event took place in Warsaw in June, while the second one was held in Budapest in November. Furthermore, UEAPME managed to be represented in the High Level Group on "Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment", the most important political think-tank at EU level, which was set up to give an answer to the vital challenge of turning our continent into the cleanest, most energy efficient and most performing area of the world.

Last but not least, important files such as the Services Directive and REACH, the revision of the EU legislation on chemicals, were approved in 2006. In both cases UEAPME was successful in inserting some SME-friendly provisions in this new legislation. Of course, all this could not have been possible without the support of the European Parliament.

Now, I can only wish UEAPME all the success for the forthcoming years and thank the Secretary General, all the Secretariat staff, all my colleagues in the Board of Directors and all the member organisations for their precious support during these four exciting years.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Reckinger', written in a cursive style.

Paul Reckinger
President



Introduction by the Secretary General

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 2006 we have seen a further consolidation of UEAPME. In competition with other organisations, the UEAPME secretariat improved the position of UEAPME at European level to the benefit of our enterprises.

The first six months of the year were characterised by the EU presidency of Austria, the second half by the EU presidency of Finland. Both countries are traditionally well inclined towards small and medium-sized enterprises, which explains the very positive collaboration we had with both Governments during their presidency.

During the first half of the year, we participated in important conferences in Vienna, for example on tourism and on the European Charter for Small Enterprises, an issue on which we are actively involved. Once again, I stressed that future actions in the context of the European Charter for Small Enterprises should be based on recent and accurate data and focus on the specificities of micro and small enterprises.

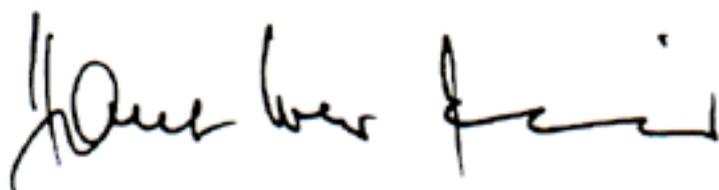
In October, the UEAPME Board of Directors discussed short-term priorities for SME policy, with a focus on innovation, in a meeting with H.E. Mrs Tarja Halonen, President of the Republic of Finland then holding the EU presidency. I also attended an Informal Ministerial Meeting in Helsinki in December, where I had the chance to put forward our vision on the very important topic of European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training.

The preparation for the Fourth European Conference on Craft and Small Enterprises is on its way. Ten years after the Third Conference in Milan in 1997, we will have a chance to draw the balance in spring 2007 and to discuss the challenges lying ahead after the EU enlargement. We will deal with demographic change as well as with the issue of globalisation. Two pre-conferences in Warsaw and Budapest have already prepared the framework.

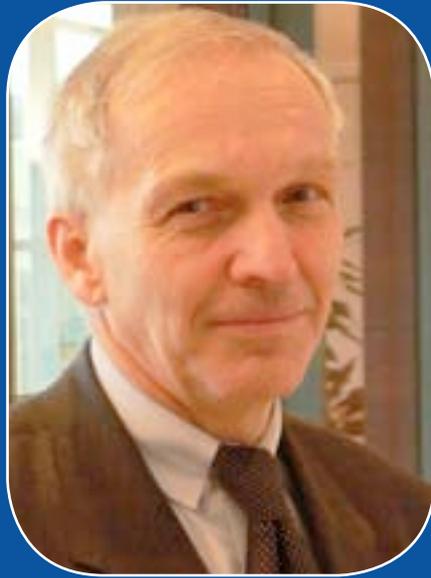
Another keyword dominated the political discussion in 2006: CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). In numerous discussions we had the chance to explain to policymakers that entrepreneurs in small businesses are acting in a socially responsible manner by default, due to their close proximity ties with their community, and that legislation is therefore unnecessary. This topic will be of some importance also in future.

Last but not least, at the end of 2006 the four-year presidency of Paul Reckinger came to an end. We would like to express our gratitude and thank him for his impulse, his engagement and his entrepreneurial perspective, which were instrumental strengthening UEAPME's position in Brussels and in integrating craft and SME representatives from new Member States.

We wish his successor Georg Toifl all the best for his work.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Hans-Werner Müller', written in a cursive style.

Hans-Werner Müller
Secretary General



Introducing Our New President: Georg Toifl

Georg Toifl, Chairman of the Crafts and Trades Division of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (WKÖ), was elected as new President by the UEAPME General Assembly which took place in Brussels on 1 December.

Policy Priorities

Mr Toifl announced in his acceptance speech that his two-year mandate would concentrate on strengthening small businesses and SME organisations in new Member States, as well as focus on undeclared work and on energy policy.

Integrating small businesses and SME organisations from new Member States is the key to a successful European internal market, said UEAPME's newly elected President, who stressed that "strong and long-lasting SMEs should become the backbone of new Member States' economy".

Mr Toifl also insisted the need to improve the regulatory framework to fight undeclared work, which is particularly disadvantageous for SMEs in labour-intensive sectors as it creates unfair competition. Moreover, it is detrimental to the balance of social protection systems and to national budgets due to the lack of fiscal revenue it generates.

As far as the energy markets are concerned, Mr Toifl expressed concerns that the existing players are hampering rather than promoting competition in the sector, with SMEs being burdened by excessive prices and a lack of choice on the range of energy suppliers available. Private monopolies in the energy sector should be avoided as much as possible and fair treatment for small business consumers should be ensured.

Background

Georg Toifl is a successful entrepreneur leading a SME in the laundry business in Vienna. In 1972 in the middle of his studies of international trade at the University of Vienna he took over the family business with 15 employees at that time and led the company to be one of the biggest in this sector in Austria. The company currently employs a workforce of 155. The company specializes in hospital and sterile laundry and ranks third in Vienna with a daily capacity of 12 tonnes. Toifl further offers rental of working outfits for industrial and wholesale clients, as well as storage and handling systems.

Georg Toifl was born on July 24th, 1948. After successfully graduating from the college of higher technical studies in Vienna in 1968 and finished his business studies at the University of Vienna in 1974. From 1995 to 2000 Georg Toifl acted as Vice President of the Vienna Economic Chamber. In June 2000 Georg Toifl has been appointed as Chairman of the Crafts and Trades Division of the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber and is as such the highest representative of the Austrian Crafts and Trades.

PART ONE

Policy Area Activities

ENTERPRISE POLICY, LEGAL AFFAIRS, RESEARCH & TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENT, EXTERNAL RELATIONS, REGIONAL POLICY AND ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION

Enterprise Policy

One of the highlights of 2006 was the European Parliament's plenary approval of the Council's common position on the **Services Directive** in second reading on 15 November. The vote marked the end of almost three years of negotiations over one of the most complex and contentious pieces of EU legislation. UEAPME welcomed the outcome of the vote, which includes a number of SME-friendly measures such as "single points of contact" for businesses willing to expand their services cross-border, and urged Member States to quickly put it into practice. UEAPME made a point about closely following the national implementation process to ensure that the benefits of the Directive reach European SMEs.

The beginning of the year was dominated by the possible cut in the **EU budget** from 132 billion Euro to 72 billion Euro for crucial programmes for SMEs, such as the 7th Framework programme for R&D (**FP7**) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme (**CIP**). UEAPME could avoid this cut through its lobby work towards Parliament, Council and Commission. We also obtained a better definition of "innovation", which will make the CIP more relevant for all sectors (not only high tech) and focus on all aspects of innovation, including production, distribution, marketing, management and HR.



Responding to a consultation launched by the European Commission on the **free movement of goods in the non-harmonised area**, UEAPME put forward its views on the options the EC was considering to improve the application of the mutual recognition principle. UEAPME stressed that a regulatory approach would ensure an optimal practice of the principle. In too many instances SMEs still encounter real barriers to free trade through the use by Member States of national norms or technical requirements as market-protecting devices. UEAPME also actively participated in the consultation concerning the **future of the internal Market**.

Speakers at the two-day conference in Warsaw on 29-30 June on the integration of crafts and SMEs from new Member States into the single market

Through the year, an open and continuous dialogue was kept with the newly-appointed Deputy Director General of DG Enterprise and **SME Envoy** Françoise Le Bail.

UEAPME welcomed the launch of the "**Enterprise Experience**" programme by the European Commission in July, by which civil servants of DG Enterprise will have the possibility to spend a week in an SME as training visitors. According to UEAPME, which was involved in the programme since a pilot project took place in 2005, "Enterprise Experience" will be an excellent opportunity for EU officials to get a better understanding of the business realities they work on. Indeed, a direct, hands-on experience within an SME is the best way for EU officials to get to grips with the way SMEs work and the issues they face every day. Civil servants need a better awareness of SMEs' needs and conditions in order to properly and effectively address them. The programme will be an opportunity for EC staff to see the practical consequences of European and national legislation on the everyday operations of a small business. It will also increase their knowledge on the structure of SMEs, with a particular reference to micro-businesses that represent the vast majority of businesses in Europe.

Future actions in the context of the **European Charter for Small Enterprises** should be based on recent and accurate data and focus on the specificities of micro and small enterprises. This was the message that UEAPME brought at the yearly Conference on the European Charter organised by the Austrian Presidency of the EU. The lack of up-to-date information on the reality of European SMEs is a primary cause of concern. The EC Observatory of European SMEs ceased operations after producing the 2003-2004 reports. The resulting shortage of information means that current European SME policies may be based on less than

satisfactory statistics, which might lead in return to less than satisfactory policy outputs. Also the need to retain the small and micro-businesses dimension of the Charter, which was “somewhat diluted” during the process, was stressed. Both the European Commission and the EU Member States failed in this respect. The specific challenges faced by micro-enterprises call for a tailored policy response. New legislation should always start from the perspective of smaller businesses, which must be the rule rather than the exception in the EU law-making process.

The European Commission, the Polish government and the Association of Polish Craft Trades organised a two-day conference in Warsaw on 29-30 June to discuss the integration of crafts and small enterprises from the new Member States into the single market on the way to the **4th Conference on Craft Enterprises and SMEs** to be held in Germany in Spring 2007. Several speakers from UEAPME and NORMAPME participated in this event. The role of small businesses should be strengthened in several aspects, all of which were thoroughly discussed during the Warsaw conference. The second pre-conference on crafts and small enterprises “Challenges for the successful integration of crafts and small enterprises from the new Member States into the single market by 2010” took place in Budapest, Hungary, on 20- 21 November. Organised by the European Commission with support from the Hungarian Association of Craftsmen’s Corporations (IPOSZ), the two-day event aimed to stimulate the debate on measures for craft and small enterprises to become more competitive in the Single Market, as the challenges for this sector have considerably changed in the last decade. The agenda focused on issues such as cross-border activities and trans-national cooperation, innovation, vocational training and education for apprentices and young craftsmen, and the challenges and benefits for crafts and small enterprises arising from compliance with EU legislation.

The UEAPME secretariat and some national member organisations participated actively in DG Enterprise’s **“BEST project on the consultation of small enterprises at national/regional level”**. This project analyses and evaluates how small enterprises are consulted at national/regional level, how and if their concerns are taken into account by national and regional governments. This project fits in action 10 of the Charter on better consultation of small enterprises. Following the work of the Best Expert Group on “Consultation with stakeholders in the shaping of national and regional policies affecting small business” (of which UEAPME was a member) and the publication of its final report, DG Enterprise and Industry organised a conference on consultation of stakeholders at national and European level during which UEAPME was invited to take the floor and express the views of SMEs.

UEAPME published its response to the European Commission’s consultation on the **“European Transparency Initiative” (ETI)**. UEAPME welcomed the ETI as a contribution to good governance and policymaking. It warned, however, that overregulation must be avoided when creating a voluntary registration system for lobbying. As far as the Commission’s minimum standards for

consultation are concerned, UEAPME stressed that there is room for improvement regarding both consultation periods and the role representative business organisations play as intermediaries between enterprises and EU institutions.

UEAPME participated to a workshop organised by the European Commission, DG Enterprise and Industry, to examine the ways in which the DG communicates SME policy to its stakeholders. Participants were presented with a study exploring how communication can be improved, in what ways, and what the relative emphasis should be between the various communication methods, channels and messages. The consensus was that communication should be targeted towards intermediaries such as SME organisations, rather than towards single small businesses. Translation issues were also highlighted: a balance must be found between the number of languages into which a document is translated, on one side, and the need to focus the work of EC translators on key documents on the other side.

Corporate Social Responsibility was one of UEAPME main policy issues in 2006. On 22 March the European Commission adopted a long awaited new communication on CSR entitled “Implementing the Partnership for Growth and Jobs: Making Europe a pole of excellence on CSR”. Now it is finally clear that the Commission will not take any legislative initiative in this field, meaning for instance that there will be no compulsory reporting. It must be stressed that the Commission recognises in its communication the role that SME play in the field of CSR. This is mainly due to the effective lobby work of UEAPME during the last years and our successful CSR awareness raising campaign. At the same time the Commission supported the “European Alliance for a Competitive and Sustainable Enterprise” which is linked with this Communication. UEAPME supports this initiative and asks its member organisations to do the same. Furthermore, the UEAPME secretariat, as well as some national member organisations, together with national governmental experts, participated actively in the expert group on «Mainstreaming CSR among SMEs», of DG Enterprise and Industry.

A number of European business organisations, including UEAPME, welcomed the organisation on 7 December of an initial stock-taking meeting to discuss progress in the areas of the different recommendations made by the European Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) at the end of its work in 2004. The business side has been very active in advancing CSR on the ground, in cooperation with trade unions, NGOs and other stakeholders. Past activities in the field have shown that CSR is a multi-faceted practice that must be properly explained and is not easily understood in all its dimensions: capacity building actions and information campaigns are therefore essential. In a letter to Vice-President Verheugen and Commissioner Špidla, UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and Eurocommerce stressed that a shift from debates to concrete actions is the right way forward for achieving results.

