

UEAPME Newsflash

Administrative Council tackles SBA, access to finance

The Administrative Council of UEAPME met in London on 18 June. The event, organised in collaboration with our member ACCA, the UK Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, dealt both with purely administrative matters and with two important policy issues currently at stake: the Small Business Act for Europe, due to be unveiled on 25 June, and access to finance for SMEs. Mr Laurent de Mautort, Director at the European Investment Bank (EIB), presented the results of a consultation exercise on the EIB financial offer and on how it can be better tailored to SMEs to improve their access to finance. Mr Jiry Plecity, in charge of Entrepreneurship and SMEs in the Cabinet of Commission Vice-President Verheugen, spoke to members about the upcoming SBA, which will try and unlock SMEs' growth and jobs potential, both by introducing a number of general policy principles and by specific legislative measures.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Gerhard Huemer](#) (EIB) or [Luc Hendrickx](#) (SBA)

Irish referendum must not stop the EU from delivering

The majority of Irish voters said "no" to the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in a referendum that took place on 13 June. This negative result comes at a time when Europe's most productive businesses should reap the benefits of European integration, said President Georg Toifl in a [statement](#). All Member States must now work to assess possible solutions to the institutional crisis, said Mr Toifl, who stressed that if some of them are willing to continue working towards more integration, while others clearly are not, enhanced co-operation can and should be used. At the same time, UEAPME welcomed President Barroso's statement that the EU must keep delivering on its key priorities, particularly on the Lisbon agenda for growth and jobs.

Waste Directive: EP confirms disappointing compromise

The European Parliament's plenary voted in second reading on a compromise version of the Waste Directive in Strasbourg on 17 June. UEAPME was not convinced with the results, which reconfirm the introduction of legally binding, EU-wide quantitative targets that are likely to place small businesses in countries lacking proper recycling facilities at a competitive disadvantage. Moreover, the Parliament renounced to a proposal for a consultative "Waste Forum" open to all stakeholders, and left important procedural aspects to be dealt with through "comitology" behind closed doors. On the positive side, the compromise now includes a clear definition of "by-products", which are excluded from the scope of the Directive, and foresees a simplified "waste list" that will be of great use for SMEs.

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

Social Partners organise final seminar on restructuring

On 19-20 June, the European Social Partners UEAPME, ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE and CEEP organised a final conference for their "Joint study on restructuring in the EU-15". Secretary General Andrea Benassi tackled the specific process of "silent restructuring" in SMEs, which happens "below the radar" and without publicity but is nonetheless accompanied by difficult consequences both for workers and for the entrepreneur when it comes to closing down the company. Against such a background, SMEs need external support to anticipate, accompany and respond to change, both from a financial and an organisational perspective. There is also a clear need to differentiate between measures for micro-companies and larger SMEs. The former tend to need more integrated interventions, while the latter require a more targeted approach, concluded Mr Benassi.

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

Late payments, 4th Directive discussed with accountants

Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke on 19 June at a meeting of the Small Business Committee of our member ACCA, the UK Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, which was attended by representatives from other business organisations and banks. He updated participants on the main EU policy issues at stake, namely the Small Business Act, the Late Payments Directive and the revision of the 4th Company Law Directive, which serves as the harmonised basis for establishing and publishing business accounts for corporates. While the EC moots the exclusion of micro-companies from this Directive for the sake of "better regulation", UEAPME has repeatedly called against such a choice.

➤ Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

Sustainable consumption and production: the SME view

The UEAPME Environment Committee met on 16 June. The main item on the agenda was the "Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan" (SCP) due to be adopted soon by the European Commission. Mr Herbert Aichinger from the EC's DG Environment updated participants on the SCP, which is a far-reaching attempt to improve the energy and environmental performances of products through a "double barrier" made of stricter minimum energy and environmental requirements for a larger range of products and of a labelling system modelled on the existing standards for electrical appliances. UEAPME stressed the need to minimise the impact of the SCP on SMEs by providing them with support measures through the ECAP programme and with an adequate timeframe for compliance.

➤ Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

EESC event analyses SMEs' needs on energy efficiency

The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) organised a workshop in cooperation with UEAPME on "Energy efficiency policies in the European Union: new opportunities and challenges for SMEs" on 16 June. The event engaged the EU institutions, social partners and economic operators in a dialogue on the need for innovative and sustainable energy policy choices. Speaking at the event, Secretary General Andrea Benassi proposed the creation of a permanent "Forum on Energy and SMEs" to assess the needs of SMEs and identify the key policy issues and challenges that require the involvement of all interested stakeholders.

➤ Contact: [Guido Lena](#)

Environment news round up: ECAP, EMAS expert groups

The Environment Team represented SMEs this week at two stakeholder events organised by the European Commission. On 18 June, the first meeting of the Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme (ECAP) Expert Group took place in Brussels. The Group focused on the next steps in the implementation of ECAP, including information tools, better regulation issues and targeted funding. On 19-20 June, UEAPME participated at a meeting of the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) Regulatory Committee, which brought together representatives from Member States and stakeholders in the framework of the revision of the EMAS regulation, due soon as part of the SCP package.

➤ Contact: [Cristina Marongiu](#)

Ecolabel criteria: businesses warns against mischoices

A group of ten business organisations, including UEAPME, warned this week against the reducing role given to science in the ecolabelling decision-making process, and questioned the means used by the National Competent Ecolabelling Bodies to achieve their mission. At the last meeting of the European Ecolabelling Board a majority of the representatives of the Member States rejected a series of European Commission's proposed criteria, which referred to the official risk assessment procedure and to the REACH regulation. The negation of the existing regulations and of the scientific conclusions issued by a panel of experts commissioned by the Member States themselves is alarming for the industry, which needs a clear and uniform framework in which to operate, wrote the ten.

➤ [Read more](#) or contact [Guido Lena](#)

Mobility of apprentices must be the standard in the EU

Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke on 13 June in Marseille at a meeting entitled "Paroles d'Européens" organised by the French Government. His panel was devoted to the mobility of young people in Europe. Mr Benassi stressed that UEAPME strongly supports the already existing European mobility programmes, in particular the Leonardo da Vinci programme. However, a clear need appeared in the last years for a new step forward towards the creation of a specific programme dedicated to apprentices and young people in initial alternating vocational training. This would put mobility for young people in VET on a par with academic mobility, and make it the standard, rather than exception in Europe. The French Presidency should make progress on this issue, concluded Mr Benassi.

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

UEAPME speaks at Agora on climate change

Advisor Rosa Solanes spoke at the Agora on Climate Change, which took place at the European Parliament in Brussels on 12-13 June. She stressed that micro and small businesses are often not fully aware of the environmental impacts of their activities, and need specific training to be able to comply with environmental legislation. Her points were later echoed at a workshop on the "Economic challenges of climate change", where participants called for a socio-economic model where governments, civil society and the private sector (especially SMEs) work together with the aim of protecting the environment.

➤ [Read the Agora conclusions](#) or contact [Rosa Solanes](#)

FORWARD PLANNING

KEY EVENTS AHEAD:

- [CGPME conference on the Small Business Act for Europe: Which SME policy for the French Presidency of the EU?](#) (Brussels, 23/06)
- [Dublin Foundation Seminar on Workers' Skills](#) (23-25/06, contact [Helen Hoffmann](#))
- [European Interoperability Framework Info Day](#) (Brussels, 25/06, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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