

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Better consultation discussed with Secretariat General of the Commission

As a reply to many complaints made by stakeholders regarding the manner in which the Commission conducts its public consultations ([see previous Newsflash](#)), and at the initiative of DG GROW, the Secretariat General of the Commission organised a [workshop](#) for the Business Organisations. In an open and constructive atmosphere the participants explained to the Commission how they run consultations with their members and the difficulties they encounter. The main complaints were the non-availability of all the language versions, the length and compulsory use of the questionnaires, the biased questions, the questionnaires not adapted to organisations, and the absence of criteria to give weight to organisations. The Commission ensured that it will continue to work on all mentioned shortcomings.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Carcinogens: SMEs need limit values to be less strict

UEAPME published its [position](#) on the revision of the Directive on protection from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work. The updated annex will include new substances, based on new risk evaluations. For UEAPME, it is important that SMEs respect obligations to eliminate or reduce risks caused by these substances. However, compliance costs should be reduced to a minimum as changes to the limit values have a particular impact on SMEs and micro-companies. Some limit values proposed by the EC will in fact cause heavy additional burdens due to costs of replacement or adjustment of machines and tools, or increased measuring requirements. Concretely, UEAPME asks for limit values to be less strict in the case of hardwood dust, Crystalline Silica (RCS), Chromium IV compounds, and Butadiene. For RCS, UEAPME requests their removal from the proposal and asks that it be dealt with in the context of REACH.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

## UEAPME requests clarification on digital content proposal

After a final discussion at the Legal Affairs Committee, UEAPME adopted its [position](#) on the EC's proposed directive on certain aspects concerning contracts for the supply of digital content. UEAPME agrees that, given the fast technical changes, there is a need to act at EU level before Member States start regulating at national level. However, the impact on SMEs needs to be carefully evaluated. For the time being, the proposal is quite complex and partially ambiguous. Indeed, SMEs are concerned by a possible confusion on the scope of application, i.e. which type of content and/or data would be covered. Clarification of the definitions is hence needed, alongside clarification of the coexistence between the proposal and the implemented General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Furthermore, UEAPME is strongly against having the burden of proof on the supplier for an unlimited period of time – this should be limited to six months.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## Europe and Japan cooperate on industrial relations

The 16<sup>th</sup> EU-Japan Tripartite symposium dedicated to industrial relations gathered high-level Japanese and EU officials with EC Vice-President Dombrovskis as well as researchers and delegations of employers and trade unions. The main objective was to compare how Japan and Europe face similar challenges, that it be globalisation, ageing workforce, lack of skills, diversification of workers or evolving working patterns. In both cases, companies are looking for more flexibility and increased competitiveness for more stable working conditions. While Japan has a very decentralised industrial relations system and is hence looking for more centralised coordination (e.g. on wages), the EU has more centralised patterns and hence tends to progressively introduce decentralised collective bargaining. The real challenge in these two methods is to find the right balance for higher competitiveness, especially for SMEs. Considering they represent the main employers in Japan and in the EU, SMEs' needs should be better taken into consideration.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Retail: EC should abstain from questioning SME-friendly legislation

Last week, in the framework of the Single Market Strategy, DG GROW organised a stakeholder [workshop](#) on "Addressing Operational Restrictions in the Retail Sector". Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx [stated](#) that the EU has to ensure a diverse retail market, but that it has unfortunately contributed to the abolishment of many national regulations ensuring a level playing field for all. He urged the Commission not to give in to the pressure of the multinationals questioning once again some of these fair legislations – such as national regulations on opening hours, the prohibition to sell below cost and the urban and local planning rules. Last but not least, he criticised the distortion of competition due to the different implementation of the money laundering directive.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Franchising: DG COMP needs to act urgently on the matter

At the initiative of MEP Dennis de Jong (NL), the policy department of the European Parliament organised a [workshop](#) on the relations between franchisees and franchisors following the publication of an excellent [study by the University of Osnabrück](#). On behalf of the franchisees, Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx [stressed](#) the positive attitude toward franchising at it helps self-employed remain competitive. However, franchisees have suffered for decades from unbalanced contracts. Long lasting attempts to solve the problems through self-regulation and codes have failed. As many of the problems have their origin in European Regulations, such as the non-competition clause, he called on DG COMP to urgently come up with a review of the regulation in order to also adapt it to the digitalisation of the retail sector.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Will CMU deliver new funding opportunities for SMEs?

