

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Tangible changes witnessed in social dialogue in CEECs

Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke today at the final conference of a joint EU-funded project by UEAPME, BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP and ETUC to support social partners in Central and Eastern European Countries (CEEC) and candidate countries to engage in effective dialogue at national and EU level. Strong and autonomous partners are a precondition for this to happen, said Mr Benassi. However, several SME organisations lack human and financial resources as well as experience in bipartite dialogue. They also struggle to be recognised as a full-fledged social partner, either by the government or other social partners according to the industrial relations system in place. Funding for capacity building in regions lagging behind is available via the European Social Fund, but it is not easily accessible and can only be granted to existing social partners. This vicious circle must be broken, and SME organisations must have access to ESF funds in order to become stronger and act as social partners. While significant progress was made recently, also thanks to this project, much remains to be done, he concluded. [Read more](#) or contact [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Labour markets: supply and demand must be matched

The 16th Employment Week took place in Brussels on 24-25 June. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke at the event at a session on the "social cost of change". All stakeholders, from social partners to governments and individuals, should share the responsibility to find adequate solutions to the economic crisis, said Mr Hendrickx. As far as SMEs are concerned, this means acting both on the demand and on the supply side of labour markets. On the demand side, entrepreneurship must be further promoted and access to finance must be secured so that SMEs are able to create and maintain jobs. In fact, having a job is still the best protection from social exclusion and other negative social consequences associated with the crisis, stressed Mr Hendrickx. On the supply side, the labour market participation rate must be raised and low skilled individuals must be better integrated, for instance by cutting non wage labour costs at the low end of the salary scale. Education and training systems must be more efficient and more responsive to labour market needs, continued Mr Hendrickx. Finally, demand and supply must be better matched: small enterprises still have unfilled vacancies as they cannot find workers with the rights skills set. This is a missed opportunity, especially in these crisis times, he concluded. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## EESC urged to monitor implementation of recovery plans

Economic and Fiscal Policy Director Gerhard Huemer spoke alongside colleagues from Eurochambres and BUSINESSEUROPE at a meeting of the SME category of the European Economic and Social Committee's employers group in Brussels on 25 June. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the current economic crisis and the state of play of the European economic recovery plans. SMEs are increasingly concerned about the present downturn, which is now spreading to all economic sectors, as well as with the wave of mass redundancies that is likely to hit Europe in the autumn, said Mr Huemer, who presented a document outlining the [SME priorities](#) against the crisis that UEAPME prepared for the Swedish EU Presidency. Against this background, small businesses clearly appreciate the efforts by the Committee to prioritise SME policy in Europe, especially in relation with the Small Business Act and the recovery plans. Committee members can play a crucial role when it comes to monitoring the implementation phase of these dossiers, he concluded. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Forum tackles impact of climate change on employment

The European Commission organised the very first [Forum on the Impact of Climate Change on Employment](#) this week. Environment Policy Director Guido Lena spoke in a roundtable on the role of social partners in climate change policies. It is very hard to predict how climate change will affect employment, said Mr Lena. Although the overall levels are likely to remain stable, it is clear that jobs will be re-distributed across regions and sectors. Employment in construction, for instance, is likely to grow due to the legislation to reduce emissions and increase energy efficiency and to the use of renewables in buildings. Conversely, sectors such as road transport are likely to witness a fall in workforce because of the legislation to reduce emissions, noise and traffic and to switch transport from road to rail. Subcontractors to larger industries subject to stricter environmental rules are likely to be indirectly affected, he stressed. Problematic sectors should be promptly identified and supported, while winning sectors must be enabled to deploy their economic potential. Social partners will play a key role because of the major structural changes in employment due to climate change and flanking policies. Companies and workforce will need to adapt, notably in terms of future skill needs on the labour market, he concluded. Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

## Social partners discuss restructuring in Portugal

A seminar on the role of social partners in restructuring and anticipating change took place in Lisbon this week. The event is part of a series of seminars organised by the European Social Partners in the framework of their work programme and as part of a project that has covered most of the EU Member States. The Portuguese Social Partners discussed a draft national dossier prepared by an expert. In particular, they exchanged views on the present economic situation and on the structural reforms needed to anticipate and manage change. The role played by micro enterprises and their significant employment share in the Portuguese economy was also highlighted, as well as the necessity to further work on their specific needs in case of restructuring. The final results of the various seminars will be presented and discussed in a synthesis report comparing and contrasting the roles of social partners in managing change during a final conference in Brussels in 2010. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

**BSP III project: aims and activities showcased in Munich**

Project Manager Iris Marlovits spoke in Munich last week at the final conference of a project on environmental certifications and CSR funded by the EC BSP III programme and run by a consortium featuring UEAPME members CONFAPI and FIDEN. Her presentation dealt with the [SME FIT II project](#) that UEAPME is leading under the same budget heading and that will soon come to a close. Partners now enjoy highly trained and specialised staff in key areas of the EU acquis, provide outstanding services for their members and can use a wide expert network for their own lobbying and networking activities. All partners would participate in a theoretical BSP IV, which shows the success of the current project. [Read more](#) or contact [Iris Marlovits](#)

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