

# UEAPME Newsflash

## Renewed social agenda satisfactory despite some limits

The European Commission presented on 2 July its "Renewed social agenda", a package of legislative and non-legislative initiatives in the social policy area. UEAPME said that the package is a step in the right direction as far as the general approach is concerned, and welcomed the focus put by the EC on the need to invest more on youth, skills and employability to improve inclusive labour markets. However, it would have preferred more attention for flexicurity and active labour market policies. Moreover, it criticised the initiative to review the existing rules on equal treatment for the self-employed. Finally, it warned against new burdens and costs for SMEs possibly arising from a new directive to tackle discrimination in all its forms and beyond the workplace, which covers "access to goods and services" and puts the burden of proof on the alleged offender.

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

## Hike in interest rates creates concerns for SMEs

The Governing Board of the European Central Bank, meeting in Frankfurt on 3 June, decided to raise its main interest rates by 25 basis points. UEAPME reacted cautiously to this decision, and stressed that a hike in interest rates is not the correct way to tackle the rising inflation in the EU, which is mainly due to external factors such as high oil and commodity prices. The ECB's decision is likely to put pressure disproportionately on the real economy, a worrying signal for crafts and SMEs at a moment when the Eurozone is showing clear signs of a slowdown. UEAPME warned against repeating such hikes in the months to come.

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

## EPC customers progress on credit transfer, direct debit

Economic and Fiscal Policy Director Gerhard Huemer represented UEAPME at a meeting on 30 June among customer stakeholders of the European Payments Council, the decision-making and coordination body of the European banking industry in relation to payments. Progress was made on SEPA credit transfer systems, the next version of which will allow better "end-to-end" processing. However, a final solution for remittance information, the optional bits of data accompanying payment orders, has not been found yet. This could create problems for SMEs, said Mr Huemer, which could have to comply with different sets of requirements from different larger clients and contractors. On direct debit, consensus was found on the so-called CMF system, by which debtors mandate a creditor company to withdraw from their accounts. If one of the transaction parties wants increased security, additional optional services (AOS) will be available, but at an extra cost.

➤ Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## E-tools for learning and training discussed in Poland

The Polish Craft Association ZRP organised in Gdansk on 27 June the final conference of the EQUAL project "Opolski e-Rzemieślnik" aiming at a better use of electronic tools to improve the continuous learning and training offer to Polish craftsmen. Training Policy Director Liliane Volozinskis opened the meeting. She gave participants an in-depth overview of the main priorities for UEAPME in the training policy field, as well as of the latest development in VET policy at European level, such as the so-called "Copenhagen process" and the adoption of several tools, for instance the European Qualifications Framework (EQF), the European Credit system for Vocational Education and Training (ECVET) and the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework (EQARF). A good exchange of views took place about the role of craft associations in the reform process of education and training systems taking place at national level in view of implementing the EQF.

➤ Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## SME FIT II: new trainings in Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria

HOK, the Croatian Chamber of Crafts, organised its first National Training Programme in [Zagreb](#) on 9-10 June on the EU acquis on food safety, product safety and health and safety at work. Local experts and speakers from Slovakia (SZZ) and Austria (WKÖ) joined the training and added their valued opinion. On 12 June, NCSC, the National Chamber of Skilled Crafts and the beneficiary partner for Bulgaria, hosted an information seminar in [Veliko Tarnovo](#). Current and interested future members participated in workshops on gender equality and female entrepreneurship as well as successful lobbying at national and EU level. The last week in June witnessed an information seminar for entrepreneurs and members of the National Council of Small and Medium Sized Enterprises of Romania, CNIPMMR, in Bucharest on "How to improve your competitiveness with CSR". The first month of summer ended with a meeting of lead and beneficiary partners on Thursday 26 June in Brussels. Hosted by lead partner UNIZO, partners exchanged experiences with the activities so far, adjusted timetables and discussed details for the events to come. Activities continue in Bulgaria on 10 July with a seminar for UPEE on how to introduce new services for member with experts from Germany.

➤ Contact: [Iris Marlovits](#)

## Coming up: final conference for the CSR project

The final conference of the project "Responsible Entrepreneurship in SMEs", which aims to support SME organisations in implementing the recommendations made by the Multi-Stakeholder-Forum on CSR, will take place in Rome on 11 July. The event will be opened by a video message from the Commissioner Verheugen, followed by interventions of all

project partners. Each speaker will illustrate the experience made during the project in the different partner countries. The main deliverables of the project will also be unveiled, including a handbook in 8 languages, a VET curriculum and the “CSR game”, a table game designed to raise awareness of the benefits of CSR in its environmental, economic and social aspects.

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

## EESC publishes brochure on the future of textile sector

The Consultative Commission on Industrial Change (CCMI) of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) recently compiled its latest work on the textile, clothing and footwear sector in a brochure published in four languages. The text shows how the story of the industry is an example of adaptability and resilience, and a lesson on the advantages of concerted and coordinated action of all social partners. It concludes that, in spite of partial relocation, the future of the sector is bright and this is due to a large extent to the industry itself. Director for Enterprise Policy Luc Hendrickx contributed to the brochure, which contains the proceedings of a public hearing organised by the EESC to which he participated last year. Counterfeiting is a key concern for SMEs operating in the sector, stressed Mr Hendrickx – while a handful of countries do an excellent job in this respect, the political will to prioritise the issue is still missing in most Member States.

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

## From Andrea Benassi’s agenda: Rome, Brussels, Sweden

Secretary General Andrea Benassi spoke last week in Rome at a meeting between the EC and the Italian Ministry for Economic Development. This week, he met representatives of the French Government in Brussels as well as UEAPME members and chaired the Budget Committee. This weekend, he will fly to Sweden to attend the General Assembly of Företagarna and meet the Swedish EU Affairs Minister.

**27/06:** In Rome, Mr Benassi attended a meeting between the European Commission’s SME Envoy **Françoise Le Bail** and the Italian Ministry for Economic Development. Speaking on behalf of our Italian members, the Secretary General stressed the key role of the SME Envoy in Brussels and reinstated UEAPME’s main requests on the Small Business Act, which is going to be discussed soon at Council level.

**30/06:** Mr Benassi met the Deputy Permanent Representative of the French Government in Brussels, Mr **Philippe Léglise-Costa**. On the eve of the French Presidency of the EU, Mr Benassi and Mr Léglise-Costa held a last exchange of views on the main policy priorities for the months to come, starting of course from the SBA.

**02/07:** Mr Benassi and Mr **Hans-Eberhard Schleyer** from ZDH chaired UEAPME’s Budget Committee, which dealt with the main activities foreseen for 2008 and 2009.

**03/07:** Mr Benassi and UEAPME Directors met representatives of **Coiffure EU**, the association of employers’ organisations in hairdressing, to discuss the creation of a Sector Forum regrouping all organisations dealing with cosmetics and aesthetics.

**05-06/07:** In Sweden, Mr Benassi will attend the General Assembly of our member Företagarna. On Sunday, he will speak alongside the Swedish EU Affairs Minister **Cecilia Malström**, Företagarna’s Managing Director **Anna-Stina Nordmark** and Board Vice Chairman **Gunilla Almgren** in a seminar on small businesses and Europe at the “Almedalen Week”, the biggest annual political get-together in Sweden.

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

## FORWARD PLANNING

### KEY EVENTS AHEAD:

- Meeting of EU social partners with the Troika of Social Affairs ministers (Chantilly, 10/07, contact [Liliane Volozinskis](#))
- Informal Competitiveness Council (Versailles - Jouy-en-Josas, 17-18/07, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))

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