UEAPME also dealt with **origin marking** for imported products and gave its opinion on a Communication of the Commission

on **Public-Private Partnerships** against organised crime and terrorism.

The four Italian UEAPME members – CNA, CONFAPI, Confartigianato and Confesercenti – organised a one-day “European session” on 6 July in Rome to examine the EU policies on SMEs with contributions from the UEAPME staff. The main issues on the agenda were the completion of the European internal market and the challenges faced by SMEs in the standardisation field.

A Working Group on “**Corporate Culture of Craft-type Enterprises**” was set up to analyse the characteristics of craft and craft-type enterprises. The Working Group held its first meeting in September and met one more time in November.

Legal Affairs

In 2006, the UEAPME Legal Affairs Committee worked on several important files. Patent protection, intellectual property rights, computer implemented inventions, consumer protection, contract law, the spare parts issue in the framework of the design directive, the statutes of the European private company were the main items it dealt with.

Intellectual Property Rights

The legal department worked hard on intellectual property in 2006. The links with the European Patent Office were strengthened and a fruitful relationship with the IPR Helpdesk was also established.

Patents

The work relationship with the European Patent Office was strengthened in 2006. UEAPME participated to the first edition of the EPO event “European inventor of the Year” in Brussels, where Secretary General Müller spoke in a panel discussion. In November Mr. Müller also spoke at a meeting of the STOA panel of the European Parliament on “Policy options for a European patent system”. In July, Legal Affairs Adviser Maria Cimaglia spoke at a Commission hearing on the “future of Community patents”.

Our experts also participated to several conferences organised by the EPO throughout the year. In December our expert Paolo Severi (CNA) participated to a hearing on “Intellectual Property and Knowledge Commons: the impact of TRIPS and other legal systems on economy, innovation and knowledge flows” organised by the Group of Greens at the European Parliament. In December Mrs Manoela Loidl (WKÖ) participated to the EP and EPO meeting on “Pharmaceuticals and Patents: Economic and Social Value for Europe”. UEAPME also responded to an EC consultation on patent insurance.

Software Patents

Even if the directive on Computer implemented inventions was rejected by the European Parliament, the file is still on the table. UEAPME participated to the ICT Task Force on Patents. Several working groups were organised in this framework. UEAPME appointed Freek Posthumus (NORMAPME) Lieven van de Velde (UNIZO) and Maria Cimaglia (UEAPME) as experts.

European Contract law

In 2006 working group of the European Commission on European Contract Law continued its activities. Legal Affairs Adviser Maria Cimaglia represents UEAPME in this working group.

European Private Company

While the European Commission decided not to work on this file, the European Parliament voted an own-initiative report to push the Commission to act in the domain. The file is very much discussed in the framework of the Legal Affairs Committee, with members of UEAPME having different positions on it.

Design directive

UEAPME continued to deal in 2006 with the so-called Design Directive (98/71/EC), for the part that concerns the automotive spare parts in cooperation with the other members of the European Campaign for the Freedom of the Automotive Parts and Repair Market (ECAR), to sustain the introduction of the “repair clause” in the directive. This clause, proposed by the European Commission, excludes small automotive exchange parts from the protection and prevents the creation of spare parts monopolies in the after sales market.

Consumer policy

The European Commission started its announced revision of the Consumer Acquis. A number of directives will be reviewed. UEAPME responded to several consultations in this respect, for instance on product liability. UEAPME is also represented by Luc Hendrickx, Director for Enterprise Policy, in the peer review working group of the European Commission on “Healthy Democracy”.

Research & Technological Development

7th Framework Programme R&D (FP7): SME budget increased by almost 200 %

In 2006 UEAPME's lobby of several years proved to be successful. The 6th Framework Programme ended at the end of the year and had a budget of 2.2 billion euro for SMEs. In the new Framework Programme for the period 2007-2013 the budget was nearly tripled to 6.3 billion euro.

For SMEs the record-high budget has been allocated to mainly two activities:

- Capacities programme: "Research for SMEs" (formally called Craft) and "Research for SME Associations" (in the past Collective Research). The budget was raised from 400 million to 1,400 million euro.
- Co-operation programme: participation of SMEs to more high-tech oriented or thematic projects. This budget was raised from 1.7 to 4.9 billion euro.

Our major battle was that at least 15 % of the co-operation programme budget should be reserved for SMEs, as was the case with FP6. In the two proposals of the European Commission such a budget reservation was denied: 0 %!. Both the European Parliament as the Council however supported UEAPME and decided that the SME reservation should be maintained. During 2007 UEAPME will monitor the implementation and the results of FP7.

Expert Groups of the European Commission

Dr Neumann of ZDH is the UEAPME representative in the European Research Board. This important committee advises Research Commissioner Potocnik. In plenary meetings and in the Working Group on SMEs the importance of SME participation in R&D was highlighted.

The High-Level Expert Group on SMEs (SME-HLEG) advises the Research Directorate-General, mainly on the Framework Programmes. It includes several representatives from our members: Berney (Ireland), Lichtmanegger (WKÖ), Dr Neumann (ZDH), Ravagnan (CONFAPI), Russomanno (Confartigianato), Schröder (UEAPME), Sorbi (API) and Yvinec (APCM).

Ullrich Schröder of UEAPME is the representative within the Sounding Board of Commissioner Potocnik (preparation 7th Framework Programme).

RTD Committee

Discussions were held with European Commission on the 6th and 7th Framework Programme and we received feedback from our representatives within EURAB, SME-HLEG and the Sounding Board (see above).

Other items discussed, include the Community Patent, NORMAPME, the European Institute of Technology ETI, Eureka/Eurostars, state aid rules and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme CIP.

External Relations

The European Commission published a communication on the contribution of its external trade policy towards creating "growth and jobs" in Europe ("**Global Europe: competing in the world**"). UEAPME appreciated the general analysis of the challenges ahead but denounced the lack of attention for SMEs in the text. Less than 10% of small European businesses are active internationally, mostly in the EU internal market only. The effects of external trade are more often a challenge than an opportunity for small businesses, said UEAPME, and this aspect appears to have been overlooked in the communication. UEAPME also spoke against the scarce focus on "neighbouring countries".

UEAPME was also invited by the Commission, DG Enterprise, to take part in the **EU-Russia dialogue**, more specifically the subgroup on SME-policy. The aim of the dialogue is to exchange information on SME policy and to tackle trade problems.



Secretary General Hans-Werner Müller meets Mr Hammad Kassal, President of the Federation of Moroccan SMEs (Brussels, June 2006)

Mediterranean Countries

UEAPME participated actively in the Working Group on Euro-Mediterranean Industrial Co-operation, which is made up of representatives from the public authorities of the EU Member States and of the Mediterranean Partners, as well as of private sector organisations. At present the working group is dealing with the implementation of the EU-MED Charter of Small Enterprises. Specific parts of the Charter (e.g. innovation, market access, innovation and textile/clothing EU-MED clusters, investment promotion, education and training programmes) as well as follow-up measures proposed have been applied but not entirely. DG Enterprise will implement them in the 2007-2008 working programme. The aim is to explore new areas of interest and new on-field initiatives, to be implemented together with the most representative SMEs and civil society organizations in order to boost the Barcelona Process and the EU-MED industrial cooperation and to create a Free Trade Area by 2010.

UEAPME expert Claudio Cappellini (CNA) participated in the expert group on education to entrepreneurship organised by DG Enterprise. The aim of the expert group is to collect best practices and exchange experience in the field through EU SMEs organisations in collaboration with the national administration of the MEDA countries.

EU-US: focus on IPR

In June 2006, during the EU-US Summit in Vienna a new programme of cooperation on the enforcement of intellectual property rights around the world was launched. The objectives were defined in the EU-US IPR Action Strategy adopted by the Summit. UEAPME is participating in a group of experts helping the European Commission on the matter.

ASIA-Invest and Pro-Invest

UEAPME participated in the Advisory Committees of the ASIA-Invest and Pro-Invest programmes, in order to inform its member organisations about upcoming funding possibilities and projects.

UEAPME International

With regard to the non-European activities of UEAPME, the mission and aims of UEAPME's international unit were presented at the Board of Directors meeting on 25 January. The creation of this unit was approved by the Board at the same meeting allowing the team to start its activities at the beginning of the year.

UEAPME International was created as a response to the increasing economic and social challenges arisen as a consequence of globalization, with the mission to start working in cooperation with non-European organisations of Crafts and SMEs sharing UEAPME's main values.

In 2006, the International Unit started its activities by undergoing an extensive research of national/regional Crafts and SME associations mostly operating in the following areas: South and East of the Mediterranean, Latin America, Eastern Europe and Asia. The research was carried out with the support of Country Missions to the EU, Embassies, Trade Commissions of WKÖ and EU Delegations, which advised on the most adequate organisations to be contacted in each of the countries.

As a result, a database of SME organisations worldwide was created. Until now, the database includes a wide range of business associations working on the mentioned geographical areas and is being updated on a regular basis.

Contacts with some organisations started in the second half of 2006. Information exchanges on the organisations' mission, goals, activities, etc, and discussions on the possibilities for mutual future cooperation took place. UEAPME International envisages formalising the cooperation with some organisations through the signature of the first cooperation agreements during 2007.

Regional Policy

Regional Policy issues took centre stage again at the beginning of 2006, after a couple of years of inactivity. The preparation of the new programming period of the **Structural Funds** (2007-2013) sparked UEAPME's return in the field.

During 2006, UEAPME monitored the entire procedure of the legislative proposals on cohesion policy reforms through the European Institutions. As a first step, UEAPME organised a meeting between Secretary General Müller and the cabinet of Mrs. Hübner (Commissioner in charge of the Regional Policy). During the meeting Mr. Müller pointed out the crucial role of SMEs for Regional Policy.

The **Regional Policy Working Group** was re-established and a first meeting took place at the end of March 2006. The purpose of the meeting was an exchange of information with its members about the National and Regional strategic plans in preparation at that time and a discussion on different items related to Regional Policy. This meeting provided practical proposals for

SMEs activities to submit to the European Institutions.

UEAPME supported the 3 new initiatives launched by DG Regio, named **JEREMIE** (Joint European resources for Micro to medium Enterprises), **JESSICA** (Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas) and **JASPERS** (Joint Assistance in Supporting Projects in European Regions). Considering the importance of JEREMIE for SMEs, UEAPME participated in June 2006 to an hearing on the subject in the ECOSOC premises. In that occasion UEAPME described the difficulties for SMEs to access to finance and the need to facilitate this process.

UEAPME participated in several conferences and events organised by its members, with the purpose of informing them about the opportunities given by Regional Policy and in particular by the new Structural Funds.

The European Commission's DG Agriculture and Rural Development organised a Conference on 3-4 October in Brussels entitled: "A simple CAP for Europe - a challenge for all". The conference described the challenges and obstacles facing simplification efforts in the area of agriculture and gave the opportunity to all stakeholders to present ideas for reaching a simplified approach concerning the Common Agricultural Policy. UEAPME was represented by the President of the Structural Funds Working Group.

Economic and Monetary Union

The work of the UEAPME Secretariat focused mainly on awareness raising and information concerning the **introduction of the Euro in the new Member States**. UEAPME Director for Enterprise Policy and External Relations Luc Hendrickx spoke during a two-day training seminar organised on 29-30 June by the European Commission about the introduction of the Euro in the new Member States and its effects on SMEs. The new currency offers great challenges for SMEs, but whether businesses are ready to face them will be strongly influenced by the individual national communication strategies. Support measures for SMES and a better involvement of the business sector were strongly recommended. The European Journalism Centre also asked UEAPME to speak about SMEs and the introduction of the Euro. In addition, Mr Hendrickx spoke about the benefits and cost to business and retail at the Euro Changeover Conference held in Malta on 27th November organised by the European Commission and the Maltese Government.

Thanks to the lobby work of UEAPME, representatives from UEAPME member organisations in new Member States joined **Euro Team**, a network of conference speakers and experts on economic and financial affairs, focused on the Euro and the different aspects of its introduction. The network is supported by the European Commission's DG Economic and Financial Affairs and by the EC Permanent Representations. The objective of the network is to provide a pool of speakers

throughout the 10 new Member States, who are able to give lectures at conferences, seminars or at other public events on Economic and Monetary Union and the Euro. Members are chosen from national academia, governments, national banks or other institutes with an economic/financial background. The appointment of UEAPME members to the Euro Team is a public acknowledgment at national and European level of their expertise in the field.

In addition, the UEAPME secretariat followed up as usual the developments and possible problems concerning the use of the Euro and to communicate them to the Commission and the ECB, mainly in the **Euro Cash Group** set up for this aim.

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

UEAPME's activities in the environmental sector in 2006 were developed as usual according to three major working areas: monitoring new or revised programmes and legislative proposals, being represented in consultative committees and initiatives at EU level and carrying out service contracts with DG Environment.

Monitoring new or revised programmes and legislative proposals

Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme (ECAP) for SMEs

UEAPME kept monitoring the development of the first draft proposal for ECAP at the Directorate General Environment of the European Commission. In order to ensure that the content of this new programme corresponded as much as possible to small businesses' needs, UEAPME organised a further meeting between DG Environment and its Environment Committee on 18th May. UEAPME also examined the call for tenders issued by DG Environment on the first concrete actions to be developed in the framework of ECAP as from 2007. Secretary General Müller then met the Head of Unit in charge of ECAP in DG Environment, Mr. Herbert Aichinger, on 11th June. As a follow up, UEAPME's Environmental Unit met the company which won the call for tenders on 18th December in order to ensure that its activities at national level would involve UEAPME's member organisations.

REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation of Chemicals)

Legislative process

The second reading vote on REACH took place in October and its final adoption in December. UEAPME was active both on the European Parliament and the Council through meetings, position papers and press releases in order to influence the results of the vote. Although the second reading was promising, UEAPME gave a mixed evaluation of the final text. The OSOR principle (One Substance, One Registration) has been confirmed as basis of REACH, as requested by UEAPME, although a wide set of opt-outs undermines the system and the Agency in Helsinki is left with no control on them. Secondly, the payment of the shared data is no longer based exclusively on a fair and proportional system, as requested by UEAPME to reduce costs for SME formulators.

European Commission Working Group on the practical preparations for REACH

Mr Giandomenico Villa of CONFAPI, one of UEAPME's Italian full members, kept following the work of this consultative group set up by the European Commission to discuss all the aspects linked to the preparation and implementation of the REACH Regulation.

SHERPER Study

Mr Erwin Tomschik of the Austrian Federation of Chemical Industry (FCIO), part of UEAPME's Austrian Member Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (WKÖ), represented UEAPME in a group of experts in charge of providing advice during a study aimed at understanding how to set up SME helpdesks on REACH in Member States. The so-called SHERPER Study was launched by the European Commission's DG Enterprise and lasted from May till December. The final report of the study is due to be presented at a European conference in Berlin on 14th February 2007.

Conferences

UEAPME was also involved in two important EU conferences on the development of the REACH proposal, which were organised on 27-28 April in Brussels and on 26-27 September in Amsterdam. Mr Erwin Tomschik of the Austrian Federation of Chemical Industry (FCIO), part of UEAPME's Austrian Member Wirtschaftskammer Österreich (WKÖ), represented UEAPME in these events.

Revision of the EMAS Regulation

UEAPME was involved in the first discussions on the revision of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) Regulation, which took place in the framework of the EMAS Consultative Committee set up by DG Environment. Mrs Cristina Marongiu took part in the meeting in Athens on 13-14 November and in the Workshop on the revision of the EMAS Regulation on 11-12 December.

Revision of the Waste Framework Directive

The first reading of the European Parliament on the revision of the Waste Framework Directive started between the end of 2005 and the beginning of 2006. UEAPME was active both on the European Parliament and the Council through meetings, position papers and press releases in order to influence the results of the vote. The Environment Committee of the European Parliament voted the report of Ms Jackson MEP (Rapporteur for this Directive) at the end of November. UEAPME welcomed amendments aiming at involving stakeholders, which were integrated into several articles of the Directive. It was also pleased by the Committee approving rules enforcing the harmonised application of the European Waste Code, which increases user-friendliness for SMEs. However, there is still room for improvement on the wording of the Waste Directive as it stands after this vote, in particular as regards definitions, permits and authorisations.

Other issues

During 2006 UEAPME also worked on other important files such as: the revision of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the further implementation of the Integrated Product Policy, the revision of the Directives on biocides and plant protection products, the draft regulation on LIFE+ and the revision of the Integrated Pollution, Prevention and Control (IPPC) Directive. As for IPPC, UEAPME is also member of the advisory group on the revision.

Representation in consultative committees and initiatives at EU level

BEST Project on the streamlining and simplification of environment-related regulatory requirements for companies

Mr Stephan Hirsch from UEAPME's German member ZDH continued to represent UEAPME in the BEST Project on the streamlining and simplification of environment-related regulatory requirements for companies, set up by the European Commission's DG Enterprise. The final report of the study was officially presented during a European conference in Brussels on 22 June. Secretary General Müller was one of the key speakers at this conference.

High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment

After months of intensive pressure on the European Commission, UEAPME managed to appoint Mr Alberto Conte (CONFAPI) as

its representative in the High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment. This consultative group, set up in the beginning of the year with a mandate till December 2007, was created by the European Commission as a follow up of its Communication on Industrial Policy at the end of 2005. The Group is composed of EU Commissioners, members of the European Parliament, representatives from Member States and the civil society (industry, consumers, environmentalists, etc) and has the important task to come out with proposals to make the EU at the same time more competitive, cleaner and cleverer in its energy management. UEAPME set up also an internal Ad Hoc working group with the aim of supporting Mr Conte at the HLG.

Partnership for a Clean, Clever, Competitive Europe (CCCE)

Mr Giorgio Russomanno (Confartigianato), Chairman of the Environment Committee, kept following the "Clean, Clever, Competitive Europe" (CCCE) initiative. Initiated by the Dutch Presidency, CCCE regroups the European Commission, EU Member States and businesses. Its objective is to identify opportunities linked to eco-efficient innovations and to propose a series of concrete actions to improve their market perspective, in order to reduce the impacts of businesses on the environment, increase economic growth and create new jobs in line with the recommendations on the revival of the Lisbon strategy. The final report of the Eminent People Group was available in the first months of the year and officially presented in order to influence the outcome of the Spring Council on 23-24 March.

Sustainable Energy Forum

Mr Oliver Loebel, Director for Sectoral Policy, kept representing UEAPME in the Sustainable Energy Forum, set up by the Energy Council in the framework of the Green Paper on energy efficiency. This paper aims at finding ways to better use energy in order to reduce the dependency of the EU, saving resources and reducing pollution.

Service contracts with Directorate General Environment

The EU Eco-label scheme

UEAPME also pursued its activities relating to the EU Eco-label after obtaining for the seventh consecutive year a service contract with the Commission to represent the interests of SMEs in the eco-label scheme.

In accordance with the service contract UEAPME:

- ▶ attended the various meeting of the European Eco-Labeling Board and Consultation Forum
- ▶ attended the marketing and policy management groups
- ▶ nominated experts and provided comments for the following Ad Hoc Working Groups in charge of establishing the criteria:
 - heat pumps
 - mattresses
 - printed matters
 - soaps and shampoos
 - soil improvers and growing media
 - textiles
 - tissue papers
 - wooden furniture
- ▶ kept its members informed on the latest developments and in particular on the upcoming revision of the scheme.

UEAPME also took part in the first informal discussion on the revision of the EU Regulation establishing the Eco-Label, especially during the EUEB (European Union eco-Labeling Board) meeting with the EU Presidency in Vienna in February and in Helsinki in October.

More information about UEAPME's involvement in the EU eco-label scheme can be found on the UEAPME website.

Activities in the area of energy policy

In addition to its already established presence in the Sustainable Energy Forum (see above), UEAPME replied to the official consultation launched by the Green Paper on Energy Efficiency. Moreover, Secretary General Müller was one of the key speakers in a one-day European event on energy policy and SMEs co-organised by UEAPME's four Italian full members in the ECOSOC and in the European Parliament on 10 May 2006. As a follow up, Mr Guido Lena, Director for Environmental Policy, represented UEAPME during the European conference on energy and SMEs organised by the same partners in Rimini (I) on 8-9 November in the framework of the "Intelligent Energy for Europe" Programme.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS, EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING

Social Affairs and Employment

In 2006 UEAPME's activity in the field of employment and social policy has been characterised by a consolidation of actions and initiatives launched in the previous years, including activities with the aim of a better integration of the new Members States in the European Social Dialogue.

The European Social Dialogue: Main Events

1 - Tripartite Social Summits for Growth and Employment

In March 2006, UEAPME participated for the fourth year in the Spring Tripartite Summit for Growth and Employment with the Troika of the Heads of State (Austria, Finland, and Germany) together with the Ministers for Labour and Social Affairs and the President of the Commission. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of the revised Lisbon strategy and in particular the way forward to revive growth and employment in Europe. During the discussion, the European social partners reiterated their support for the Lisbon Strategy and their willingness to contribute to modernise the social model. They also presented the new joint work programme of the European Social Partners for the EU social dialogue 2006-2008 as their main joint contribution.



President Reckinger (first from left) at the press conference following the Tripartite Social Summit (Brussels, March 2006)

On October 20th 2006 an extraordinary informal meeting of the Tripartite Social Summit for Growth and Employment was organised in Lahti by the Finnish Prime Minister, Mr. Vanhanen, to discuss with the European Social Partners the topic of managing change through flexicurity.

Each of the high level meetings provided an ideal opportunity for UEAPME to express the specific concerns of crafts, trades and SMEs in the field of economic growth, competitiveness and employment, particularly in a difficult economic climate.

2 - Implementation of the multi-annual work programme of the European social partners (2003-2005)

SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT - MAIN OUTCOMES

- › Successful negotiations of an “autonomous framework agreement on harassment and violence at work”.

In December 2006, the European Social Partners negotiating team finalised a joint text for an agreement on harassment and violence at work. The scope of the agreement covers all types of internal cases of harassment and violence. The aim is to raise awareness and improve understanding and to provide employers, workers and their representatives with an action-oriented framework to manage problems arising from harassment and violence when such a case occurs at the workplace.

- › Active preparation of the Joint analysis on the key challenges of Europe's labour market
- › According to the commitments taken in the new work programme, UEAPME prepared its own labour market analysis with a specific focus on SMEs needs. This contribution has been integrated in the joint document by European employers and will further serve as a basis for discussion with the trade unions on the joint analysis of the key challenges facing Europe's labour markets. This joint work should be completed by March 2007 for the Spring Tripartite Summit.
- › Adoption of the first annual report following the “Framework of Actions for Gender Equality”

The first follow-up report on the implementation of the framework of actions for gender equality gives a good overview of the wealth of actions and initiatives undertaken by the national social partners in order to address gender role, promote women in decision-making, support work-life balance and tackle the gender pay gap.

▸ 2006 - European Year for Mobility of Workers

UEAPME has been regularly invited to intervene in several conferences and events including the closing conference of the European Year for Mobility of Workers in Lille on 11-12 December 2006, where a workshop has been dedicated to the mobility culture in SMEs.

IN THE FIELD OF ENLARGEMENT

▸ New Integrated Programme to support the social dialogue and social partners organisations in the new Member States

As a follow-up of the successful European Social Partners' project on industrial relations entitled "CEEC social partners' participation in the European Social Dialogue: What are the social partners needs?" and of restructuring studies in the 10 new Member States, a third "integrated programme" co-financed by the European Commission was launched.

This programme is composed of four main strands comprising a social dialogue project in Bulgaria, Romania and the candidate countries, a joint study on restructuring in each of the 15 "old" Member States, a mentoring programme on competence development for the European Social Dialogue and two resource centres: one for trade unions, one for employers.

Employment and Social Policy

1 - Working time

Following the European Court of Justice's decision to qualify on-call time as full working time, the revision of the directive on working time has become one of the most controversial discussions at the Council level. The main divergences are about regulation and possibilities of opting out, flexibility of the working time and health and safety risks. In 2006, the Commission's proposal was heavily debated in the Council, which could not reach a political agreement so far, mainly because of the opt-out clause, despite an extraordinary meeting of the social council organised by the Finnish Presidency in November 2006. The file will be actively followed-up by the German and Portuguese Presidencies in 2007.

UEAPME has expressed several times its opinion in favour of a directive which really takes into account the need of flexibility necessary for SMEs.

2 - Social Protection

UEAPME continued its participation in the European Pensions Forum, where the work was essentially concentrated on the technical aspects of removing obstacles to mobility and on the proposal for a directive on the improvement of portability of pension rights, adopted by the Commission in October 2005.

The debate started at the Council and Parliament is ongoing. The main discussions are about the notion of transferability of rights and the scope of the directive. UEAPME participated regularly in the discussions between the Social Protection Committee and the European social partners.

3 - Main consultations including those under Article 138 of the Treaty of the European social partners in 2006 and position papers of UEAPME

UEAPME has responded to each of these consultations with a written position (cf. website www.ueapme.com).

- Consultation on the Commission's services report on the implementation of Council Directive 1999/70/EC concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP
- Consultation on possible guidelines for action at EU-level, with a view to promoting the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market
- Consultation on the preparation of the report foreseen in Article 10 of Directive 2001/23/EC on "the approximation of the laws of the member States relating to the safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, businesses or part of undertakings or businesses"
- Consultation on the Commission's communication on reconciliation of professional, private and family life (first stage)
- Public consultation on the green paper "Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century"

Further position papers:

- UEAPME position paper on the commission's communication
- "The demographic future of Europe - from challenge to opportunity"
- Employers' Analysis of the Key Challenges Facing Europe's Labour Markets
- UEAPME position on European Globalisation Adjustment Fund
- UEAPME position paper on the proposal for a directive on improving the portability of supplementary pension rights
- UEAPME Position Paper on the Commission's communication: Working together, working better: A new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the European Union
- UEAPME response to the consultation on the Commission's service report on the implementation of Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services

Internal Activities

Nominations for the social dialogue structures in 2007-2008:

Social Dialogue Structures	UEAPME representatives
Social Dialogue Committee	Mr Jan Dannenbring - ZDH - (D) Mrs Edyta Doboszynska - ZRP (PL) + Secretariat UEAPME
a - Working group "Macro-economy"	Mr Fabrizio Toscano - Confartigianato (IT) + Secretariat UEAPME
b - Working group "Labour Market"	Mr Danny van Assche - UNIZO (BEL) + Secretariat UEAPME
c - Working group "Education and Training"	Mr Philippe Perfetti - APCM (F) + Secretariat UEAPME

Training

2006 was a very successful year for UEAPME in the field of vocational training, as it consolidated and expanded its position at European level. While the number of topics and initiatives steadily increased in this field, the main focus was on the continuation of issues and processes already initiated in previous years.

Troika of the Education and Training Ministers

UEAPME met twice in 2006 with the Troika of the Education and Training Ministers for an informal discussion on the current priorities in the field of Education and Training, mainly the EQF, the integrated lifelong learning programme, the key competences for lifelong learning, the revision of the Maastricht communiqué on which UEAPME could present its position.

