

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Climate change and energy package: mixed results

The European Commission unveiled on 23 January a package of measures implementing the EU climate change and energy strategy. UEAPME gave a cautious welcome to the documents. It was pleased by the revised rules on State aids for environmental purposes, which foresee a significant increase in the allowed aid intensity and a broader, more practical definition of eligible costs. UEAPME said it would accept in principle the EC proposals to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and supported a broader and stronger Emissions Trading System (ETS), although it warned that compensation must be foreseen for some industry sectors. It also backed the EC proposals on renewable energy, but stressed that these measures, including possible trading mechanisms, must promote competition and the use of the economically most efficient sources, thereby leading to the best possible prices for end users.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Gerhard Huemer](#) (state aids) or [Guido Lena](#)

## SMEs insist on a legally binding Small Business Act

UEAPME and the SME Union of the EPP organised a working breakfast on the forthcoming "Small Business Act for Europe" (SBA) at the European Parliament in Brussels on 23 January. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke at the event, which also featured representatives from the European Parliament, the European Commission and the French Presidency. He stressed that the SBA is the last chance for the EU to deliver a concrete answer to small businesses' needs before the Parliamentary elections and the European Commission's renewal in 2009. He stated that small businesses need a legally binding act providing a solid SME policy basis in the next years. He also insisted on the application of a real "think small first" principle, by which small businesses are treated as the rule rather than the exception in policymaking at EU and national level.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Lisbon guidelines: time to focus on implementation

Director for Economic and Fiscal Policy Gerhard Huemer spoke on behalf of UEAPME at a hearing jointly organised by the European Parliament's Economic Affairs and Employment Committees in Brussels on 22 January. Representatives from the European Social Partners were asked to comment on the EU "Integrated Guidelines for Growth and Jobs". The guidelines have clearly demonstrated their added value in terms of improving the EU economic performances and creating a better employment situation, said Mr Huemer. Although continuity must be ensured, their implementation must be improved on some aspects of particular relevance for European small businesses, such as tackling undeclared work, the lack of risk finance and unfair competition at global level.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Conference closes project on social partners' needs

The final conference of a joint project started in 2004 by UEAPME, BUSINESSEUROPE, CEEP and ETUC on the needs of social partners in new Member States and their participation to the European Social Dialogue took place in Brussels on 23-24 January. The findings and conclusions show the success of the project in helping social partners in the 12 new Member States to develop their capacity and to create their own bipartite dialogue. At the same time, many weaknesses remain and there is still a long way to go until they will be fully equipped for the EU social dialogue. During the final roundtable, Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis highlighted the diversity of situations in new Member States despite many common structural and relational problems, which cannot be tackled through a one-size-fits-all solution. She also insisted on the need for crafts and SMEs to be fully involved in all kinds of national bipartite social dialogue from the very beginning.

➤ Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## Enforcement and cooperation a must for single market

Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx participated on 24 January to a conference on the future of the internal market organised by the Academy of European Law in Brussels. His panel dealt with the governance aspects of the single market. First of all, Mr Hendrickx reinstated UEAPME's support for the analysis of the challenges ahead made by the EC in its "Single Market Review" package in November 2007. Secondly, he stressed that enforcement practices must be strengthened: all Member States should secure a timely implementation of the EU directives and resist the temptation to add extra clauses, a practice known as "gold-plating". Finally, despite some laudable initiatives such as the SOLVIT network for informal problem solving, there is still room for improvement on administrative cooperation between Member States, concluded Mr Hendrickx.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## Can indirect taxation increase SMEs' competitiveness?

The SME Union of the EPP invited Director for Economic and Fiscal Policy Gerhard Huemer to participate to a working breakfast on indirect taxation as a possible means to boost SMEs' competitiveness, which took place at the European Parliament on 22 January. Mr Gotz Werner, a successful entrepreneur and Professor at the Karlsruhe University, was the keynote speaker at the event. He stressed that when taxes are paid directly to the government by the person on

whom they are imposed, they tend to alter international trade by making exports more expensive and imports relatively cheaper, thereby reducing competitiveness. Making more use of indirect, consumption-based taxes could be a relief solution. Mr Huemer accepted Mr Werner's theory, but warned that in practice this could lead to problems in labour-intensive services, leading to inflation and to a surge in undeclared work. He also stressed that changes in taxation matters require unanimity at the European Council, which will be difficult to obtain.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Gerhard Huemer](#)

### **SME insurance: UEAPME highlights policy difficulties**

A conference on "Creating and distributing SME insurance products and services" took place in London on 21-22 January. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke about the sometimes difficult relation between EU policy and SMEs in the field. He analysed four cases: the requirement for compulsory professional insurance in the Services Directive's first draft, which was then scrapped in the final version; the survey on the business insurance sector carried out by the European Commission's Competition DG; the European Parliament's recent proposals for a pilot project and a budget line for an Insurance Guarantee System; and last but not least, UEAPME's calls for a patent litigation insurance system, which is an indispensable part of an efficient EU patent policy.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Luc Hendrickx](#)

### **UEAPME attends EU Employment Committee meeting**

UEAPME and the other European Social Partners participated on 21 January to a meeting of the EU Employment Committee (EMCO), an advisory body foreseen by the Treaties to promote coordination between Member States on labour market policies. The event aimed at exchanging views on the employment dimension of the Lisbon Strategy. Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis said that according to UEAPME the current employment guidelines are still valid and insisted on the need to ensure continuity when implementing the Lisbon guidelines. She also recommended an increased focus on the flexicurity concept, with particular attention to undeclared work. On the governance side, she called for more visibility for the employment guidelines, especially in Member States, and regretted the decrease in the involvement of social partners at national level, which must be tackled through a renewed partnership for change, she concluded.

➤ Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

### **ETV should be simple, inexpensive and SME-friendly**

UEAPME responded this week to a consultation launched by the European Commission on a planned EU-wide system to verify the potential of new technologies to reduce environmental impacts, the so-called Environmental Technology Verification (ETV). The EC aims to provide a comprehensive system and international recognition for new technologies that are currently lacking proven information on their performance under real or field conditions. According to UEAPME, the capacity to support SMEs and innovative businesses through a simple, user-friendly and inexpensive service will be critical for the success of ETV. The system must be targeted to new technologies just entering the market and draw upon the experience made in countries such as Canada, which bases its ETV on the verification of performance claims made by the manufacturer.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Cristina Marongiu](#)

## **FORWARD PLANNING**

### **KEY EVENTS AHEAD:**

- SEPA credit transfers official launch (28/01, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- Slovenian Presidency Conference on Gender Equality (29-30/01, contact [Helen Hoffmann](#))
- Informal Troika of the Social Affairs Ministers – Meeting with the EU social partners (31/01, contact [Liliane Volozinskis](#))
- EC hearing on the "Small Business Act" (Brussels, 06/02, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- Launch of the new Enterprise Europe Network (Brussels, 06-07/02, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- European conference on fashion and innovation (Milan, 15/02, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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