

UEAPME Newsflash

European Council: SMEs pleased with focus on growth

Heads of State and Government met in Brussels this week for an informal European Council. In a [statement](#), they singled out the completion of the single market, access to finance and youth unemployment as key issues to tackle to promote growth in the EU. UEAPME was pleased with the timely choice of topics. On the single market, it stressed that more can and should be done to facilitate the activities of companies operating across EU Member States, starting by the Community patent. On youth unemployment, the organisation called for actions to be taken on the functioning of the labour market on one side and on education and training systems on the other. Finally, on SME finance, the next generation of EU financial instruments must cover the whole range of SMEs and provide tailored support for each company type, warned UEAPME, which also called for corrective measures in the new EU rules for capital requirements. [Read more](#)

Common Sales Law for the EU: UEAPME issues remarks

UEAPME published this week two position papers with its [general](#) and [specific](#) remarks on the Common Sales Law for the EU. While supporting the Commission's intention to boost cross-border sales in the single market, UEAPME stressed that the commercial reality of SMEs was not properly taken into account. SMEs will have to assess whether to use the optional common sales law or the national law of the country in which they plan to do business anyway. Coupled with the complexity of the optional instrument, this means that small companies will still have to contact a lawyer and incur in extra legal costs. As no costs will be saved, it is doubtful whether such an instrument will make the cross-border activities of SMEs easier and more attractive, wrote UEAPME, which also commented on the relation of the new instrument with the "Rome I" regulation and on the impact assessment accompanying the EC proposal. Contact: [Dora Szentpaly-Kleis](#)

EC plans to exempt micro companies are a step too far

UEAPME published this week a position paper on a report recently published by the European Commission on "Minimising regulatory burden for SMEs – Adapting EU regulation to the needs of micro-enterprises". While supporting the efforts by the Commission and by Member States to achieve a better regulation and cut red tape, UEAPME warned that the "reverse burden of proof" suggested by the EC, by which "micro-entities should be excluded from the scope of the proposed legislation unless the proportionality of their being covered can be demonstrated", is a step too far. Although a simplification of procedures for micro companies may be useful on a case by case basis, 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, concluded the organisation. [Read more](#) or contact [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Macroeconomic Dialogue: mobilise private demand, say SMEs

Economic and Fiscal Policy Director Gerhard Huemer participated this week in Brussels to a technical meeting of the Macroeconomic Dialogue between ECB, Commission, Council and European Social Partners. Participants discussed the economic outlook and the measures recently taken against the economic crisis. On the Annual Growth Survey recently presented by the Commission, Mr Huemer welcomed the focus not only on austerity measures but also on the need to stimulate growth and private investments, a point that was also taken on board by the European Council this week (*see above*). However, he expressed worries about Member States' lack of commitment and ownership, as many country-specific recommendations were not taken up. Anticipating the results of our upcoming Craft and SME Barometer, Mr Huemer warned that the situation is declining for SMEs as austerity measures are hitting private demand, calling for structural reforms to mobilise again private spending. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

"Erasmus for all": SMEs call for earmarked budget for VET

UEAPME published this week its [position](#) on the "Erasmus for all" programme proposed by the European Commission. The organisation agreed with its aims, praising also the simplified structure and streamlined architecture of the proposal. However, it pointed out a number of key shortcomings, notably the absence of a fixed minimum budget earmarked for vocational education and training (VET) and the lack of identification of apprentices as a separate target group in VET. UEAPME requested more recognition for the specific role of social partners at a political and operational level, as well as the role of SMEs and crafts in the learning mobility of apprentices, including for the sending and hosting mobility. The role of networks and partnerships of intermediary bodies for quality learning mobility of apprentices sent and hosted by smaller businesses must also be acknowledged and supported, wrote UEAPME, which asked to extend VET mobility to international mobility schemes, as for higher education. Contact: [Helen Hoffmann](#)

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](#))

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