The Helsinki Communiqué on Enhanced European Cooperation in Vocational Education and Training

The European Ministers of Vocational Education and Training, the European Social Partners and the Commission adopted in their meeting on 5 December 2006 the Helsinki Communiqué, which follows the Copenhagen Declaration (2002) and Maastricht Communiqué (2004). It sets the priorities and strategies for the European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training for the next two years. Focus has been put on improving the attractiveness and quality of VET, developing and implementing

common tools for VET, strengthening mutual learning, taking all stakeholders on board. UEAPME was closely involved in the full revision process and actively contributed to the final result.

UEAPME'S Contribution to the European Training Policy

In 2006 UEAPME continued to participate in different EU level committees such as the Directors General Committee for Vocational Training (DGVVT), the Advisory Committee for Vocational Training ACVT, the Education and Training 2010 Coordination Group (ETCG), the committee for the new lifelong learning Programme and various ad hoc working groups in the field of education and training. They all give us several opportunities to influence the EU decisions in education and training issues.

Main Issues at European Level in 2006

- The European Qualification Framework (EQF)

UEAPME participated actively in and strongly influenced the Commissions work on improving the EQF, which has the objective to facilitate the transfer and recognition of qualifications held by individual citizens, by linking qualifications systems at the national and sectoral levels and enabling them to relate to each other. Through its successful lobbying UEAPME ensured that the descriptors, used in the EQF to describe qualifications according to knowledge, skills and competence, would better reflect the reality of working life and workplaces, and include competences based on professional and vocational learning outcomes at all levels and not only academic competences.

- › The European Credit Transfer System (ECVET)

UEAPME has been closely involved in the discussions on the ECVET and UEAPME's ad hoc working group is preparing a position to the Commission's public consultation on ECVET.

- › Mobility of apprentices

UEAPME was involved in two parallel processes. On the one hand it contributed in making the new integrated Lifelong learning programme, and in particular the Leonardo da Vinci programme which includes mobility periods for young people and apprentices, more adapted to the specific situation and needs of work place based apprentices. At the same time UEAPME was member of the steering groups of the studies (ECVET REFLECTOR and ECVET CONNEXION and MoVE-iT) resulting from the first phase of the European Parliament's budget line on a pilot project for an "ERASMUS" style programme for apprentices. In 2007, UEAPME will continue to be closely involved in this issue.

- › European Institute for Technology

The EIT is an initiative launched by President Barroso within the Lisbon Strategy to better integrate innovation, research and high education at EU level for making the European economy more competitive and successful at worldwide level. UEAPME achieved to be involved in the discussions on the EIT from the beginning. This participation is aimed at ensuring that the EIT will bring an added value in respect to the various already existing European bodies, programmes, actions and initiatives to strengthen innovation and research and development, and that SMEs and their representatives will be fully involved at all levels in the process and their needs will be taken in due consideration. UEAPME will continue to follow this process in a critical way in 2007.

Main Position Papers of UEAPME in 2006

- › UEAPME position paper on the Commission's Communication Fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning
- › UEAPME concept paper on measures for improving mobility of apprentices in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme 2007-2013 and of the studies undertaken by the European Commission with the budget line "Guy-Quint" on an "Erasmus style" programme for Apprentices
- › UEAPME position paper on the European Institute of Technology (EIT)
- › UEAPME position paper on adult learning

European Social Dialogue

Within the European Social Dialogue, UEAPME worked jointly with the other European inter-professional social partners in 2006 on the issue of vocational education and training. The main outcome was the adoption of the evaluation report on the implementation of the Framework of Actions for the lifelong development of competences and qualifications, which was presented at the Spring Tripartite Summit for Growth and Employment in March 2006. The evaluation showed that the Framework of Actions has created impetus for change and new actions, supported pre-existent social partners actions on competence development, provided a framework to national social partners for discussions be it bilaterally or with public authorities and helped bring about concrete actions to promote lifelong competence development in all Member States. European social partners believe that the four priorities identified in 2002 remain valid and essential building blocks to improve the functioning of Europe's labour markets.

The topic of lifelong learning is integrated in the new work programme of the European Social Partners. It is part of the current discussion on the analysis of labour market challenges and potentially a topic for negotiations at a later stage.

ECONOMIC AND FISCAL POLICY

Economic Policy: how to keep the growth momentum

Towards a balanced policy mix for economic growth

The economic outlook in 2006 was characterised by a relatively **strong economic growth**, but at the same time by **high uncertainty** about future developments due to some emerging threats. Sky-rocketing energy prices, further raises in the US double deficit, growing imbalances in the global financial market and political uncertainties were on the list of external risks. Significant differences in growth within the EU and the Euro Area, the upcoming increment of the VAT rate in Germany, the appreciation of the Euro and its increasing interest rates were among the internal risks. Therefore, one question dominated the macro-economic policy debate in 2006: **how to keep the growth momentum**. Will the step-by-step increase of interest rates by the ECB endanger investments and reduce potential output? Will higher wages, as demanded by trade unions, endanger Europe's competitiveness? Will domestic demand become a stable driver for growth, or will it mainly depend on external factors in the future?

Both session of the Macro Economic Dialogue dealt with these questions, with the majority of participants agreeing that the **implementation of the renewed Lisbon Strategy without further delays** and further efforts to reduce structural fiscal deficits, in line with the reformed Stability and Growth Pact, will be crucial to strengthen the economic upturn and to achieve autonomous growth for Europe.

Craft and SME policy higher on the European policy agendas in 2006

The **Austrian Presidency** of the European Union put craft and SME policy at the centre of the [Spring Summit 2006](#) in March, with a specific focus on improving business environment, while the **Finnish Presidency** tried to strengthen business support services, especially for innovative SMEs, in the second half of 2006. As regards the **European Commission**, 2006 has shown some progress in streamlining policy for Crafts and SMEs, especially in the areas of administrative burdens, innovation policy, state aid regulations and support measures to facilitate access to finance.

In addition to the better regulation efforts made in 2006, the finalisation of the **Financial Perspectives 2007-2013** was crucial for the future of European SME policy. The significant increases in the available budgets for **SME research** (FP 7) and SME-relevant aspects in the **Competitiveness and Innovation Programme** (CIP), as well as the provision of new instruments for SME policy within the framework of the Structural and Cohesion Funds (**JEREMIE** and **JASPERS**), were important improvements for Crafts and SMEs.

Taxation policy: VAT in the spotlight, no progress on company taxation

The experiment on **reduced VAT rates on labour intensive** services, which was used by 9 Member States since 2000, ended in December 2005 without an agreement about its prolongation. This would have forced some Member States to increase favourable VAT rates for various labour intensive services to the normal rate, which would have endangered up to 100.000 jobs in these sectors, according to studies provided by these Member States. [Public pressure made by UEAPME](#) and other stakeholders on Poland and other countries blocking such a prolongation succeeded at the end of January 2006, when the Austrian Presidency was able to reach consensus on the issue. The new [agreement](#) foresaw a prolongation of the experiment **until 2010** and **opened the scheme for reduced VAT rates on labour intensive services to new participants**. This opportunity was subsequently used by several new Member States and also by Finland. A total of **17 Member States are now participating in this experiment**.

During the rest of the year the European Council tried to get an agreement on the so-called **VAT package** (one-stop-shop for VAT compliance, change of the place of taxation for some services, review of the regulation on VAT on e-commerce), failing because of a **veto by Germany**. The incoming EU Presidency decided to use the VAT package to put pressure on other Member States and obtain their support for its so-called "reverse charge system" for VAT, which is strongly opposed by the European Commission and various other Member States. [Massive protests of UEAPME](#) towards the German government have not succeeded so far. The German Presidency, however, has promised to rethink its position.

As regards the project on a "**Common Consolidated Company Tax Base -CCCTB**", in December 2006 a common stocktaking exercise by stakeholders, including UEAPME, **has shown** that **very little progress** was made by the ECOFIN Council working group and by the European Commission in 2006. In fact, a small number of Member States that have general reservations against

this project is blocking any step forwards.

The project on **Home State Taxation for SMEs** was abandoned. UEAPME and the European Commission, which started a campaign on the issue in 2004, realised that not one single Member State was willing to start or to participate in a pilot project.

SME finance: learning to live with Basel II

The new regulation on capital requirements for financial institutes, the Capital Requirement Directive better known as **Basel II**, has become the synonym not only for the new legal framework but also for the new developments on the **credits and loans market**, which is characterised by higher risk-sensitivity and deeper risk assessments by banks. Both features have raised serious concerns in the **SME sector**, which fears increasing obstacles for its access to finance, especially for riskier projects like start-ups, innovation, business transfer and internationalisation.

Therefore, improving access to finance was the key discussion topic during the 5th **Roundtable between Banks and SMEs**, organised by the European Commission (DG Enterprise) for the 2006-2007 period. Three working groups are currently dealing with: (1) **Transparency and Dialogue**, focusing on the improvement of mutual understanding and the exchange of relevant information between Banks and their SME clients, (2) **Mezzanine Finance**, with the aim to develop new financing instruments and to identify existing barriers for such instruments, and (3) **Securitisation for SMEs**, aiming to make use of asset-backed securitisation for SME finance.

Direct support for SMEs' access to finance can be provided by **new financial instruments** in the framework of the **CIP** and **JEREMIE** programmes, which will facilitate SME finance via guarantees. These measures are deemed to be a kind of state aid and therefore must be cleared by the European Commission, which in 2006 adopted the respective state aid rules to allow the provision of such guarantees. UEAPME succeeded in the framework of the current State Aid Reform of the European Commission (DG Competition) by obtaining a **new block exemption on "de minimis aid"**, which increased the threshold for aid allowed for SMEs without notification requirements from EUR 100.000 to 200.000 per SME over a three-year period. UEAPME was also able to ensure that state aid in form of guarantees is also covered by the scope of the regulation. Furthermore, the European Commission published **new Guidelines for State Aid for risk capital for SMEs**, which allow the provision of risk capital, including certain kinds of state aid, up to EUR 1.5 Million per year.

New approaches made EU Innovation Policy more SME friendly

UEAPME has made several efforts to convince European policymakers to adapt their innovation policy to SMEs' needs since the 3rd SME Summit 2004 in Luxembourg. The SME way to innovate is characterised by a more permanent innovation strategy, based on existing technologies, and focuses more on the medium and low tech sectors. These efforts started to bear fruits in 2006, when the European Commission published its **new Framework on State Aid for R&D and Innovation**. The European Commission allows for the first time state aid for innovation measures that are not directly related to R&D, such as innovation support services, support for clusters, experimental development etc.

Furthermore, the European Commission stressed in its last communication on innovation the importance of demand-driven innovation, such as the development of lead markets and different types of smart procurement, both of which are in line with the SME type of innovation.

5th SME Summit – SMEs and the European Economic and Social Model

The 5th **Craft, Trade and SME Summit 2006 in Graz**, Austria, was UEAPME's contribution to the discussions on the **European Social Model** that started in 2005 at the European Summit in Hampton Court. More than 100 craft and SME representatives from 23 countries discussed the influence of different social models on the competitiveness of Europe's economy with prominent academics from Brussels and Austria. Furthermore, the Summit attempted to start a **project between SME associations and Trade Unions** aiming to find SME-specific solutions to balance the employers' need for more flexibility with the employees' need for security.



The audience of the well-attended 5th SME Summit (Graz, Austria, April 2006)

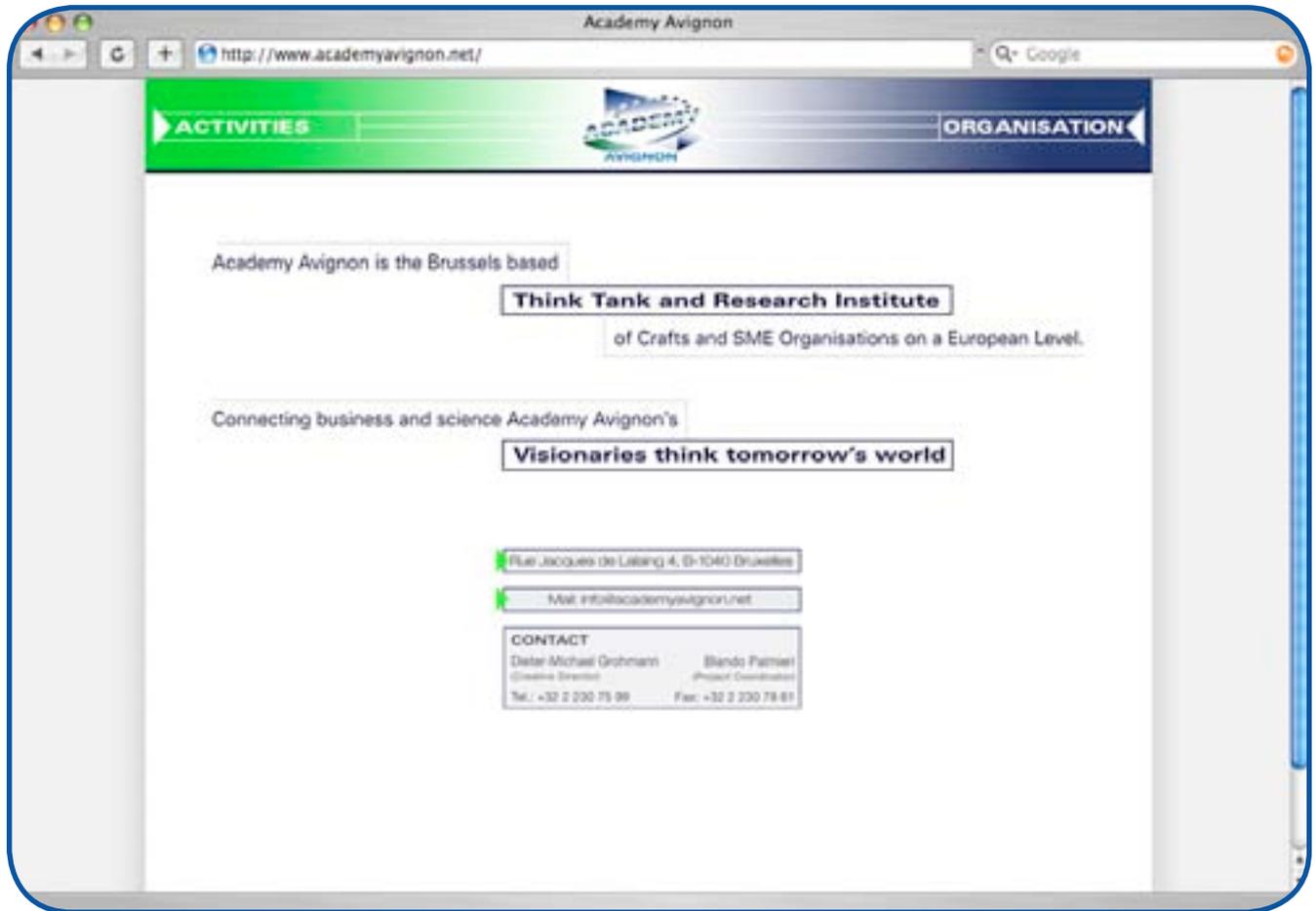
PART TWO

Project Activities

ACADEMY AVIGNON

A new webpage for Academy Avignon

Academy Avignon launched a new website, with a focus on increasing usability. The new website allows Academy Avignon users to find and download programmes, meetings details and final reports of projects.