UEAPME, its member organisation ACCA and Barclays Bank organised a [conference](#) on “Capital Markets Union (CMU): delivering new opportunities for SMEs through venture capital”. At the discussion with representatives from DG GROW, DG FISMA, Invest Europe, Business Angels and the “Deutsche Börse”, most speakers focused on the financial needs of high-tech start-ups and fast growing companies. Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer agreed on the importance of such companies for Europe’s economy, but reminded the participants that many other SMEs have funding needs which cannot be satisfied by traditional bank loans. Therefore, the CMU has to also improve the provision of alternatives like crowd and peer-to-peer funding and business angel investments. Financial instruments like guarantees should not only cover loans and venture capital but also mezzanine products like subordinated loans, which are used by traditional SMEs as quasi-equity instruments.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Tax reforms have to simplify compliance & cross-border business

UEAPME member organisation ACCA organised an informal roundtable on current taxation dossiers with the European Commission, European Parliament and representatives from national governments and business stakeholders. On the upcoming proposal for [CCCTB](#), Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer said that a common corporate tax base can contribute to simplifying cross-border activities for SMEs if it is kept simple and SME-friendly. As regards the [VAT Action Plan](#), he supported the extension of the One Stop Shop to all e-commerce transactions and warned against a temporary application of a reversed charge system in some Member States because it will create unnecessary burdens and uncertainty for SMEs and additional barriers for the Single Market. Finally, he did not support the European Commission on giving more leeway to Member States on VAT rates because of its negative effects on competition between Member States.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## EFSI need to happen in all Member States

Secretary General Peter Faross participated in the panel “Proper allocation and management of EU funds, the European perspective” at the [conference](#) on the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), organised by MEP Maria Garapini in Timișoara (Romania). Mr Faross gave an overview of the use of EFSI and especially focussed on the successful use of the SME window, which was increased by € 500 million. EFSI investments are taking place in 26 Member States and this does not include Romania or Malta. The conference’s goal was therefore to stimulate Romania to make use of the investment instrument, i.e. to nominate intermediary banks and to simplify Romanian internal procedure.

Contact: [Peter Faross](#)

## UEAPME welcomes Confartigianato delegation

In the context of a visit to Brussels and a deepening of their knowledge of the EU Institutions, a delegation from Confartigianato Cuneo (Italy), led by UEAPME Vice-president Luca Crosetto, met Secretary General Peter Faross and Internal Affairs Director Guido Lena. Mr Faross gave them an overview of the current political scenario as well as of the UEAPME lobbying priorities and Mr Lena explained UEAPME’s structure, objectives and way of working. The meeting was an opportunity to further strengthen the already tight relations with Confartigianato (one of UEAPME’s founding members) and to exchange views with craft entrepreneurs operating at local level.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

----- News from UEAPME Sector Fora -----

## Food: SMEs involved in forum for better functioning supply chain

Last week, Christine Weiker (ECSLA) represented UEAPME in the second meeting of the Sherpa group in view of preparing the High-Level Forum for a better functioning food supply chain in September. During its mandate (2016-2019), this high-level forum will focus on three issues: competitiveness, growth and jobs. UEAPME very much supports this as these issues are key elements for SMEs. Furthermore, UEAPME is working on solutions for a better supply chain where SMEs are taken into account at all levels. The frequent problems encountered between suppliers, producers and retailers include late payment, recall of products and loss of contracts.

Contact: [Birte Day](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- [SBS Annual Conference \(19.10, contact Tessa Delville\)](#)
- [European Forum on eco-innovation - Tallinn, Estonia \(26-28.10, contact Guido Lena\)](#)

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