

UEAPME Newsflash

UK referendum is a wake-up call for Europe

Following the results of the referendum vote, UEAPME regrets UK citizens' decision to support the Brexit. However, this decision needs to be respected. The "leave" outcome will be detrimental for both the UK and the other European countries, especially for European SMEs, in their efforts towards jobs and growth. For UEAPME, the referendum has made it clear that the EU has to improve its performance. First and foremost, bureaucracy has to be substantially reduced for all SMEs in all EU countries. UEAPME will support the European Institutions and continue to contribute to this objective with constructive proposals. Also, UEAPME will continue to collaborate with SMEs in the United Kingdom in order to maintain business ties.

Contact: [Jenny Manin](#)

SME Dialogue with Trade Unions continues

After a first meeting between President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller and [ETUC](#) Secretary General Luca Visentini earlier in spring, the Secretary Generals of both associations and their teams met to continue the newly established EU SME Dialogue. The aim of the dialogue is to better explain SME problems and needs to other stakeholders, identify joint interests and develop common ground. The aim being to come up with pragmatic win-win solutions for both sides. The main areas discussed at the meeting were the better regulation agenda and consultation processes, undeclared work, health and safety, wage negotiations for SME sectors, and EFSI.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Consultations: VP Timmermans replies to UEAPME complaints

EC Vice-President Frans Timmermans [replied](#) to UEAPME's complaints regarding stakeholder consultations, expressed in a [letter](#) sent to him in May. Although his reply remained vague and did not really answer the concrete complaints concerning the compulsory use of unadapted questionnaires, Mr Timmermans announced improvements in this field. While recognising the right of all citizens to communicate in their own language, the Commission does not intend to publish all consultations in all languages for budgetary reasons. However, UEAPME views this position as unacceptable.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Social dialogue still at the top of EU social partners' agenda

The finalisation of a quadripartite statement on "A new start for Social Dialogue" was approved by UEAPME Social Affairs Committee members as well as discussed in the EU social partners' Social Dialogue Committee. The other main topic broached was the ongoing reflections and consultation on the EU Pillar of Social rights with the aim to reach more convergence in the EMU. The posting of workers was also discussed, reflecting divergent opinions about the current revision as is the case in the Council. Last but not least, the committee members had an exchange with the incoming Slovak Presidency on its priorities and on the possible Brexit consequences on the Social Council agenda.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Sustainable Development Committee: Energy Union & latest developments

The Sustainable Development Committee welcomed Peter Handley (EC Head of Unit, Resource Efficiency, Secretariat General) for an update on the upcoming main steps of the Energy Union planned for 2016. Additionally, an exchange of views took place between committee members and representatives of Ecopreneur – an association representing the interests of sustainable SMEs in Europe. This exchange aimed at determining potential fields of cooperation and building synergies for the future. The committee members also discussed the latest developments of the Energy Efficiency Labelling and the revision of the Waste Framework Directive to coordinate upcoming actions.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

SMEs need simple and fair tax regulations

Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer was invited to discuss current tax policy issues with the MEPs from the Green Group. He explained that there are two main SME concerns. Firstly, the existing tax systems with 28 different regimes creating an unacceptably high level of administrative burdens and compliance costs for SMEs, and taxation is perceived as one of the most relevant barriers for cross-border business. Secondly, the current tax rules allow multinational companies to reduce their tax payments drastically by tax avoidance strategies or political deals. This creates massive distortion of competition and each Euro on taxes not paid by large companies have to be paid by SMEs and their employees. Without agreeing on all details, the Green MEPs showed support regarding the UEAPME demands concerning the VAT action plan and a common tax base for corporates.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Skills Agenda launch: a priority for SMEs

UEAPME [welcomed](#) the launch of the New Skills Agenda for Europe, for better and more relevant skills. This aims to improve the employability of the workforce and tackle the lack of basic skills and skills mismatches, one of the major concerns for SMEs throughout Europe. At the launch event organised by the EC, UEAPME highlighted that SMEs also

expect a lot from the future actions on digital skills and on “Making VET a first choice”. Moreover, UEAPME Training Working Group expressed concerns regarding the Skills Guarantee. While being a necessary effort to upskill low-qualified adults and to enable a smooth bridge to VET and labour market, a guarantee is misleading and creates expectations which cannot be met without additional financial means. Member States will need a reality check and flexibility to target efforts towards specific priority groups. Finally the Guarantee objective to reach an upper secondary level for low-skilled adults is definitively too ambitious.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

UEAPME sends recommendations ahead of vote on energy labelling

Last week, the EP’s ITRE Committee voted in favour of the compromise amendments on the revision of the Energy Labelling Directive. In preparation of this vote, UEAPME disseminated [voting recommendations](#) on specific provisions to the members of the ITRE Committee and wrote to the shadow rapporteurs of the [European Conservatives and Reformists Group](#) and of the [Socialists](#). One of UEAPME’s key points was to prevent the inclusion of “services” in the definition of energy related products, which was indeed rejected by the Committee. However, as the Committee rapporteur did not obtain the mandate to start negotiations with the Council, the amendments still need to be sent to the plenary for a second reading.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

Transfer of Businesses: defects still exist at national level

Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer was invited to speak in a panel on Business Transfers from a business perspective at the [AECM](#)’s (European Association of Guarantee Providers) annual [event](#) in Porto. Taking the floor alongside DG GROW Director Christine Schreiber, he underlined that the [EU Recommendations](#) from 1994 on business transfers are still valid. However, these recommendations have to be implemented at national and regional level and SMEs need better advisory services tailored for transfers. As regards financial support, he welcomed the efforts made by national guarantee providers to offer solutions for business transfers, but warned that classical loan guarantees are not sufficient as businesses often lack equity after having paid-out former owners or other family members.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

SME development in ASEAN and EU countries

Last week, more than 40 participants from ASEAN and EU countries participated in the [Global Forum meeting](#) in Singapore organised by UEAPME member ACCA. The conference on SME development focussed on [ASEAN economic integration](#). Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx gave an overview of the SME support measures at EU level, specifically on internationalisation. Furthermore, he stressed that – although there are cultural differences between the two regions – SMEs face the same challenges. Both sides could therefore learn from the exchange of best practices in support of SME development, to which UEAPME is willing to contribute.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- ACCA-Barclays-UEAPME event "Capital Markets Union : delivering new opportunities for SMEs through venture capital" (13.07, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))

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