Academy Avignon's new website

Sprinter Project

Academy Avignon implemented in 2006 a number of actions and initiatives in the framework of the "SPRINTER – Social Partner Role Indicating Training Needs for European SME" project. This project intends to analyse the practices of participation of Social Partners in developing National Vocational Training Plans, a planning of educational actions to be realised to identify the needs of competences required by a company, a group of companies or at sectoral level, in coherence with the strategic planning and the professional development of the resources employed, which makes it possible the development of links between the world of work, education and training, and ensures individual employability through a continuous professional growth.

Video productions

Academy Avignon is fostering visions about the future of SMEs and Craft in Europe. Therefore a documentation of the present status is necessary. Academy Avignon produces these documents in different formats such printed reports and film documentaries. These documentaries help to picture the state of the art in various business branches and give the opportunity to deliver new suggestions and approaches.

EUROPEAN SECTORAL POLICY

UEAPME: Partner for Sectoral SME Interests

In 2006, UEAPME continued to develop its sectoral activities. By doing so, UEAPME has become the European focal point co-ordinating branch-specific interest representation for craft and SMEs. Through UEAPME, sectoral representatives are integrated in a unique information network. They can develop joint positions with partners representing related activities and send joint experts to European advisory and expert groups. UEAPME offers its infrastructure, expertise and political weight.

With the European Union of Tile Fixers' Associations – EUF, the 21st sectoral member has joined UEAPME in 2006. Discussions with other associations are at an advanced stage.

Sector Forums extended

UEAPME has also extended the successful concept of sector forums to two new areas: transport and cosmetics. These forums bring together European sectoral associations and experts from the UEAPME full members from certain industry or service branches. Members communicate via email or meet directly to discuss policy issues of common interest and, if agreed, organise joint lobbying activities.

The sector forums have also become an important co-ordination point with NORMAPME – the European small business standards association. NORMAPME regularly updates forum members on standardisation activities in their sector and offers financial support to a number of SME standardisation experts.

Construction Sector Forum

This forum brings together eleven European sectoral associations, representing various construction trades, as well as construction experts from UEAPME full members. The participants considered a number of topics including the following:

- › Construction products directive: discussions with the European Commission and drafting of a position paper with NORMAPME mainly focusing on the requirements for non-series production of construction products;
- › Posting of workers directive: discussions with the European Commission;
- › Directive on services in the Internal Market: update;
- › Reduced VAT rates on labour-intensive services: follow-up of the lobbying activities organised in 2004-2006;
- › Public procurement (contracts below the thresholds, SME privileges in public procurement, private partnerships): discussions with the European Commission to express the opposition of SMEs against EU procurement rules below the thresholds and stress the necessity to include small business interests in the future legislation on concessions;
- › Waste directive: drafting of a position paper with EBC proposing alternative provisions for small quantities of construction waste;
- › The European Energy Efficiency Action Plan: information update;
- › Directive on the energy efficiency of buildings: informing members about the main provisions, risks, opportunities and related standardisation;
- › Standardisation: environmental performance of construction, dangerous products, doors and windows etc.

The forum met twice in 2006, on April 21st and October 31st.

Cosmetics Sector Forum

This Forum was established in summer 2006 to respond to a request from the European Commission for better SME input into the process of revision the cosmetics directive. It includes manufacturers and users (such as beauticians) of cosmetic products.

The Forum sends a joint expert to the advisory group at DG Enterprise and Industry. The Forum submitted comments on a Commission consultation relating to international trade barriers for cosmetic products.

In September 06, a newsletter was circulated to all Forum members.

Foodstuffs Sector Forum

Several important items were on the agenda of the Foodstuffs Forum in 2006. For instance, UEAPME worked at the concept of a short film in which the problems of small enterprises are exemplified through three small and medium sized bakeries in Germany, Luxembourg and Belgium. The film, which was then completed in 2007, is entitled “UEAPME’s” daily bread. You can order this film on CD for free at the UEAPME secretariat or download it at http://www.ueapme.com/EN/sectorial_food.shtml.

The working group analysed the conditions under which small food enterprises have to work, including requirements on hygiene, inspections, traceability, labelling, working time and safety at work.

In 2006 the UEAPME working group on foodstuffs prepared the following position papers:

- › Response to DG SANCO’s consultative document of February 2006 “Labelling: competitiveness, consumer information and better regulation for the EU”,
- › European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health,
- › Mandatory and voluntary labelling,

and wrote several press releases on the abovementioned issues.

Healthcare Sector Forum

This Forum is operated jointly with NORMAPME and brings together European and national associations representing manufacturers and dealers of external medical devices. The Forum sends joint experts to:

- › the EU Medical Devices Expert Group (3 meetings in 2006);
- › the CEN Advisory Board for Health Standards;
- › the EU Health Forum (one meeting in 2006);
- › the e-Health initiative (through NORMAPME).

As in the previous year, the group’s work mainly focused on the revision of the Medical devices directive. The European Commission had included the following UEAPME demands in the draft revised directive as published in December 2005:

- › requiring the ‘statement’ under Annex VIII of the Directive to be provided to the named patient;
- › requiring this ‘statement’ to include the name and address of the manufacturer and any additional manufacturing site;
- › including custom-made devices in the European medical devices database.

In 2006, position papers were published on the draft directive as a whole, on quality management systems and on annex VIII. Numerous meetings took place with the European Parliament and the Commission. The Parliament’s Public Health Committee supported the UEAPME position. This decision is still to be confirmed by the plenary vote.

Other topics:

- › Generic standards on good manufacturing practice for custom-made devices;
- › European eHealth initiative (NORMAPME involvement). The main task is to work towards a system which is workable and accessible for custom made devices manufacturers;
- › Directives on services and the recognition of professional qualifications;
- › Future of the EU health policy: The Forum currently prepares a detailed response to the Commission consultation.

A number of German-speaking national and trans-national healthcare associations receive EU information in German and can use the UEAPME services for additional lobbying activities on the basis of service contracts signed with UEAPME. The forum met twice in 2006, on May 11th and October 10th.

Retail Forum

The final adoption of the Services Directive was a huge success for the UEAPME Retail Forum. Thanks to its lobby work the Directive now allows Member States to keep their regulations on the establishment of big retail centres and the prohibitions to sell below cost, both of which are of utmost importance for small firms and retailers.

The Retail Forum also participated in a public consultation launched by DG SANCO about its directive on the indication of prices of products offered to consumers. The Forum stressed that clauses foreseeing compulsory indication of unit prices constitute a very high administrative burden for small retailers and often impose heavy additional costs. The existing safeguards for small retailers should thus become permanent exceptions, with the definition of “small retail” business being within the remit of Member States.

Tourism Forum

UEAPME and some of its member organisations participated in the Fifth European Forum on Tourism, held in Limassol, Cyprus, 16th-17th of November, to discuss new opportunities in the tourism industry.

UEAPME was also invited to express its opinion during the conference “Measuring Seasonality – Causes for Seasonal Fluctuation and its effects on the tourism industry” organised in the European Parliament by the Tourism Intergroup and during the 3rd international European Tourism Conference organised by CEEP Tourism Platform.

As previous years the main activities of the Tourism Forum concerned the consultation of the member organisation on the necessity of standardisation (ISO) in the field of spa services and tourism services in general.

Transport Sector Forum

In spring 2006, UEAPME decided to set up this Forum with a view to providing better input to the legislative activities in this area. The main topic was the Commission proposal to enhance supply chain security. This proposal would have imposed significant financial burdens on SMEs in the transport sector without tangible results. The Forum drafted a position paper and met a significant number of European and national policy makers.

A joint press release was published with Eurochambres and Eurocommerce. In December 06, the Commission decided to “freeze” its proposal for a period of two years. The Forum members received eight editions of the UEAPME Transport news update, which covers all relevant political developments in this sector and informs about European calls for proposals.

Provision of Secretarial Services

UEAPME offers tailor-made service contracts to European sectoral associations to organise their European secretariat. Whilst maintaining their full independence, the sectoral associations can benefit from the UEAPME facilities and develop a permanent presence in the European capital. In 2006, the following European sectoral associations were co-operating with UEAPME through such contracts:

- › European Builders Confederation – EBC
- › European Telecommunication Services Association – ETSA
- › Comité européen des équipements techniques du bâtiment – CEETB
- › Génie climatique international – Union internationale de la couverture et de la plomberie – GCI-UICP
- › Union internationale des entreprises de peinture – UNIEP

In the beginning of 2006, a new service contract signed with the European Metal Union – EMU came into force.

PART THREE

Press Work

PRESS

UEAPME's presence in Brussels-based media was constant in 2006. Coverage was particularly steady in EU affairs websites such as Euractiv.com and in daily bulletins such as Agence Europe and Europolitics, where UEAPME confirmed itself as the voice of European SMEs. UEAPME's reach was expanded in sector-specific publications dealing with issues such as Research and Development (Cordis News) and environment (ENDS Environment Daily).

Regular presence in the media helped in ensuring that UEAPME's position on a number of policy issues was brought to the attention of the key EU policymakers. This is particularly true for issues such as the European Patent policy debate, the State Aid reform, the REACH regulation on chemical substances and the directive on Services in the Internal Market.

TV breakthroughs on channels such as Arte and CNBC Europe, as well as radio presence in France through BFM radio completed a successful year for the UEAPME Press Office. The goal in 2007 will be to consolidate UEAPME's presence in press agencies and newswires, which requires reacting in a timely manner and anticipating the Secretariat's position on key topics.

COMMUNICATIONS

The **UEAPME Newsflash** was completely overhauled in 2006. It has become a leaner weekly document, which is published every Friday at noon. The Newsflash focuses on the Secretariat's activities during the week, reporting on conferences, press activities and UEAPME internal meetings and linking to the UEAPME website or external sources for more information. It also contains a "forward planning" section, where members are kept informed about forthcoming UEAPME activities such as consultations and Working Group meetings. 19 issues of the Weekly Newsflash were published between July and December 2006.

The **UEAPME leaflets** were also renewed. The new version is available in four languages (EN, FR, DE, IT) both in paper and PDF version. It contains some basic facts about UEAPME, including UEAPME's aims, and about SMEs in Europe, such as the official definition of SMEs according to size and turnover and a breakdown of European enterprises by size class. The back of the leaflet doubles as an A3 poster featuring the UEAPME logo and all the names of the UEAPME member organisations. 4000 copies of the leaflet were printed in October 2006. The leaflet was subsequently presented to members at the UEAPME Annual General Assembly in Brussels on 1 December 2006.

In addition, the **UEAPME website** continued to progress in 2006. The website is updated on a daily basis with all press releases and position papers instantly uploaded. The website also contains regularly updated content on UEAPME news and events (including pictures), as well as all policies and projects run by the organisation. See: <http://www.ueapme.com>

The whole UEAPME communications structure will be thoroughly assessed and revised in 2007, with a view to modernise the way the Secretariat provides information to members through both "push" and "pull" information services.

