

UEAPME Newsflash

SG Willems meets DG Servoz on social affairs

Secretary General Véronique Willems met EC Director General Michel Servoz to put forward SME views on social affairs' files. On the European Pillar of Social Rights, she highlighted its role in maintaining the right balance between economic and social dimensions as well as the need to put priority on implementing the social acquis instead of adding new rights. Additionally, Ms Willems restated that UEAPME still believes in Social Dialogue and hence that it is crucial for SME organisations to be recognised as social partners and to actively participate in the EU Semester. On the need for capacity building, she emphasised the role of social partners in the support to implement European acquis (e.g. OSH).

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Europe Day focusses on support for SMEs

In the context of the European Union Day, the Vlaams Brabant Province organised a seminar on the opportunities of Europe for entrepreneurs. Secretary General Véronique Willems put forward the objective of regaining respect for traditional SMEs instead of primarily having policies dedicated to start-up, innovative companies. Furthermore, she highlighted different support programmes for SMEs, e.g. the Erasmus programme for young entrepreneurs. On Horizon 2020, she emphasised the fact that authorities at different levels should work on a complimentary approach to support research and development, and innovation. Last but not least, she underlined the guarantees for loans via the Juncker Plan as they are open to all SMEs via national or regional financial intermediaries.

Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

Youth employment: SMEs' views on the way forward

At the occasion of its [assessment report](#) of the Youth Guarantee, the EU Court of Auditors (ECA) organised a conference on "Youth Employment – Confronting challenges and finding solutions". Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis recognised that youth unemployment remains one of the main challenges in Europe, notably for the less qualified and those neither in employment, education nor training (NEETs). As part of the solutions, she insisted on education and training that match the skills needs of the labour market, a business environment that supports investments, growth and job creation, and active labour market policies that facilitate transitions from school to work through early career guidance and advice. On skills mismatch, she highlighted the utmost necessity for more focus on vocational training (in particular apprenticeship) and a systematic business-education cooperation to adapt learning contents to labour market changes.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

Attractive and effective Blue Card to address skills needs

In a panel on 'the global race for talent' of the [Migration Talks event](#) in the European Parliament, Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer spoke about the need for efficient skills migration schemes in Europe. Companies should be able to attract people who bring added value if no EU citizens are available on the labour market. A more attractive, and simplified Blue Card scheme is needed together with a campaign focused on SMEs. To achieve an effective and relevant system, Mr De Boer stressed the importance of an objective debate about migration and the labour market. To create a level playing field for companies as well as the foreign talent, UEAPME calls for developing an expression of interest system, creating a pool of talent on the long term.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

Internationalisation discussed with German Craft Chambers

The foreign trade advisers of the Regional Craft Chambers from UEAPME's German member organisation ZDH had their annual meeting in Brussels to discuss the latest developments of foreign trade and internationalisation. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx explained UEAPME to the participants as well as its history and functioning. He also presented the UEAPME activities and main policy requests in the field of internationalisation (both inside and outside the EU), the consultation process and the [East Invest 2](#) project.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

CNA delegation visits Brussels and UEAPME

In the context of a visit to the European Institutions, a delegation of CNA Sindacale (with representatives from regional offices across Italy) discussed a variety of European policies with UEAPME. In a training session on 'Social Europe, training policies and changes in European policies', Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer gave an overview of activities and achievements of the European Social Dialogue as well as UEAPME's priorities in the field of social affairs and training to support SMEs in Europe. Among the topics discussed with CNA were digitalisation, the European Pillar of Social Rights, occupational health and safety, and skills development.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

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

East Invest 2: SME Academy hosted in Moldova

In the framework of the East Invest 2 project and under the EU4Business initiative, the series of SME Academies for SMEs from the Eastern Partnership countries continued, this time in Chisinau, Moldova. More than thirty Moldavian SMEs with export potential attended training courses on the opportunities due to the DCFTA (deep and comprehensive free trade agreement) but also on the challenges when entering the EU market. The courses were given by trainers from the network of UEAPME and Eurochambres, as well as Moldavian business organisations.

Contact: [Doris Rabetge](#)

The ERIK project started with its kick-off meeting

Sustainable Development Director Guido Lena attended the kick-off meeting of the European Resource Efficiency Knowledge Centre (ERIK) in Mechelen with the partners and the representatives of the European Commission. The aim of the centre is to support the European SMEs in improving their competitiveness through improving their resource efficiency and facilitate the transition to greener economy. The role of UEAPME will be to promote the Centre and its actions through its SME member organisations as well as provide feedback on the Centre's initiatives.

Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- Brussels Economic Forum (01.06, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)) - [Registration](#)
- AECM: Global Conference on Guarantee Institutions for SME Financing (02.06, Madrid, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
[Registration](#)
- East Invest 2 Annual Conference (21.06, Kyiv, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- Research & Innovation - Shaping our Future - High-Level Group Pascal Lamy (03.07, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
[Registration](#)
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