

# UEAPME Newsflash

## SMEs comment on upcoming Environmental Action Plan

UEAPME sent this week its comments to the European Commission on the 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme for 2002-2012. The organisation stressed that the programme does not take into account the challenges facing SMEs in complying with environmental policies. These are further compounded by recent EU strategies and flagship initiatives aiming at a more sustainable Europe, which represent a revolution in the way SMEs have to manufacture their products and provide their services. SMEs need a smooth transition towards these new production and service provision methods, wrote UEAPME. Therefore, the upcoming Environmental Action Plan should set up a favourable framework to allow SMEs to take up the challenge of a resource-efficient economy, in line with the SBA review. It should also integrate a revised and reinforced Environmental Compliance and Assistance Programme (ECAP), with a higher profile at both EU and national level, concluded UEAPME. [Read more](#) or contact [Rosa Solanes](#)

## Future of SME finance after new rules discussed in Vienna

Economic and Fiscal Policy Director Gerhard Huemer spoke this week in Vienna at a [conference on business finance in the new regulatory framework](#) organised by the think tank European Forum Alpbach. It is clear that a number of regulations on financial markets currently under discussion and the new “Basel III” rules are likely to increase financing costs for SMEs. On the other hand, these regulatory changes are needed to prevent a new crisis, which would be even costlier, he stressed. Commenting on [our views on the next generation of European SME finance programmes](#), he said that tailored solutions for the diverse needs of different SMEs must be found. Companies depending on loans will need public support in form of guarantees to face tougher credit conditions. On the other hand, improving the availability of equity finance and products capable of carrying more risks could drag SMEs out of the “loan trap” and provide them with alternative ways of financing unavailable at the moment. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## European Private Company statute must be reserved to SMEs

Legal Affairs Counsel Maria Cimaglia spoke last week at a [conference on international commercial and company law](#) organised by the German Lawyers’ Academy in Brussels. Her panel dealt specifically with the plans for a European Private Company (EPC) statute. The EPC must be reserved exclusively to businesses fulfilling the EU definition of small and medium-sized enterprise. Companies operating solely outside of the EU territory, large corporations and their subsidiaries must not be considered, she stressed. Doing otherwise would trigger the insertion of requirements, for instance on employee participation, that are not adapted to the reality of “proper” SMEs. Consequently, the EPC statute would become more demanding, less flexible and less likely to be endorsed by small enterprises. Moreover, references to national law may be needed when it comes to specific aspects such as criminal and fiscal law, but they should be kept to a minimum to ensure a truly EU-wide instrument, she concluded. Contact: [Maria Cimaglia](#)

## Food experts oppose EC plans on direct and local sales

The UEAPME Food Forum met in Brussels this week. Participants were updated by Michael Erhart from the European Commission’s DG Agriculture on direct sales and local sales, which the EC wants to further promote mainly via support to farmers. Our experts strongly disagreed with these plans, stressing that they must take into account all businesses in rural areas, where SMEs in particular guarantee a well structured food supply with good educated staff. Farmers’ shops, direct marketing and similar initiatives can only be regarded as an additional food supply chain, they warned. Participants then discussed the upcoming vote at the European Parliament on food labelling, supporting amendments aiming to delete the mandatory declaration for defrosted food. Also on the agenda were food price monitoring, the use of ICT tools in the food supply chain and an update by our experts on a number of food-related standards. Contact: [Ludger Fischer](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Brussels Economic Forum 2011](#) (18/05, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- [“SME-TraiNet” conference](#) (Warsaw, 18-19/05, contact [Dorota Chmielewska](#))
- [SBA conference “Mobilising SMEs for the Future of Europe”](#) (Budapest, 24-25/05, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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