*Gerhard Huemer,
Economic and Fiscal
Policy Director,
during an interview
with CNBC television
(Brussels, March 2006)*



PART FOUR

Committees and Structure

LIST OF THE COMMITTEES AND WORKING GROUPS OF UEAPME WITH THEIR RESPECTIVE CHAIRMEN AND CONTACT POINTS IN THE SECRETARIAT

<i>Committees and Working Groups</i>	<i>Chairmen</i>	<i>Secretariat</i>
Economic and Fiscal Affairs	H.E. Schleyer (ZDH - D)	Gerhard Huemer
Finance and Relations with Banks	R. Suominen (SY - SF)	Gerhard Huemer
Structural Funds	M. Di Venere (Confartigianato - I)	Cristina Murciano
Taxation	C. Roy-Chowdhury (Acca/FPB - UK)	Gerhard Huemer
EMU	A. Henkel (WKÖ - A)	Luc Hendrickx
Tourism	C. Albonetti (Confesercenti - I)	Luc Hendrickx
Retail	J. Alarcon (PIMEC - Merger Group)	Luc Hendrickx
Legal Affairs	P. Vesterdorf (Håndværksrådet - DK)	Maria Cimaglia
Social Affairs	C. Schweng (WKÖ - A)	Liliane Volozinskis Ralf Drachenberg
Environment	G. Russomanno (Confartigianato - I)	Guido Lena Cristina Marongiu
Vocational Training	A. Griset (APCM - F)	Liliane Volozinskis Ralf Drachenberg
External Relations Working Group	A.M. Ferraboli (CNA - I)	Luc Hendrickx
Central and Eastern European Countries Working Group	UEAPME Secretariat	Oliver Loebel
Mediterranean Countries	A. Benassi (Confartigianato - I)	Maria Cimaglia
Informal Working Group Latin America	R. Vila (PIMEC - Merger Group)	Maria Cimaglia
RTD and Innovation	R. Neumann (ZDH - D) Acting Chairman	Ullrich Schröder
Working Group on Foodstuff	UEAPME Secretariat	Ludger Fischer
Working Group on Corporate Culture of Craft and Craft Type enterprises	François Moutot (APCM - F)	Birte Day

UEAPME POSITION PAPERS 2006

N°	Date:	Languages	Title:
1.	12.01	E	Reply on the Commission services draft working document – Report by the Commission services on the implementation of Council Directive 1999/70/EC of 28 June 1999 concerning the framework agreement on fixed-term work concluded by ETUC, UNICE and CEEP
2.	16.01	E	Reply to the consultation on the Commission’s service report on the implementation of Directive 96/71/EC concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services
3.	17.01	E	Position on the documents sent by Ecolabelling Norway on 13 th January 2006 and related to the draft Eco-Label criteria for Soaps and Shampoos
4.	24.01	E	Position on the Commission’s communication : Working together, working better: a new framework for the open coordination of social protection and inclusion policies in the European Union
5.	January	E	Position on the first draft background report for the revision of the Eco-Label criteria on tissue papers
6.	25.01	E	Position on the reduction of the CIP budget
7.	30.01	E	Reaction to Ecolabelling Norway’s e-mail sent to the EUEB on 27 th January 2006
8.	February	E	Position on the revision of the Eco-Label criteria on tissue papers (first draft proposal of 8 th February 2006)
9.	9.02	E	Position on the proposal for a directive on improving the portability of supplementary pension rights
10.	2.03	E	Position on the Commission’s Communication on Implementing the Community Lisbon Programme: fostering entrepreneurial mindsets through education and learning
11.	8.03	E	Evaluation of the European Parliament’s vote on the Services Directive
12.	9.03	E	European Policy for Crafts and SMEs: now it’s time for concrete actions – European Council – Spring 2006
13.	10.03	E	Concept paper on Measures for improving mobility of apprentices in the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme 2007-2013 and of the studies undertaken by the European Commission with the budget line “Guy-Quint” on an “Erasmus style” programme for Apprentices
14.	13.03	E	Comments of the UEAPME NORMAPME Healthcare Forum regarding the proposal for a Directive amending Council Directive 93/42/EEC of 14 June 1993 concerning devices
15.	30.03	E	Remarks on the document “Commission position on the inclusion of purely health related issues in the draft Soaps and Shampoos criteria” and the last draft Eco-Label criteria on Soaps, Shampoos and Conditioners (21 st February 2006)
16.	31.03	E	Green Paper on Energy Efficiency

17.	2.04	E	Reaction to Eco-label for Heat Pumps Draft background report III and second discussion draft
18.	4.04	E	Position on European Globalisation Adjustment Fund
19.	4.04	E	Position on the Commission's consultation on action at EU level to promote the active inclusion of the people furthest from the labour market
20.	5.04	E	Report on the situation of the generic plant protection sector and amendments to the proposal for regulation which modify directive 91/414/EEC (document SANCO 10159, Rev. o 06/04/2005) drafted by the European commission
21.	5.04	E	Reply to the Questionnaire on the effect of the provision of Council Directive 2001/23/EC of 12 March 2001 on the approximation of the laws of the members States relating to the safeguarding of employee's rights in the vent of transfers of undertakings, businesses or part of undertakings or businesses
22.	April	E	First comments of UEAPME on the communication from the Commission to the Council of Ministers and the European parliament on Public Private Partnership against organised crime and terrorism, including an Action Plan (Delegates version March 30)
23.	5.05	E	Comment of the UEAPME/NORMAPME Healthcare Forum regarding the idea of introducing a general obligation to have a quality management system for manufacturers covered by the proposal for a Directive of the European parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 93/42/EEC of 14 June 1993 concerning medical devices
24.	May	E	Position on the revision of the Eco-Label criteria on tissue papers (second draft proposal of 3rd May 2006)
25.	24.05	E	Comments on the consultation Documents from the European commission on State Aid relevant for SMEs
26.	9.06	E	Position of the UEAPME/NORMAPME Healthcare Forum regarding the suggestion to modify the Commission proposal relating to Annex VIII of Proposal for a Directive amending Council Directive 93/42/EEC of 14 June 1993 concerning medical devices
27.	June	E	Contribution to the public consultation on the future of the internal market
28.	15.06	E	Position on the informal consultation document of the European commission "Towards a Europe Free From Tobacco Smoke: Policy Options at EU level"
29.	30.06	E	Position on the priorities for the upcoming Community Health and Safety Strategy 2007-2012
30.	17.07	E	Position on free movement of goods in the non-harmonised area "mutual recognition" Elements for a legislative approach
31.	July	E	Position on the revision of the waste framework directive 75/442/EEC
32.	July	E	Comments on the discussion paper presented by DG Environment on the revision of the European Eco label scheme
33.	July	E	Priorities for the second reading of REACH (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals)
34.	July	E	Comments on the draft regulation on "LIFE+" and the first draft of the "LIFE +" multi-annual plan
35.	August	E	Amendments proposed by UEAPME to the Council common position on Reach
36.	August	E	Position on REACH - Second reading in the European parliament

37.	August	E	Position on the Green Paper “European Transparency Initiative” – COM(2006) 194 final
38.	August	E	Position on the revision of the Eco-label criteria on tissue papers (third draft proposal of 16 th May 2006)
39.	5.09	E	Position on the European Institute of Technology (EIT)
40.	September	E	Position on the revision of the Eco-label criteria on tissue papers (fourth draft proposal of 31 st August 2006)
41.	12.09	E	Reaction to the fourth discussion draft Eco-label for Heat Pumps – September 2006
42.	22.09	E	Labour market Analysis – Main Observations
43.	September	E	Retail Forum position on the Communication from the Commission on the implementation of Directive 1998/6/EC of the European parliament and the Council of 16 February 1998 on consumer protection and the indication of prices of products offered to consumers – COM (2006) 325 Final
44.	September	E	Comments on the background report prepared for the second AHWG meeting for the revision of criteria for bed mattresses
45.	3.10	E	Position on European Platform for Action on Diet, Physical Activity and Health
46.	October	E	Position on the Commission proposal COM(2006) 79 / SEC(2006) 251 on enhancing supply chain security
47.	20.10	E	Comments on the revised proposals from the European commission on the Amended new de minimis block exemption (COM (...) 2006), September 20, 2006
48.	October	E	Employers’ Analysis of the Key Challenges Facing Europe’s Labour Markets
49.	6.11	E, F	Facilitating the access of SMEs and crafts to public tenders
50.	14.11	E	Position of the UEAPME Construction Forum regarding the Directive of the European parliament and of the council on waste COD 2005/0281
51.	20.11	E	Response to the first stage consultation of the European social Partners on “the reconciliation of professional, private and family life”
52.	December	E	Amendments to the proposal for a regulation of the European parliament and of the Council concerning the placing of plant protection products on the market
53.	8.12	E	Position on the commission’s communication “The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity”
54.	13.12	E, D	Open letter to Mr. Peer Steinbrück, German Federal Minister of Finance, on the “VAT package” standstill at the Economic and Financial Affairs Council

LIST OF MAIN CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND STRUCTURES WHERE UEAPME IS REPRESENTED AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

- Round Table of Banks and SMEs (DG ENTR)
- Measuring Instruments Committee (DG ENTR)
- Enterprise Policy Group, EPG (DG ENTR)
- Committee on "e-commerce" (DG ENTR)
- Medical Device Expert Group (DG ENTR).
- EU Multistakeholder Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility
- Advisory Committee for the Equal Opportunities between Women and Men (DG EMPL)
- Social Dialogue Committee (DG EMPL)
- Working group "Labour Market" (DG EMPL)
- Working group "Macro-economics" (DG EMPL)
- Working group "Education and Training" (DG EMPL)
- Pensions Forum (DG EMPL)
- European Monitoring Centre on Change- EMCC (DUBLIN FOUNDATION)
- Payment System Groups (DG MARKT)
- SLIM "Simpler Legislation in the Internal Market" (DG MARKT)
- EFRAG (DG MARKT)
- Lifelong Learning Programme Committee (DG EAC)
- ACVT Advisory Committee on Vocational Training (DG EAC)
- Directors General for Vocational Training – DGVT (DG EAC)
- Education and Training 2010 Coordination Group (DG EAC)
- EU Network for Quality Assurance – ENQUA (DG EAC)
- Consultative Committee of Social Parties on Structural Funds (DG REGIO)
- Committee on Rural Development (DG AGRI)
- Permanent Working Group on Women in Rural Areas (DG AGRI)
- European Research Advisory Board EURAB (DG Research)
- High-Level Advisory Committee on SMEs (DG Research)
- High-Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment (DG ENTR – DG ENV – DG TREN and other DGs)
- Commission Working Group on the Practical Preparations for REACH (DG ENTR – DG ENV)
- EMAS Consultative Committee (DG ENV)
- European Union Eco-Labeling Board and Eco-Label Consultative Forum (DG ENV)
- Several Ad Hoc Working Groups establishing Eco-Label Criteria for different product groups (DG ENV)
- IPP (Integrated Product Policy) Regular Meetings (DG ENV)
- IPPC Review Advisory Group (DG ENV)
- Working Group on Minor Use/Niche Biocides (DG ENV)
- Working Group on the revision of the Emission Trading Scheme (DG ENV)
- Committee on Urban Environment (DG ENV)
- Energy and Transport Forum (DG TREN)
- Sustainable Energy Forum (DG TREN)
- Consultation Forum for the Eco-Design of Energy Using Products Directive (DG ENTR – DG TREN)
- Macroeconomic Dialogue (ECOFIN)
- Euro Cash User Group (DG ECOFIN and European Central Bank)
- Asia - Invest Advisory Committee (DG TRADE)
- Panel of Experts for the Millennium Round of the WTO (DG TRADE)
- AL-INVEST Advisory Committee (EuropeAid)
- TABD (Trans Atlantic Business Dialogue)
- Health and Food Safety Advisory Committee on Foodstuffs (DG SANCO)
- EUROSTAT - Statistical information group
- Stakeholder Consultative Platform (EFSA)
- European Payments Council (EPC) Stakeholder Forum
- SEPA End-user Group of the European Central Bank (ECB)

UEAPME MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Full Members

Austria

**Wirtschaftskammer Österreich
Bundessparte Gewerbe und Handwerk**

President: Dr. Christoph LEITL
Secretary General: Mag. Annemarie HOCHHAUSER
Deputy Secretary General: Dr. Reinhold
MITTERLEHNER

Wiedner Hauptstraße 63

Postfach 350

A-1045 Wien

Tel:+43 (0)5 90 900-3291

Fax:+43 (0)5 90 900 217

E-mail: bsg@wko.at

<http://www.wko.at/bsgh>

Belgium

**Comité National Belge des Petites et Moyennes
Entreprises CNBPME**

President: Karel VAN EETVELT
Secretary General: Luc HENDRICKX

Rue de Spa 8

B-1000 Bruxelles

Tel: +32.2.238.05.02

Fax:+32.2.238.07.94

E-mail: harry.verdoodt@unizo.be

CNPME consists of the following organisations:

Unie van Zelfstandige Ondernemers UNIZO

President: Rik JAEKEN
Managing Director: Karel VAN EETVELT

Rue de Spa 8

B-1000 Bruxelles

Tel:+32.2.238.05.02

Fax:+32.2.238.07.94

E-mail: harry.verdoodt@unizo.be

Union des Classes Moyennes UCM

Secretary General: Pierre COLIN

Bd d' Avroy 42

B-4000 Liège

Tel: +32.4.221.65.50

Fax: +32.4.221.65.55

E-mail: pierre.colin@ucm.be

Bulgaria

**Nationale Handwerkskammer - Bulgarien
National Chamber of Skilled Crafts**

President: Rangel TSCHOLAKOV

Contact: Simona HRISTOVA

Bul. Slivnitya 134

BG - 1303 Sofia

Tel:+359.2.931.78.80/2.931.78.81

Tel/Fax:+359.2.931.78.82

E-mail: nzk@abv.bg

<http://www.nzk.bg>

Union for Private Economic Enterprise UPEE

President: Borislav BORISOV

Secretary General: Teodor DETCHEV

30 Cap. Todor Notchev St.

BG - 1407 Sofia

Tel:+359.2.962.47.84

Fax:+359.2.962.48.36

E-mail: office@ssi-bg.org

<http://www.ssi-bg.org>

Cyprus

**Cyprus Chamber of Commerce and Industry
CCCI**

President: Manthos MAVROMMATIS

Secretary General: Panayotis I. LOIZIDES

38, Grivas Digeni Ave. & 3 Deligiorgi Str.

