

UEAPME Newsflash

Replacing energy labels: less time is not feasible for SMEs

UEAPME, EuroCommerce and Independent Retail Europe reactivated their alliance to tackle the ongoing trilogue negotiations on the review of the regulation on energy efficiency labelling. These three associations are [particularly concerned](#) with an article establishing a time period for dealers to replace the energy labels on their products. In July the European Parliament plenary agreed upon introducing a time frame of three weeks for this task. The three organisations representing businesses in Europe, and particularly SMEs, are convinced that a shorter time gap to replace the labels, currently being discussed in the Council, would be completely unfeasible. Such a provision would definitely increase the level of red tape and costs for retail SMEs, thus harming their competitiveness. In order to influence the decision, the alliance wrote a [joint letter](#) to the Council addressing this burning issue.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

SMEs support a more attractive Blue Card

The Social Affairs Committee adopted its [position](#) on the revision of the Blue Card Directive for highly skilled third-country nationals. On the one hand, UEAPME welcomes the Commission's efforts to make the EU scheme more attractive by adding flexibility on salary thresholds, simplifying procedures for recruitment, and providing additional rights and perks for Blue Card holders, especially for intra-EU mobility. On the other, UEAPME regrets that the proposal does not clearly extend the scope to the medium-skilled workers badly needed by Crafts and SMEs. Last but not least, UEAPME opposes the proposal to no longer allow for parallel national schemes and favours an 'expression of interest' system with a talent pool, creating a level playing field and a more simple scheme.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

Work-Life Balance: focus of EU social partners' agenda

Work-life balance on the EU Social Partners' agenda in the Social Dialogue Committee. UEAPME's [position](#) was debated in the Social Affairs Committee (SAC), chaired by Vice-President Pierre Martin (UPA). SMEs take work-life balance seriously and will implement the [EU Social Partners' Work Programme](#) dealing with the topic. Starting negotiations, as proposed by the EC, to create new rights at EU level is not the right way to increase women's participation on the labour market, UEAPME's key priority. The current EU legislation gives Member States sufficient leeway to reach a satisfactory balance. Instead, more childcare facilities and a change of mind-set are needed. On the Pillar of Social Rights, discussions on the national events revealed large differences in the organisation and involvement of social partners although this is a prerequisite for a good bottom-up approach. The SAC also adopted its [position](#) on the revision of the Blue Card directive.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Online contracts: Think Small First principle needs to be applied

The Parliament's SME Intergroup and EuroCommerce organised a breakfast meeting with MEP Pascal Arimont (EPP) and DG Justice on the "New Framework for online contract rules and consumer guarantees –What's there for SMEs?" Enterprise Policy Luc Hendrickx stressed that the proposal certainly does not apply the Think Small First principle, as preached by the Commission. It will consequently certainly not help small retailers to start to sell online locally, let alone cross-border. On the proposal's many shortcomings, he mentioned the absence of a notification obligation in case of non-conformity as well as the possibility for member states to impose additional provisions for commercial guarantees. Finally, Mr Hendrickx urged the MEPs to neglect the business part of the 2016 consumer survey as it is not representative at all.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

ESIF: UEAPME requests included in Report on Simplification

The Commission published the conclusions and recommendations of the High Level Group on Simplification of ESIF regarding (i) [access to EU funding for SMEs](#), and (ii) [Financial Instruments](#). The report includes UEAPME's proposals put forward by Regional Policy Senior Advisor Hubert Delorme and recommends to the Commission and to Member States to: improve simplified procedures and costs of e-Governance, implement systems of alternative dispute resolution, open capacity building for SME organisations, accept private audit costs, have common rules for all funds, create single entry points at national and regional level, and support the role of intermediary SME organisations. UEAPME considers the report to be particularly positive for SMEs and SME organisations, and urges the EC and Member States to apply these recommendations as soon as possible without waiting for the future ESIF (post 2020).

Contact: [Hubert Delorme](#)

Digital economy and its challenges at the centre of the debate

[GRASPE](#) (Reflection Group on the Future of the European Civil Service) organised a debate on the challenges of digitalisation of the economy for the traditional sectors of the economy and for the workers, and the need for a European Union response. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx, in a panel alongside representatives from ETUC and DG EMPL, stressed that any policy action should also take the traditional sectors into account as well as the need of awareness raising amongst small enterprises. Upscaling the digital skills in the broad sense of workers and entrepreneurs is also key. On the collaborative economy, he recalled that the legal framework is already in place and should be respected by all those who provide services against payment on a regular basis.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

AGS 2017: Investments and Competitiveness for more jobs

DG EMPL consulted the EU Social Partners on the draft employment and social part of the Annual Growth Survey 2017, the EU Semester process' kick-off. Despite some progress, unemployment remains high. Low growth and lack of investments translates into a negative impact on job creation. Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis recalled that the issue will not be solved without a strong focus on competitiveness and higher private and productive public investments. Further implementation of labour markets' structural reforms, better targeted social protections systems and more ownership by social partners are key in reducing unemployment and poverty. Among the most urgent reforms, she mentioned reducing tax burden on labour and making work pay, a renewed flexsecurity, tackling skills mismatch (including digital skills) through better responsive education and training systems, more vocational training and apprenticeship.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

UEAPME co-signs informative paper on Geo-differentiation

UEAPME, alongside 14 business organisations, co-signed an [infographic paper](#) aimed at visually explain why products and services differ across the EU. The paper gives a screenshot of diverging local regulatory and technical requirements and different market conditions. As the proposed regulation on geo-blocking is currently being discussed in the European Parliament, businesses want to highlight that a successful digital single market can only succeed if we lower existing barriers and build trust for both businesses and consumers.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

UEAPME exchanges views with Vietnam on SME policy

In the framework of the service contract "EU-Vietnam Strategic Dialogue Facility", Phan Thu Hang (Vietnamese Ministry of Planning and Investment) is undertaking research on "The experience of the European Union in the process of building a Law to support SMEs in Vietnam". Last week, she discussed the different ways public authorities can create an enabling environment for SMEs with Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx. Indeed, he explained UEAPME's ideas on SME policy as well as the irreplaceable role of the representative SME organisations in this process.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

News from UEAPME Projects

SBS organises its second national seminar in Italy

SBS held its second national seminar in Rome, with the support of member associations CNA and CONFARTIGIANATO, and business organisation Unioncamere. The purpose of the event was to raise awareness among participants about standardisation, and more specifically set out the framework on how to directly involve SMEs in the development process of standards. SBS experts, the Italian and European standardisation bodies, and representatives from the European Commission shared their experience of working with standards. SBS experts reaffirmed that all bodies involved need to join efforts to improve the representativeness of SMEs in technical committees as numbers are still against them.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- SBS Annual conference (19.10, contact [Tessa Delville](#))
- European Forum on eco-innovation - Tallinn, Estonia (26-28.10, contact [Guido Lena](#))
- East Invest 2 Annual Conference - Yerevan, Armenia (27.10, contact [Doris Rabetge](#))
- [Co-operative banks & innovation in SME Financing](#) (09.11, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)) - ([Registration](#))

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