

# UEAPME Newsflash

## State aid key to achieve SMEs' energy savings potential

European Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes hosted on 27 May a round table on environmental protection and climate change. The event aimed to put environmental State aid policy in the right economic and political context and to stimulate an exchange of views between industry, the financial community, stakeholders and policymakers. Secretary General Andrea Benassi was among the speakers on the agenda of this high level event, which also featured Caio Koch-Weser, Vice Chairman of the Deutsche Bank Group, and Jeremy Rifkin from the Foundation on Economic Trends. In his speech, Mr Benassi warned that Europe will not be able to reach its ambitious goals on environmental protection and climate change unless the attractiveness of investing in energy efficiency and energy savings is dramatically improved. He called on the EC to fine-tune its State aid rules to allow a better financing for energy-related consultancy services and leaner procedures to calculate eligible costs for aid to energy saving measures. Both issues must be fixed in the upcoming "General Block Exemption Regulation".

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

## Commission, Member States discuss "Think Small First"

A workshop with Member State experts on the application of the "Think Small First" principle, organised by the European Commission's DG Enterprise, took place in Brussels on 29 May. The event was the first of a series of planned meetings and aimed at discussing the way the "Think Small First" principle is translated into EU legislation and programmes, as well as examining the implementation phase at national level. Other topics discussed included the EU initiative on reducing admin burdens in the framework of the Better Regulation agenda, and an exchange of views on the effects of legislation on SMEs. UEAPME sits as observer in this working group, the next meeting of which is planned after the summer break.

➤ Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## EC adopts code of conduct for interest representatives

The European Commission adopted on 28 May a code of conduct containing clear and precise rules for interest representatives in their dealings with Commission staff. The code of conduct is joined with the register of interest representatives, which will be launched on 23 June. Acceptance of the code will be a requirement for entry in the register. Together with the code of conduct, the Commission adopted a communication on the "European Transparency Initiative – a framework for relations with interest representatives", where it provides further information, in particular on the entities which are expected to register, i.e. all those engaged in "activities carried out with the aim of influencing the policy formulation and decision-making processes of the European institutions" according to the EC.

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

## Training working group: EQF, mobility in the spotlight

The UEAPME Training ad hoc Working Group met in Brussels on 27 May. Thomas Mayr, UEAPME's representative in the European Qualifications Framework (EQF) Advisory Committee, presented the work done so far and the main challenges ahead, namely the different national understandings of EQF/NQF, the sectoral dimension and the shift from a qualification approach to an approach based on real competences. Participants also discussed the latest EC proposals on a quality assurance framework with our expert Janja Meglic. UEAPME supports in principle this content-oriented, voluntary tool, but regrets that the EC does not rely more on already existing national tools, considers the delay for implementation not realistic and is particularly critical towards the quality criteria, descriptors and indicators proposed. The final point on the agenda was mobility in vocational and educational training, which UEAPME will closely monitor since it is one of its priorities and it does not share the current EC approach on apprentices' individual mobility.

➤ Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## New website on access to finance for SMEs in the EU27

The European Commission's DG Enterprise launched on 27 May its [Enterprise Finance Index \(EFI\)](#) website, which aims to provide data and trends about access to finance for SMEs in the EU Member States to enable policymakers to evaluate better the effects of SME finance policies across Europe. The EFI brings together figures from different national and international sources on the use of loans, guarantees, venture capital and business angel finance in the EU. Total volumes, interest rates and number of operations and/or beneficiaries are some of the data that can be found under these headings. The Index also provides figures on the use of EU financial instruments under the Multiannual Programme for Enterprise and Entrepreneurship (MAP) and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). UEAPME welcomed and supported the EFI initiative, which shows at a first glance the huge heterogeneity among Member States as far as SME finance is concerned, despite the lack of internationally agreed indicators and the scarcity of comparable data that will not make EU-wide actions any simpler.

➤ Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## Cross-border trade: one-to-one advice remains crucial

The first meeting of the so-called "Network of correspondents" set up by the EC's DG Enterprise took place in Brussels on 27 May. The network aims to establish a close collaboration between the recently launched Europe Enterprise Network, which provides information and advice on EU matters to EU companies, in particular SMEs, and the "Your Europe

– Business” portal that provides data on cross-border trade. A user survey on the latter was presented at the meeting. The [survey](#) confirmed that, while one-stop-shop and online services for completing all formalities in each EU country are useful, three SME owners out of four favour personal accompaniment and one-to-one advice, a fact that must be taken into consideration when designing information campaigns and tools, stressed UEAPME.

➤ Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

### Mark your diaries: crafts conference in Tours, 30-31/10

The Permanent Assembly of the French Chambers of Trades and Skilled Crafts (APCM) will organise, in collaboration with UEAPME, a European conference on craft and small enterprises on 30-31 October at in the International Congress Centre Vinci in Tours, France. The conference will deal with “Promoting the contribution of the craft sector to the economic and social development of the European Union”. The “Small Business Act for Europe” will be under discussion by then. The conference will allow participants to elaborate concrete proposals, which could then be implemented by local, regional or national authorities. The conference organisers expect about 500 participants from 30 different European countries.

➤ Contact: [Hubert Delorme](#)

### From Andrea Benassi’s agenda: Hübner, MKB delegation

Secretary General Andrea Benassi met last week the European Commissioner for Regional Policy. This week, he spoke at a round table on environmental protection and climate change (*see above*) and welcomed a delegation from MKB Netherlands.

**23/05:** Mr Benassi met **Danuta Hübner**, member of the European Commission responsible for Regional Policy. He stressed the importance of the EU’s regional and cohesion policies for the local development of SMEs. Mr Benassi and Ms Hübner also discussed UEAPME’s participation in a series of consultative forums established by DG Regio, as well as the organisation’s role in the 2008 and 2009 Open Days.

**29/05:** Mr Benassi welcomed to Brussels a delegation from our Dutch member **MKB**. The Secretary General introduced participants to the main work priorities and the key future activities of UEAPME, before leaving the floor to the UEAPME Directors for an in-depth analysis of the main challenges in their respective policy areas.

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

## FORWARD PLANNING

### KEY EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises](#) (Bled, Slovenia, 03-04/06, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- [“Super Market Access Committee”](#) (Brussels, 04/06, contact [Rosa Solanes](#))
- [Diversity - Non discrimination conference](#) (Belfast, 05-06/06, contact [Helen Hoffmann](#))
- [European Parliament’s Citizens’ Agora on climate change](#) (Brussels, 12-13/06, contact [Cristina Marongiu](#))
- [EESC workshop “Implementing energy efficiency policies in the European Union: new opportunities and challenges for SMEs”](#) (Brussels, 16/06)
- [EU Social Partners closing conference on restructuring](#) (Brussels, 19-20/06, contact [Liliane Volozinskis](#))
- [“Cutting red tape for Europe” conference](#) (Brussels, 20/06, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- [CGPME conference on the Small Business Act for Europe: Which SME policy for the French Presidency of the EU?](#) (Brussels, 23/06)

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