P.O. Box 21455

1509-Nicosia - CYPRUS

Tel:+357.2.288.98.40

Fax:+357.2.266.90.48

E-mail: chamber@ccci.org.cy

<http://www.ccci.org.cy>

Czech Republic

AMSP CR

Association of Small and Medium sized Enterprises and Crafts of Czech Republic

President: Bretislav OSTADÁL

Executive Vice-President: Karel DOBES

Tešnov 5

CZ - 110 00 Praha 1

Tel: +420.222.246.404

Tel/Fax: +420.222.241.553

E-mail: amsp@amsp.cz

E-mail: dobes@dofra.cz

<http://www.amsp.cz>

Sdružení Podnikatelů České Republiky SPCR

Chairman: Bedrich DANDA

Secretary General: Marta SINDLEROVA

Adviser for External relations: Vadislav ZEMÁNEK

Na strži 1837/9

CZ-140 00 Praha 4 - Krč

Tel: +420.261.104.335

Fax: +420.261.104.262

E-mail: spzcr@volny.cz

E-mail: marta.sindlerova@uamk.cz

<http://www.sdruzenispcr.cz>

Hospodářská komora České republiky Economic Chamber of the Czech Republic ECCR

President: PhD Jaromír DRABEK

Secretary General: Ivan VOLES

Freyova 27

CZ - Praha 8 - Vysocany

Tel: +420.240.96.204 (President)

Tel: +420.296.646.245 (Secretary General)

Fax: +420.240.96.221

Fax : +420.296.646.257 (Secretary General)

E-mail: fholec@volny.cz

E-mail: voles@komora.cz

<http://www.komora.cz>

Denmark

Håndværksrådet

President: Poul ULSØE

Director: Lars Jørgen NIELSEN

Head of Unit for European Affairs: Peter Vesterdorf

Islands Brygge 26

DK-2300 København S

Tel:+45.33.93.20.00

Fax:+45.33.32.01.74

E-mail: vesterdorf@hvr.dk

<http://www.hvr.dk>

Estonia

Estonian Association of Small and Medium Sized Enterprise EVEA

President: Mr. Riivo SINIJÄRV

Managing Director: Ms. Riina DANILSON

Liivalaia 9

EE-10118 Tallin

Tel:+37.2.641.0920

Fax:+37.2.641.0916

E-mail: evea@evea.ee

<http://www.evea.ee>

Finland

SY - The Federation of Finnish Enterprises

President: Eero LEHTI

Managing Director: Jussi JÄRVENTAUS

Head of European Affairs: Risto SUOMINEN

Mannerheimintie 76 A

FIN - 00250 Helsinki

P.O. Box 999

FIN-00101 Helsinki

Tel: +358.9.229.221

Fax: +358.9.229.229.80

E-mail (general): toimisto@yrittajat.fi

E-mail: jussi.jarventaus@yrittajat.fi

<http://www.yrittajat.fi>

France

Assemblée Permanente des Chambres de Métiers APCM

President: Alain GRISET
General Director.: François MOUTOT
12, Av. Marceau
F-75008 Paris
Tel:+33.1.44.43.10.00
Fax:+33.1.47.20.34.48
E-mail: info@apcm.fr

Union Professionnelle de l'Artisanat UPA

President: Pierre PERRIN
Secretary General: Pierre BURBAN
53, rue Ampère
F-75017 Paris
Tel:+33.1.47.63.31.31
Fax:+33.1.47.63.31.10
E-mail: UPA@wanadoo.fr
<http://www.upa.fr>

Confédération Générale des Petites et Moyennes Entreprises CGPME

President: Jean-François ROUBAUD
Secretary General: Jean-Eudes DU MESNIL
10, Terrasse Bellini
F-92806 Puteaux- Cédex
Tel:+33.1.47.62.73.73
Fax:+33.1.47.73.08.86
E-mail: bbrisson@cgpme.fr

Germany

Zentralverband des Deutschen Handwerks and Bundesvereinigung der Fachverbände des Deutschen Handwerks/ ZDH und BFH

President: Dipl.-Ing. Otto KENTZLER
Secretary General: Hanns-Eberhard SCHLEYER
Postfach 11 04 72
D-10834 Berlin
Tel:+49.30.206.190
Fax:+49.30.206.19.460
E-mail: schleyer@zdh.de
<http://www.zdh.de>

Bundesverband der Selbständigen/ Deutscher Gewerbeverband e.V. BDS/DGV e.V.

President: Dorothea STÖRR-RITTER
Bundesgeschäftsführer: Ralf-Michael LÖTTGEN
Platz vor dem Neuen Tor 4
D-10115 Berlin
Tel:+49.30.28.04.91.0
Fax:+49.30.28.04.91.11
E-mail: bds-dgv@t-online.de
E-mail: rml@bds-dgv.de
<http://www.bds-dgv.de>

Greece

Confédération Hellénique des Petits et Moyens Entrepreneurs, Artisans et Commerçants GR. G.S.E.V.E.E.

President: Dimitris ASIMAKOPOULOS
Secretary General: Nikos SKORINIS
Rue Kapodistriou 24
GR-106 82 Athens
Tel:+30.210.3816.600 ou 3828.590
Fax:+30.210.382.07.35
E-mail: gsevec@gsevec.gr
E-mail: info@gsevec.gr
<http://www.gsevec.gr>

Hungary

Ipartestületek Országos Szövetsége IPOSZ

President: György SZÜCS
Director: Gabor SOLTÍ
Kálmán I. U.20
H-1054 Budapest
Tel:+36.1.269.29.40
Fax:+36.1.269.29.57
E-mail: solti@iposz.hu

Kereskedők Es Vendéglátók Országos Erdekképviseleti Szövetsége KISOSZ

President: Dr. Gabor ANTALFFY
Andrassy Ut. 43
H-1061 Budapes
Tel:+36.1.342.55.74/322.04.64/63
Fax:+36.1.322.52.99
E-mail: cehec@cehec.axelero.net
E-mail: kisosz@axelero.hu

Magyar Iparszövetség OKISZ

President: László HÖRÖMPÖLY

Thököly út 58-60

H - 1146 Budapest

Tel:+36.1.343-6214

Fax:+36.1.343-5182

E-mail: okisz@okiszinfo.hu

<http://www.okiszinfo.hu>

Ireland

Irish Small and Medium Enterprises Association ISME

Chairman: Daniel HICKEY

Director: Robert BERNEY

Chief Executive: Mark FIELDING

17 Kildare Street

IRL-Dublin 2

Tel:+353.1.662.27.55

Fax:+353.1.661.21.57

E-mail: rberney@eircom.net

E-mail: mark@ismc.ie

Small Firms Association SFA

President: Pat CROTTY

Director: Patricia CALLAN

Confederation House

84/86 Lower Baggot St.

IRL-Dublin 2

Tel:+353.1.605.15.00

Fax:+353.1.661.28.61

E-mail: info@sfa.ie

<http://www.sfa.ie>

Italy

Confederazione Generale Italiana dell'Artigianato CONFARTIGIANATO

President: Giorgio Natalino GUERRINI

Secretary General: Cesare FUMAGALLI

Via S. Giovanni in Laterano 152

I-00184 Roma

Tel:+39.06.70.37.41

Fax:+39.06.70.45.21.88

E-mail: segretariagenerale@mail.confartigianato.it

E-mail: presidenza@mail.confartigianato.it

<http://www.confartigianato.it>

Confederazione Italiana della Piccola e Media Industria CONFAPI

President: Paolo GALASSI

General Director: Sandro NACCARELLI

Via della Colonna Antonina 52

I - 00186 Roma

Tel:+39.06.690 151

Fax:+39.06.679.14.88

E-mail: mail@confapi.org

<http://www.confapi.org>

Confederazione Nazionale dell'Artigianato e delle Piccole e Medie Imprese CNA

President: Ivan MALAVASI

Secretary General: Gian Carlo SANGALLI

Via G.A. Guattani, 13

I - 00161 Roma

Tel: +39.06.441.88.208

Fax: +39.06.442.49.518

E-mail: europa@cna.it

<http://www.cna.it>

Confederazione Italiana Esercenti Attività Commerciali Turistiche e dei Servizi CONFESERCENTI

President: Marco VENTURI

Via Nazionale, 60

I - 00184 Roma

Tel: +39.06.47.251

Fax: +39.06.47.46.886

E-mail: confes@confesercenti.it

<http://www.confesercenti.it>

Latvia

Latvijas Amatniecības Kamera

LAK

Latvian Chamber of Craft

President: Vilnis KAZAKS

Managing Director: Viktors TISKINS

Co-ordinator: Valdis POIKANS

Amatu iela 5

LV-1050 Riga

Tel:+371.7213007

Fax:+371.7213927

E-mail: lak@lak.lv

Lithuania

Lithuanian Business Employers' confederation LVDK

President: Viktor USPASKICH
General Director: Danas ARLAUSKAS
A. Rotundo str.5
LT - 01111 Vilnius
Tel: +370.5.2498345
Fax: +370.5.2496448
E-mail: info@lvdk.w3.lt
<http://www.ldkonfederacija.lt>

Luxembourg

Chambre des Métiers du Grand Duché de Luxembourg

President: Paul RECKINGER
Director: Paul ENSCH
Circuit de la Foire Internationale 2
Boîte Postale 1604
L-1016 Luxembourg
Tel:+352.42.67.67-1
Fax:+352.42.67.87
E-mail: direction@cdm.lu
<http://www.cdm.lu>

Fédération des Artisans

President: Norbert GEISEN
Director: Romain SCHMIT
Circuit de la Foire Internationale 2
L-1016 Luxembourg
Tel:+352.42.45.11-1
Fax:+352.42.45.25
E-mail: direction@fda.lu
<http://www.fda.lu>

Malta

Malta Chamber of Small and Medium Enterprises GRTU

President: Paul ABELA
Director General: Vincent V. FARRUGIA
Exchange Building
Republic Street
M - Valletta VLT 05
Tel:+356.2123.2881
Fax:+356.2124.6925
E-mail: info@grtu.org.mt
<http://www.grtu.org.mt>

Netherlands

Koninklijke Vereniging MKB-Nederland

President: Louk HERMANS
Director: Noud van ROOIJEN
Responsible European Affairs: Benne van POPTA
Brassersplein 1, Postbus 5096
NL-2600 GB Delft
Tel:+31.152.19.12.12
Fax:+31.152.19.14.14
E-mail: popta@mkb.nl

Poland

Zwiazek Rzemioska Polskiego ZRP

President: Jerzy BARTNIK
Ul. Miodowa 14
PL-00-246 Warschau
P.O. Box 135
PL - 00-950 Warschau
Tel:+48.22.831.61.61 / 831.16.68
Fax:+48.22.50 44 220
E-mail: zrp@zrp.pl
<http://www.zrp.pl>

Portugal

Associação Industrial Portuguesa AIP

President: Jorge ROCHA DE MATOS
Secretary General: Rui FERREIRA LEITE
Vice-president: Mario SECCA
Praça das Industrias
P-1300 907 Lisboa Codex
Tel:+351.21.360.10.00
Fax:+351.21.342.94.35
E-mail (M.Secca): lrua@entrepuesto-sgps.pt
E-mail: atoregao@aip.pt

Romania

Consiliul National al Intreprinderilor Private Mici si Mijlocii din Romania CNIPMMR

President: Ovidiu NICOLESCU
General Director: Alessandro MINTAS
P-ta. W. Maracineanu nr 1-3. et.1, sector 1
RO-010155 Bucuresti
Tel:+40.21.312.68.93
Fax:+40.21.312.66.08
E-mail: office@cnipmmr.ro
<http://www.cnipmmr.ro>

Merger Group

Slovakia

Slovenský Zivnostenský Zväz SZZ

President: JUDr. Peter MASAR

Secretary General: Ing. Viola KROMEROVÁ

Racianska 71

SK- 831 02 Bratislava

Tel: +421.2.4924 6234

Fax: +421.2.4924 6653

E-mail: sekretariat@szz.sk

<http://www.szz.sk>

Slovenia

Obrtna Zbornica Slovenije OZS

President: Miroslav KLUN

Secretary General: dr. Viljem PSENICNY

Celovska 71

SLO-61000 Ljubljana

Tel:+386.1.58.30.501

Fax:+386.1.505.92.70

E-mail: janja.meglic@ozs.si

E-mail: obrtna.zbornica@ozs.si

Spain

Confederación Española de la Pequeña y Mediana Empresa CEPYME

President: D. Jesus BARCENAS LOPEZ

Secretary General: Elias APARICIO BRAVO

Diego de León 50, 8º

E-28006 Madrid

Tel:+34.91.411.61.61

Fax:+34.91.564.52.69

E-mail: secretaria@cepyme.es

Sweden

Företagarna

Företagarnas Riksorganisation

President: Jan CARLZON

Managing Director: Mrs. Gunvor ENGSTRÖM

S-10667 Stockholm

Tel:+46.8.406.17.00

Fax:+46.8.411.77.01

E-mail: christina.linderholm@foretagarna.se

<http://www.foretagarna.se>

Italy

Confederazione Autonoma Sindacati Artigiani CASA

President: Giacomo BASSO

General Secretary: Paolo MELFA

Via Flaminio Ponzio, 2

I - 00153 Roma

Tel: +39.06.57.58.081

Fax: +39.06.57.55.036

E-mail: casartigiani@tiscalinet.it

<http://www.carsartigiani.org>

Spain

Petita i Mitjana Empresa de Mallorca, Balears PIMEB

President: Francesc HORRACH I ESTARELLAS

General Secretary: Juan José DÍEZ MOYA

ParcBIT nau n° 3

camí de Ca'n Manel s/n

E - 07120 Son Espanyol (Palma)

Tel: +34.971.43.51.51

Fax: +34.971.43.51.52

E-mail: pimeb@pimeb.net

<http://www.pimeb.net>

Petita i Mitjana Empresa de Catalunya PIMEC

President: Josep GONSÁLEZ I SALA

General Secretary: Antoni CAÑETE

European responsible: Ramon VILA

Viladomat, 174

E - 08015 Barcelona

Tel: +34.93.49.64.500

Fax: +34.93.49.64.501

E-mail: pimec@pimec.es

<http://www.pimec.es>

Associate Members

Albania

KOP-CONFINCOM

President: Imir KAMBA

Secretary General: Ivis NOČKA

KOP Address:

