

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Social Partners kick-start work on ESF support to capacity building

The EU Social Partners [met](#) in Prague to launch a joint reflection on the use of the European Social Fund (ESF) to support a well-structured bipartite social dialogue through capacity building at national level. Based on an analysis of the current state of play in the Member States, they organised an exchange of good practices, illustrated by the Greek example. This showed how ESF support to capacity building is crucial for SME organisations to fully play their role as social partners. The implementation of the partnership principle was demonstrated through the Belgian and Czech examples. The social partners' involvement in the management and use of ESF is mandatory, but still insufficiently respected by many public authorities. Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis concluded that a full implementation of the partnership principle is the first and necessary step towards more responsive social partners, given they get adequate support to capacity building.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Modern education provides for relevant basic & transversal skills

At the [Estonian Presidency Education Conference](#) in [Tallinn](#), Social Affairs Adviser Arnold de Boer spoke about modern approaches to learning and teaching. For employers, it is essential that skills taught in schools follow modern trends including labour market demands. Transversal skills and competences such as digital and entrepreneurial skills will be increasingly required by businesses. At the same time, acquiring basic skills such as literacy and numeracy remains undoubtedly crucial. A modern approach to learning also takes place outside the classroom: learning in the workplace provides for essential technical and transversal skills acquired within SMEs as they are the main "on-the-job" training providers. Cooperation between the education world and businesses will be key to better identifying which skills are needed. Work-based learning and apprenticeship should be expanded beyond traditional education pathways, to make VET a first choice.

Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

## Future R&I Programme needs focus on innovation

Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer met representatives from DG Research and Innovation to discuss the UEAPME [priorities](#) for the mid-term review on Horizon 2020 and for the next framework programme for Research and Innovation. On H2020, Mr Huemer asks for improvement of the advisory services for SMEs at national level to increase the currently low success rate within the SME Instrument by increasing the quality of project proposals. In addition, SMEs demand further simplification of accountancy rules and more calls based on a bottom-up approach. As regards a future programme, he asked the Commission to not change well-functioning programme elements, such as the SME Instrument, and to keep the focus on innovation. Furthermore, he explained why highly innovative SMEs need, until commercialisation starts, support in the form of grants whereas later on financial instruments are more appropriate support instruments.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## SMEs have to be at the heart of industrial policy

In a first reaction to the [renewed EU Industrial Policy Strategy](#), UEAPME welcomed the European Commission's inclusion of SMEs in its strategic approach to strengthen Europe's industrial sector. Indeed, 99% of industry companies are SMEs, and they hence employ about 58% of workers in the sector. From an SME point of view, the priorities are the completion of the Single Market to allow innovative SMEs to grow faster and more investments in skills and IT infrastructure. Additionally, the Commission underlines the important role of the national and regional regulators for improving the business environment and rightly includes them in actions like the EU Industry Day and the future High-Level Industrial Roundtable. Here, UEAPME insists that SME representatives have to get a role at these events in line with their importance for the sector.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Regions & Cities for Sustainable & Inclusive Growth](#) (10-13.10, contact [Birte Day](#))
- [SBS Annual Conference](#) (10.10, contact [Christel Davidson](#))
- [CoR Workshop on Work-Life Balance](#) (11.10, contact [Arnold de Boer](#))
- [4th Eastern Partnership Business Forum](#) (26-27.10, Tallinn, contact [Doris Rabetge](#))

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