

UEAPME Newsflash

Debate tackles remaining barriers to the internal market

Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke at a debate on “the Czech Presidency and barriers to the internal market” organised by CEBRE in Brussels on 28 January. In the present economic downturn, the first priority of the Czech Presidency should be to start the recovery process and put in practice the Small Business Act principles, stressed Mr Hendrickx. The implementation of the Services Directive will also be crucial for the future of the internal market. Member States must devote their energy not only to internal transposition matters, but also to the creation of cross-border cooperation structures to put in practice the directive's aims and clauses. Another persisting barrier is the lack of a real internal market for insurance services at affordable prices, which drives many SMEs away from going cross-border. Moreover, better regulation will be key for an SME-friendly internal market, including an improved transposition of EU rules, enhanced enforcement and more cross-border cooperation. Mr Hendrickx also commented on the upcoming rules on accounting, which must ensure a level playing field, on late payments, which must cover B2C, and on free movement of labour, stating that UEAPME is in favour of lifting all restrictions. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

SMEs welcome new rules on VAT easing e-invoicing use

The European Commission adopted on 28 January a proposal to change the existing “VAT Directive” in respect of the invoicing rules. The aim is to reduce burdens on businesses, increase the use of electronic invoicing and help Member States tackle fraud. In particular, the proposal eliminates the current barriers to e-invoicing in the VAT Directive by treating paper and electronic invoices equally. UEAPME welcomed the new text, which will pave the way to making cross-border e-invoicing a reality. According to UEAPME, the text is largely in line with the comments put forward by the organisation during the consultation process last year. Recent studies suggest that an electronic system integrating invoicing, accounting and payments would save businesses 200 billion EUR a year. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

UEAPME staff speak as part of WKÖ training programme

UEAPME staff members Iris Marlovits, Dieter Grohmann and Gerhard Huemer spoke on 29 January to a delegation of middle-management staff from WKÖ, the Austrian Economic Chamber, visiting Brussels on a training programme designed to foster their knowledge of the EU institutions and to improve competence on EU matters in the organisation. After two weeks of theory in Austria, participants spent this week in Brussels to get a better picture of how the EU arena works in practice. During the meeting with UEAPME staff, Gerhard Huemer introduced the organisation, its history and its main achievements in the past years. He also elaborated on the current economic crisis and on the stance taken by UEAPME. Iris Marlovits spoke about the SME FIT II project that she is currently managing, as well as on her policy dossiers such as transport. Finally, Dieter Grohmann spoke about the role of communications staff to support and to frame UEAPME's policy messages. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

From Andrea Benassi's agenda: Rome, Paris, Brussels

26/01: Mr Benassi attended a high level congress organised in Naples by our Italian member Confesercenti on “measures to re-launch the real economy”, with particular reference to territorial development. The meeting was attended by State Secretary for Labour **Pasquale Viespoli** and Confesercenti Vice President **Massimo Vivoli**. In the afternoon, he met Commissioner **Vladimir Spidla** in Rome to discuss about the European Social Fund and the measures that SMEs are expecting to tackle the economic crisis. He also met representatives of the Italian government in a private visit.

27/01: In Brussels, Mr Benassi met a delegation from Confartigianato Brescia led by President **GiovanMaria Rizzi** for a lunch at the European Parliament with MEP **Francesco Ferrari**. He then met the new CEEP Vice President **Massimo Massella** to discuss about future cooperation between the two organisations.

28/01: In Paris, Mr Benassi attended a full honours ceremony for APCM Secretary General **François Moutot**, who was awarded the “Légion d'Honneur” from the French Senate President Gérard Larcher. The well-attended ceremony featured participants from APCM, the municipality of Thoiry (of which Mr Moutot is Mayor), colleagues from his political party, ENA, and government witnessing all the steps of his bright career.

29/01: In Brussels again, Mr Benassi met the SME Envoy **Françoise Le Bail** to discuss the main measures that the European Commission is about to launch following the approval of the Small Business Act and of the European Recovery Plan.

➤ For questions on Mr Benassi's agenda, please contact the [UEAPME Secretariat](#)

KEY EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Business/University Forum \(05-06/02, Brussels\)](#)
- [Roundtable debate on CSR \(09/02, Brussels\)](#)
- [Multistakeholder Forum on CSR \(10/02, Brussels\)](#)
- [Policy café on the Small Business Act \(11/02, Brussels\)](#)
- [First European SME Week \(06-14/05, Brussels\)](#)

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