

UEAPME Newsflash

Occupational pensions must remain attractive, say SMEs

The European Commission presented this week a [White Paper](#) setting out an agenda for adequate, safe and sustainable pensions. UEAPME agreed with the Commission on the need to work longer by creating a better balance between time spent in work and retirement, as well as for individuals to save more by developing complementary private retirement savings. However, the organisation expressed concerns about the announced revision of the rules regulating and supervising the so-called Institutions for Occupational Retirement Provision (IORP), such as pension funds. The review must not make these schemes more expensive and less attractive, warned UEAPME. Doing otherwise would discourage small businesses from offering supplementary pension schemes to their employees, making it increasingly difficult for them to attract the skilled workforce they need. Moreover, the debate on the portability of pension rights should focus on the removal of tax and fiscal obstacles. [Read more](#) or contact [Helen Hoffmann](#)

Innovation support services for SMEs discussed at the EC

The European Commission's DG Enterprise organised a workshop on how to improve innovation support for SMEs this week in Brussels. Commenting on the results of a [study](#) recently completed on behalf of the EC, Economic and Fiscal Policy Gerhard Huemer remarked that access to R&D and technology was not singled out as one of the key barriers to innovation in SMEs. This means that enough is being done in this respect, he stressed. Conversely, the issue of qualifications was not among the top barriers but should have been, continued Mr Huemer, as qualified staff is a precondition for the way SMEs innovate. Moreover, the study's chapter on access to finance focuses excessively on venture capital. This means that too much attention is still put on larger, fast-growing enterprises and not on how the average SME innovates, concluded Mr Huemer. At the same workshop, Gertraud Leimüller from our Austrian member WKÖ spoke on the role and views of non-technological innovators. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Audits can provide added value but must remain optional

Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke this week in Brussels at a conference on the quality of external audit jointly organised by auditors' associations from Belgium, France and the Netherlands. His panel dealt specifically with stakeholders' expectations. SMEs are generally speaking very satisfied with the services provided by auditors and believe that the relationship with their auditors must be based on mutual trust and knowledge, said Mr Hendrickx. The compulsory rotation of auditors suggested by the EC could damage this relationship, he stressed. The roles of the auditor and of the owner-manager are clearly defined, continued Mr Hendrickx. Although the auditor must be familiar with the functioning of an enterprise, the economic and financial management of the enterprise is an exclusive task of the business manager. Finally, while recognising their added value for SMEs, audits should remain an option for small enterprises rather than becoming compulsory. [Read more](#) or contact [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Brussels Tax Forum 2012](#) (05-06/03, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))

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