

UEAPME Newsflash

Spring Summit conclusions put focus on actions

The traditional Spring Summit came to a close on 14 March in Brussels. The Council conclusions focused on critical policy dossiers such as energy and climate change and the new "Lisbon strategy cycle" for 2008-2011. On energy policy, UEAPME welcomed the Council's commitment to reach political consensus within this year and have legislation in place by the end of this Parliament's and Commission's term. It also agreed on the overall objectives of the energy package and on the need for adaptation measures for energy-intensive businesses, but stressed that the burden must be shared and the reality of smaller enterprises must be taken into account. On the Lisbon Strategy, the Council rightly insisted on implementation rather than on setting new targets, according to UEAPME, which stressed that the upcoming "Small Business Act for Europe" must be prioritised as a key deliverable in the "Community Lisbon Programme".

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Francesco Longu](#)

European employers accept to negotiate on EWCs

On 2 April, in a joint letter to Commissioner Spidla, the European Social Partners UEAPME, BUSINESSEUROPE and CEEP informed the European Commission of their willingness to open negotiations with the European Trade Union Confederation on the European Works Councils (EWCs). This decision comes in response to the EC's second stage consultation of the European Social Partners on the issue, which was published in February 2008.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

State aid: UEAPME reacts on GBER and on guarantees

UEAPME recently issued its comments on the latest versions of two important items of the EC's State Aid Action Plan, the so-called "General Block Exemption Regulation" (GBER) and the "Notice on guarantees". On the [GBER](#), further improvements are required to bring the text closer to the needs of crafts and SMEs. State aid provided in form of guarantees should be included in the scope of the GBER, said UEAPME. The same goes for innovation support services and the hiring of high-qualified personnel. Moreover, State aid for business transfers should be allowed not only if the succession is in favour of family relatives but also when the successor is a former employee of the company. UEAPME was more positive on the new draft notice on [guarantees](#), since it answers all its main concerns and will allow a wider use of state aid in form of guarantees in the future.

➤ Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Family business: workforce, finance, transfers at stake

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) and the SME Union organised a meeting on family businesses in Brussels on 26 March. Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke on the issues of sustainability, continuity and succession. He singled out the lack of skilled workforce and access to finance as the two main issues currently faced by family businesses. Finance remains a key concern also in the critical phase of business transfers, when family-run companies usually face bigger difficulties compared to larger businesses, stressed Mr Benassi. New financial instruments are therefore needed and should be promoted both at EU and bank level. Business transfers in family-run companies also trigger other difficulties: the choice of successor within relatives is not always an easy one, the transfer must be prepared well in advance, taxes and legislation on inheritance are often an obstacle to a smooth takeover. Awareness raising and consulting services are crucial in this respect, concluded Mr Benassi.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Andrea Benassi](#)

Environment news roundup: Ecolabel, Waste Directive

UEAPME recently nominated three new experts in the framework of the EU Ecolabel. Mr Tim Krögel from the European Builders Confederation (EBC) will sit in the newly-formed Working Group on Buildings, while Mr Marco Giorio will represent UEAPME in the revision of the Ecolabel criteria for tourist accommodation and camp site services. Mr Alessandro Aurilia will participate in the Ecolabel Working Group on footwear, which will reconsider the criteria adopted in 2003 on the same topic. UEAPME published this week a [first set of suggestions](#) on the issue, calling for simplification both from a technical and economic perspective. UEAPME also wrote this week to Members of the European Parliament ahead of the second reading vote on the Waste Framework Directive at the Environment Committee next week.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Cristina Marongiu](#) (Waste Directive) or [Guido Lena](#) (Ecolabel)

From Andrea Benassi's agenda: EACB, CEPYME

Secretary General Andrea Benassi met this week his counterparts from the European Association of Cooperative Banks (EACB) and from our member CEPYME.

31/03: Mr Benassi met **Hervé Guider**, Secretary General of the European Association of Cooperative Banks (EACB), with which UEAPME organised the first European Forum "Co-operative Banks and SMEs" in December last year. Given the success of the event, the Secretaries General agreed to give continuity to this initiative with a second edition planned for the first months of 2009. Mr Benassi and Mr Guider also exchanged views on International Financial Reporting Standards and discussed a study on cooperative banks and SMEs in the new Member States.

01/04: on the next day, Mr Benassi met **Elias Aparicio Bravo**, Secretary General of the Spanish organisation CEPYME. During the meeting, Mr Aparicio Bravo reinstated CEPYME's full backing to the UEAPME work programme, a

support that was reconfirmed by the recent admission of CEAT, the Spanish Federation of Independent Workers and a CEPYME member, as an associate member of UEAPME.

➤ For questions on Mr Benassi's agenda, please contact the [UEAPME Secretariat](#)

In memoriam: Sean Mayo

The UEAPME Secretariat regrets to announce the passing of Sean Mayo, former Secretary General of the Union of Independent Companies in the UK. Mr Mayo played a crucial role in supporting the merger between UEAPME and EUROPMI in 1999, which finally enabled craft and SME organisations to speak with a single voice in Europe. A visionary, talented business representative and a relentless ambassador of the European integration process, Sean Mayo will be sorely missed by us all.

FORWARD PLANNING

KEY EVENTS AHEAD:

- [The Brussels Tax Forum](#) (07-08/04, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- European Social Partners seminar on restructuring in Denmark (Copenhagen, 9-10/04, contact [Liliane Volozinskis](#))
- [EESC conference: "Advantages and Benefits of the Euro"](#) (Brussels, 14-15/04, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- [Conference on the reduction of administrative burdens on SMEs](#) (Bled, Slovenia, 17/04, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- [Conference on Sustainable Tourism in Europe: Chances and Challenges for SMEs](#) (Sofia, Bulgaria, 19/04, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- EESC hearing on "The impact of ongoing development of energy markets on industrial value chains in Europe" (Brussels, 07/05, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- High Level Conference on Counterfeiting (Brussels, 13/05, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- [Brussels Economic Forum 2008: "Economic and Monetary Union in Europe: 10 Years On"](#) (Brussels, 15-16/05, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))
- [Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises](#) (Bled, Slovenia, 03-04/06, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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