

# UEAPME Newsflash

## EU common challenges will not be solved without SMEs

At the Tripartite Social Summit on growth, jobs and fairness, in presence of the Presidents of EU Council and Commission, and Heads of States, President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller's intervention [focused](#) on recalling that SMEs can only create jobs with a boost in investments and the right framework conditions for competitiveness. She also affirmed UEAPME's strong support of CETA for the EU's credibility as a future global trade partner. On the EU Social Partner's call for the EC to include an ambitious industrial policy strategy in the 2017 Work Programme, she insisted on the SME needs (access to finance, skills, innovation) to be fully included. Finally, a stronger involvement of social partners in the EU Semester process is necessary to increase their ownership of reforms. Therefore, capacity building, especially for SME associations, is a precondition to deliver, as committed in the joint statement "[A new start for Social Dialogue](#)".

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)



## Posting of workers: the divide is still very much present

Secretary General Peter Faross participated in member organisation CGPME's Annual Conference "[Planète PME](#)". He put forward UEAPME members' different approaches when dealing with the controversial posting of workers topic. The recently published UEAPME [note on posting](#) is not a common position as such but summarises the split between countries and member organisations within the EU countries. Mr Faross is hopeful that a solution will be found between the European Council and Parliament. The posting of workers topic involves a need for compromises on two crucial issues: (i) duration of posting (EC proposes 24 months), and (ii) pay level (EC proposes minimum pay rates to be replaced by remuneration). The latter implies political and technical difficulties in applying the Juncker principle "equal pay for equal work at the same place".

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## First ECOFIS Committee chaired by Vice President Alban Maggiar

Vice-President Alban Maggiar (CGPME) chaired his first meeting of the Economic & Fiscal Committee. Other than the final discussion and adoption of the [position](#) on the VAT Action Plan (see below), members discussed the impact of current economic and political developments (migration, pillar of social rights) on UEAPME's economic policy strategy and started a review of it. The current economic situation was discussed after a presentation of the latest [Craft and SME Barometer](#), which confirms the recovery of SMEs across Europe, even if the Brexit dampens SMEs' confidence in the most affected economies. Furthermore, the committee members were updated on – and discussed – the recent developments as regards the pillar of social rights, banking regulations, capital market union, Horizon 2020 and the successful (for SME finance) implementation of EFSI and the plan for a prolongation.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## VAT: UEAPME opposed to temporary reversed charge system

The Economic & Fiscal Policy Committee adopted a [position](#) on the VAT Action Plan. While agreeing with the main objectives of the Action Plan (i.e. simplification, fight against fraud, better use of new technologies), member organisations reject a temporary reversed charge system as it would create unacceptable administrative burdens and uncertainty for SMEs. Furthermore, UEAPME welcomes the extension of the current mini one-stop-shop to all cross-border e-commerce, but reminds the Commission that SMEs need trustworthy and easy accessible information about VAT rates applicable in other Member States. As regards VAT rates, UEAPME argues that additional autonomy for Member States may not distort competition within the single market. Finally, UEAPME asks the Commission to conduct a broad impact assessment on costs, benefits and efficiency of the different options for a definitive regime, in order to allow a responsible choice between them.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## REACH: submission of chemical name adds more burden

In light of the current review of the guidance on substances, UEAPME contacted DG GROW and DG ENVI on the issues stemming from the EU Court of Justice ruling on the interpretation of "articles" under the REACH regulation. The Court states that the name of a substance shall be included as a minimum requirement in the information available to the supplier and that this cannot be regarded as being excessive burden. UEAPME [expressed](#) its perplexities, not only for constituting a very strict interpretation (adding another administrative layer to the regulation), but also for its misconception of proportionality. In practice the submission of a chemical name requires testing and/or other investigation methods and after the judgment it would also include the necessity to identify single sub-articles. REACH already being one of the EU's most complex legislative projects, UEAPME is constantly aiming at restraining any further administrative burden for SMEs.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

## Consumer law fitness check: SMEs need to be taken into account

The [European Consumer Summit 2016](#) was dedicated to the Fitness Check of EU consumer and marketing law. Enterprise Director Luc Hendrickx stated that any proposal to change the acquis can only be done after the current evaluations have been concluded. Indeed, the SME point of view was never taken into account in developing the existing acquis. The acquis is also based on the wrong assumption that the consumer is always the weakest part. Traders are more and more often confronted with verbal and physical violence from consumers and the companies' information obligations have reached their limit. On the collaborative economy, Mr Hendrickx stressed that the legal framework is already in place and simply needs to be applied. Last but not least, the fitness check should apply the "Think Small First" principle and lead to a more balanced legal framework.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Strengthening VET through engagement of Member States

Social Affairs and Training adviser Arnold de Boer attended the meeting of Directors General of Vocational Training (DGVT) in Bratislava to discuss current priorities for VET. UEAPME highlighted the need for upskilling the workforce on the basis of shared responsibility. On the job learning, VET (including higher VET and apprenticeship) should be better valued as proposed in the new Skills Agenda for Europe as they are highly relevant for labour market needs including digitalisation and the integration of migrants. The DGVT held peer learning workshops to improve apprenticeship including through demand-led systems and support for SMEs. The next step for real progress is through more Member States' engagement and making use of advice of peers.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

### ----- News from UEAPME Projects -----

## SBS reinforces cooperation with all actors in standardisation community

SBS organised its 2016 EU Conference on "Smart standardisation for SMEs". This edition, as part of a series of annual conferences on the standardisation process, its impact on SMEs and its benefits, [focussed](#) on "Reinforcing the cooperation within the standardisation community". With SMEs at the centre of discussions, the speakers addressed the importance of standards in boosting competitiveness for SMEs, the value of being involved in the standardisation process, and the shift from European to international standardisation. Secretary General Peter Faross opened the event, alongside SBS President Gunilla Almgren, and stated that standardisation is back at the top of the political agenda as well as the economic one. Indeed, in these times of timid growth, there is a definite need for SME-friendly standards and standardisation system. He added that more improvements need to be made at national level to ensure SME participation in standardisation.

Contact: [Jenny Manin](#)

## Standardisation experts meet up to exchange experiences

At the SBS experts meeting, discussions focused on two important topics: the Joint Initiative on Standardisation (JIS) and the international dimension of standardisation. The JIS and the actions in which SBS will be directly involved were discussed with DG GROW representative Alice Wu. The international dimension was discussed with representatives from ISO and IEC. SBS experts at ISO and IEC level shared their experience and pointed out the difficulties in achieving SME-friendly standards at international level. In a meeting at the European Parliament with MEP Nicola Danti, the experts raised the biggest challenges for SMEs in standardisation, namely SME participation in the process and the costs of standards. This was a first step in informing the EP of some of the difficulties SMEs face in their daily business when developing and using standards.

Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

## Social Dialogue: EU Social Partners launch two calls for tender

As part of the upcoming Integrated Projects of the EU social dialogue 2016-2018, the EU Social Partners are conducting two projects, one on "[employee training](#)" and one on "[European Social Fund](#): supporting social dialogue at national, regional and local levels". Both projects will be supported by funding from the European Commission. In the context of these projects, the EU Social Partners have launched two calls for tender for subcontracting expertise (one for each project, both deadlines are set to 23<sup>rd</sup> November).

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- [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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