

# UEAPME Newsflash

## EU Social Partners meet Barroso on youth unemployment

Secretary General Andrea Benassi participated this week to a meeting between the European Commission's President José Manuel Barroso and the European Social Partners on youth unemployment and the "Youth Opportunities Initiative". He recalled the key role of SMEs as job creators, calling for all measures on youth unemployment to be targeted to suit the special needs of small and medium-sized companies and for actions to be taken both on the functioning of labour markets and on education and training policies. The best performers for young people at work are countries with work-based learning, and notably well established and functioning VET systems based on apprenticeship and demand-led by the economy, continued Mr Benassi, who also called for more support for young people willing to become entrepreneurs. Concrete solutions will mainly be found at national and regional level and will require a strong involvement of the social partners at all levels, concluded Mr Benassi. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## National SME Envoys' Network warned against exemptions

The European Commission organised the second meeting of the recently established Network of national SME Envoys this week in Luxembourg. Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke at the event, stressing the strategic importance of the network for all SME-related dossiers. Commenting on the issue of exemptions for micro enterprises currently being discussed, Mr Benassi warned that what they actually need is a thorough application of the "Think Small First" principle, which would rule out the need to exempt companies from legislation in the vast majority of cases. Mr Benassi also spoke against the suggestions made by the EC on the "reverse burden of proof", i.e. a general exemption of micro companies from legislation unless the proportionality of their being covered can be demonstrated. In fact, if a piece of legislation is not needed by micro companies then most probably it is not needed at all, concluded Mr Benassi, who also spoke against widening the current European SME definition. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## SME finance: EU instruments must cater to diverse needs

The European Investment Fund and the European Commission organised a workshop on the EU financial instruments for SME competitiveness and innovation this week in Luxembourg. Speaking at the event, Secretary General Andrea Benassi stressed that SMEs are very diverse, ranging from traditional family businesses to high-tech and fast growing enterprises and start-ups. The next generation of EU financial instruments must cover the whole range and provide tailored support for each company type. Credit and loan guarantee schemes are needed for traditional SMEs, while start-ups and innovative enterprises should have better access to equity and quasi-equity financial instruments such as "mezzanine finance". Tools such as securitisation are also needed to increase the margin for banks to lend to SMEs. The "Debt and Equity Platform" set up by EIF and EC is a welcome initiative that can help to ensure coherence for SME funding in the various programmes, concluded Mr Benassi. [Read more](#) or contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Experts assess opportunities for SMEs in new cohesion policy

UEAPME and the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) co-organised a meeting on the opportunities arising from structural funds for crafts and SMEs this week in Brussels. Experts from the Commission, the Parliament and the EESC discussed with UEAPME representatives the proposals recently made by the EC in the field. The debate also touched upon the issue of administrative simplification. Opening the event, Secretary General Andrea Benassi stressed the need to fully apply the SBA principles to regional policy and recalled the [105 measures on simplification](#) put forward by UEAPME in 2010. He also called for the participation of economic and social actors in the decision making process at every level by fully applying the "horizontal subsidiarity" principle. The recent EC proposals are overall very positive for SMEs as they take many requests on board, said Mr Benassi, but it will be crucial to ensure collaboration with SMEs and their organisations and to secure adequate funding, he concluded. Contact: [Hubert Delorme](#)

## Capital requirements must not harm trade & SME finance

UEAPME and Barclays Bank organised this week a roundtable discussion on the implementation in the EU of the "Basel III" rules on capital requirements. Speaking at the event, which took place at the European Parliament in Brussels and was hosted by the SME Circle President Bendt Bendtsen MEP, Economic and Fiscal Policy Director Gerhard Huemer stressed that funding from banks is and is likely to remain the most important source of external finance for SME in the EU. Therefore, it is crucial to ensure that the new rules for capital requirements under discussion at the EP do not hamper this funding channel. In particular, Mr Huemer called for the immediate revision of the current risk weights for SME loans. The liquidity ratios suggested by the Commission are too restrictive and could jeopardise the long-term financing culture, he also warned. Moreover, guarantee schemes and public support schemes must allow capital relief for banks to fulfil their purpose, he concluded. [Read more](#) or contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Review of EU standardization system must empower SMEs

Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke this week in Brussels at a breakfast meeting on the ongoing review of the EU standardization system organised by the SME Intergroup of the European Parliament. Mr Benassi stressed that the "Think Small First" principle should be fully applied to the process, to ensure that SMEs are informed about the benefits of standards and that they are enabled to apply them. Standards must always be market-relevant, accessible for SMEs and as user-friendly as possible. A sound financial basis for the activities of NORMAPME is needed to achieve these goals and to secure that SMEs are properly represented in the various technical committees where standards are discussed and elaborated, he concluded. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Stakeholders discuss SEPA changeover and governance

Economic and Fiscal Policy Director Gerhard Huemer participated this week in Brussels to a meeting of the Stakeholders Forum of the [European Payments Council](#), the decision-making and coordination body of the European banking industry in relation to payments. Participants discussed different aspects related to SEPA, the Single Euro Payments Area in which credit transfers, debt transfers and payment card services across the EU will be subject to the same basic conditions. On the agenda were the rule books for credit transfers and direct debit under SEPA, as well as the consequences on rule books and national migration plans of the recently agreed regulation on end dates, which foresees a changeover to SEPA rules by the end of 2014. The [governance](#) of SEPA was also on the agenda. On this topic, Mr Huemer warned that the SEPA Council co-chaired by EC and European Central Bank will only reach reasonable conclusions if its meetings are better prepared in advance at technical level. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Lunch debate: "From Basel III to alternative sources of funding"](#) (09/02, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- [ERA conference on the Common European Sales Law](#) (Trier, 09-10/02, contact [Dora Szentpaly-Kleis](#))

### SUBSCRIBE / UNSUBSCRIBE / PAST ISSUES

To subscribe to, unsubscribe from or read and download all the issues of the UEAPME Newsflash, please visit the following link: <http://www.ueapme.com/spip.php?rubrique14>