Council of Employers' Organisations- KOP

Rr. Kavajes, Sun Tower Business Center, Nr. 29

P.O. Box 8187 Tirana - Albania

CONFINCOM Address:

Rr. Kavajes Nr. 6 (Dhoma e Tregtise)

P.O. Box 8187 Tirana - Albania

Tel/fax: +355.4.234.511

E-mail: kop-confincom@icc-al.org

Bosnia and Herzegovina

Association of Employers of B&H

President: Tomislav GRIZELJ

Secretary General: Alija-Remzo BAKSIC

Branilaca Sarajeva 14

BiH - 71000 Sarajevo

Tel: +387.33.552.470

Fax: +387.33.552.461

E-mail: apbih@bih.net.ba

Croatia

Hrvatska Obrtnicka Komora HOK

President: Stjepan ŠAFRAN

General Secretary: dr. Petar SINDICIC

Ilica 49/IIHR - 10000 Zagreb

Tel:+385.1.48.06.666

Fax:+385.1.48.46.610

E-mail: ured.predsjednika@hok.hr

Konfederacija hrvatske industrije i poduzetnika KHIP

Confederation of Croatian Industry and Entrepreneurs CCIE

President: Ivan PARADŽIK

Director: Anastazija SORI" URANI"

Masarykova 22/1

HR - 10000 Zagreb

Tel:+385.1.4815.001

Fax:+385.1.4815.006

E-mail: anastazija@konfederacija.hr

E-mail: konfederacija@konfederacija.hr

<http://www.konfederacija.hr>

Liechtenstein

Gewerbe- und Wirtschaftskammer des Fürstentum Liechtenstein GWK

President : Arnold MATT

General Manager : Wolfgang STRUNK

Zollstrasse 23

FL-9494 Schaan

Tel: +423.237.77.88

Fax: +423.237.77.89

E-mail: wstrunk@gwk.li

E-mail general information: gwk@gwk.li

Liechtenstein

President address:

Purtscher 665

FL-9493 Mauren

Tel: +423.377.19.40

Fax: +423.377.19.45

E-mail: mdm@matt-druck.li

Norway

The Norwegian Federation of Craft Enterprises HBL

Director: Harry BJERKENG

Middelthunsgt. 27

N - 0303 Oslo

Tel:+47 2308 8760

Fax:+47 2308 8763

E-mail: harry.bjerkeng@hbl.no

San Marino

Unione Nazionale Artigiani della Repubblica di San Marino UNAS

President: Gian Franco TERENCE
Secretary: Alberto CHEZZI
Vice-President: Giorgio BATTISTINI
Segretario Generale: Pio UGOLINI
Piazzale Giangi, 2
RSM - Città Rep. San Marino
Tel:+378.99.21.48
Fax:+378.99.28.37
E-mail: info@unas.sm

Serbia

Serbian association of small and medium enterprises SASME

President: Velimir VUKADIN
Secretary General: Stanco PEVAC
General Secretary Deputy: Jelena BOZOVIC
Cara Nikolaja II / 59
SRB - 11 000 Beograd
Tel: +381 11 344 26 72
Fax: +381 11 245 19 97
E-mail: vukadin@srb-smeasoc.org
<http://www.srb-smeasoc.org>

Turkey

Türkiye Esnaf ve Sanatçıları Konfederasyonu TESK

President: Dervis GÜNDAY
Secretary General: Naci SULKALAR
Tunus Caddesi no:4
Bakanliklar
TR-06680 Ankara
Tel:+90.312.418.32.69.70.10
Fax:+90.312.425.88.97
E-mail: disismd@tesk.org.tr

European Sectoral Organisations

European Federation of Accountants and Auditors for SME's EFAA

President: Federico DIOMEDA
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tel:+32.2.736.88.86
Fax:+32.2.736.29.64
E-mail: info@efaa.com
<http://www.efaa.com>

European Metal Union / Union Européenne du Métal EMU

President: Klaus DANN
Responsible for Secretariat: Agnieszka MAKIEL
SOUDE
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B - 1040 Bruxelles
Tel:+32.2.282.05.32
Fax:+32.2.282.05.35
E-mail: a.makiel@normapme.com

European Federation of Chimney-Sweeps ESCHFÖ

President: Hans-Günther BEYERSTEDT
Westerwaldstr. 6
D-53757 Sankt Augustin
Tel:+49.2241.34.07.0
Fax:+49.2241.34.07.10
E-mail: ziv-steinebach@schornsteinfeger.de

International Association of Building Service Contractors FIDEN

President: Hans ZIEGLE
Secretary General: Laurent WESTERMEYR
c/o Westermeyr & Lerg
Richard-Wagner-Straße 19
D-80333 München
Tel:+49.89.52.30.40.30
Fax:+49.89.52.30.40.50
E-mail: westermeyr@fiden.org

**Fédération Internationale du Métiers de Couvreur
IFD**

President: Sandor HORVATH
Secretary General: Detlef STAUCH
Fritz-Reuter Str. 1
D-50968 Köln
Tel:+49.221.398.038.0
Fax:+49.221.398.038.99
E-mail: zvdh@dachdecker.de

**Génie Climatique International - Ass. Suisse des
Maîtres Ferblantiers et Appareilleurs
GCI-UICP**

President: Jean ROUGNON
Executive Secretary: Oliver LOEBEL
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tél:+32.2.285.07.27
Fax:+32.2.230.78.61
E-mail: contact@ceetb.org

European Builders Confederation EBC

President: Jean LARDIN
Secretary General: Agnès THIBAUT
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tel:+32.2.514.23.23
Fax:+32.2.514.00.15
E-mail: agnes.thibault@eubuilders.org

**Comité Européen des Equipements Techniques
du Bâtiment CEETB**

President: Jean ROUGNON
Secretary General: Oliver LOEBEL
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tel:+32.2.285.07.27
Fax:+32.2.230.78.61
E-mail: contact@ceetb.org

**European Caravan Federation ECF
C/o Caravaning Industrie Verband e. V.**

President: François FEUILLET
Secretary General: Hans-Karl STERNBERG
Königsberger Straße 27
D-60487 Frankfurt am Main
Tel:+49.69704039-0
Fax:+49.69704039-23
E-mail: info@e-c-f.com
<http://www.e-c-f.com>

European Federation of Funeral Services EFFS

President: Wolfgang ZOCHER
General Secretary: Peter SKYBA
Obere Donaustrasse, 53
A-1020 Vienna
Tel:+43.1.717.37-6236
Fax:+43.1.710.58.96
E-mail: office@effs.at

**Confédération Européenne des Professionnelles de
l'Esthétique Cosmétique CEPEC**

President: Michèle LAMOUREUX
General Secretary: Magda MAGRI NAUDI
64, rue de la Briquetterie
F - 17000 La Rochelle
Tel: +33.5.46.41.69.79
Fax: +33.5.46.42.25.96
E-mail: info@cnaib.fr

European Standard Travel Agent ESTAR

President: Joseph REITINGER-LASKA
Hermannsgasse 33
A-1070 Vienna
Tel: +43.1.522.80.45
Fax: +43.1.522.80.48
E-mail: contitravel@reiseweb.at

**Association Internationale des Réparateurs en
Carrosserie A.I.R.C.**

President: Armand RAHTS
General Secretary: Jan KOOLEN
Warmonderweg 1-5
NL - 2171 AH Sassenheim
Tel: +31.252.565.222
Fax: +31.252.265.255
E-mail: secretariat@airc-int.org

**Confédération Européenne des organisations nationales de la Boulangerie et de la Pâtisserie
CEBP**

President: Jacques van de VALL
General Secretary: Dr. Eberhard GROEBEL
Tweekerkenstraat 21
B - 9620 Zottegem
Tel: +32.9.360.99.62
E-mail: w.claes@scarlet.be

**Union Internationale des Entrepreneurs de Peinture
UNIEP**

President: Jürgen HINZ
Responsible for Secretariat: Ludger FISCHER
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B - 1040 Bruxelles
E-mail: malerhinz@t-online.de
E-mail: l.fischer@ueapme.com
<http://www.uniep.org>

European Construction Wood Federation

President: Georg KÖNIG
Secretary General: Jeannot FRANCK
2 Circuit de la Foire Internationale
L - 1347 Luxembourg-Kirchberg
Tel: +352.42.45.11
Fax: +352.42.45.25
E-mail: j.franck@fda.lu

EuroWindowor

President: Libero RAVAIOLI
Secretary General: Ulrich TSCHORN
Walter-Kolb-Straße 1-7
D - 60594 Frankfurt
Tel: +49.69.95.50.54-0
Fax: +49.69.95.50.5411
E-mail: EuroWindowor-GS@window.de
www.eurowindowor.org

**Federation of European Tile-fixers' Associations
EUF**

Secretary General: Werner ALTMAYER
Kolbenholz 4-6
D - 66121 Saarbrücken
Tel: +49.681.9356520
Fax: +49.681.9356519
E-mail: info@eufgs.com
<http://www.eufgs.com>

Group of European Craft Trades in the Health-care Sector

International and European Federation of European Dental Laboratory Owners FEPPD

President: Jürgen SCHWICHTENBERG
General Secretary: Michel REY
Chief Executive: Nancy PAULUSSEN
Rue Jacques de Lalaing 4
B-1040 Bruxelles
Tel: +32.2.238.05.73
Fax: +32.2.230.50.27
E-mail: feppd@kmonet.org
<http://www.feppd.org>

International Association of Orthotists and Prosthetists INTERBOR

President: Edmond DESCHOOLMEESTER
Secretary General: Bernd WÜNSCHMANN
Tulpenlaan 21
B - 2550 Kontich
Tel: +32.475.60.54.03
Fax: +32.15.31.01.41
E-mail: edmond.deschoolmeester@eds-orthopedie.be
<http://www.interbor.org>

OTHER ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

BALKANS

**Mittelstandsbüro Balkan
Handwerkskammer Koblenz**

President: Ibrahim ALAGIC
President: Karl-Jürgen WILBERT
Alabin Str. 16-20
BG - 1000 Sofia
Tel: +359.2.980.99.16
Tel/Fax: +359.2.981.21.34
E-mail: hgf@hwk-koblenz.de
E-mail: wassilev@bia-bg.com

EUROPE

Jeunes Entrepreneurs de l'Union Européenne JEUNE

President: Elena PELLASCHIAR

Secretary General: Maria CIMAGLIA

Task Manager: Rosa SOLANES

4, Rue Jacques de Lalaing

B-1040 Bruxelles

Tel:+32.2.230.75.99

Fax:+32.2.230.78.61

E-mail: m.cimaglia@ueapme.com

E-mail: r.solan@ueapme.com

<http://www.jeune-pme.eu>

Female Europeans of Medium and Small Enterprises FEM

President: Giovanna POLITANO BOSCHIS

Responsible for Secretariat: Doris RABETGE

4, Rue Jacques de Lalaing

B-1040 Bruxelles

Tel:+32.2.285.07.14

Fax:+32.2.230.78.61

E-mail: d.rabetge@ueapme.com

<http://www.fem-pme.com>

FRANCE

Banque Fédérale des Banques Populaires

Directeur Marché des Professionnels: Claude
FORGET

Le Ponant de Paris

5, rue Leblanc

F-75511 Paris cedex 15

Tel:+33.1.40.39.69.30

Fax:+33.1.53.78.78.88

E-mail: claudе.forget@bfbp.banquepopulaire.fr

E-mail: michele.hanquet@bfbp.banquepopulaire.fr

GERMANY

SIGNAL IDUNA Gruppe

Unternehmensverbindungen Handwerk, Handel
und Gewerbe

Director: Herrn Joachim KRUMM

Joseph-Scherer Str. 3

D-44193 Dortmund

Tel:+49.231.135.0

Fax:+49.231.135.4638

E-mail: marianne.schellenberg@signal-iduna.de

www.signal-iduna.de

ITALY

Artigiancassa

President: Lino POMPILI

General Director: Gian-Franco VERZARO

Via Crescenzo dal Monte, 25

I-00100 Roma

Tel:+39.06.584.51

Fax:+39.06.589.96.72

E-mail: gianfranco.verzaro@artigiancassa.it

Fedart Fidi

President: Roberto Villa

Co-ordinator: Tino Vaccai

Contact: Franco Cruciani

Via Labicana, 110

I-00184 Roma

tel: +39.06.772.67.51

tel: +39.06.772.675.226

tel: +39.06.772.675.228

fax:+39.06.772.03.185

E-mail: info@fedartfidi.it

<http://www.fedartfidi.it>

LUXEMBOURG

Mutualité d'aide aux Artisans

President: Jos MOUSEL

Administrator: Théo HOLLERICH

58, rue Glesener

L - 1630 Luxembourg

Tel: +352.48.91.61-1

Fax: +352.48.71.21

E-mail: maa@groupec3.lu

<http://www.groupec3.lu>

UNITED KINGDOM

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants ACCA

Chief Executive Officer: Allan BLEWITT

29 Lincoln's Inn Fields

London WC2A 3EE

UK

Tel: +44.207.059.50.00

Fax: +44.207.059.50.50

E-mail: jonsonv@accaglobal.com

<http://www.accaglobal.com>

UEAPME BOARD OF DIRECTORS, 2006

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Paul Reckinger

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Director European Affairs of MKB-Nederland

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President of Håndværksrådet

Karel Van Eetvelt

Managing Director, UNIZO

Dario Visconti

President, CONFARTIGIANATO Milano

