

UEAPME Newsflash

Adoption of geo-blocking regulation: SMEs are concerned

The European Parliament's plenary [adopted](#) the regulation to end unjustified geo-blocking. While SMEs support the fight against discrimination based on nationality and residency, they remain highly concerned as there are many questions regarding the practical implementation of the regulation left unanswered and no guarantee of legal certainty for traders. The text imposes a de facto obligation to sell, contrary to what the Commission and Parliament state. According to UEAPME, it is still not clear which obligations the traders will have towards consumers residing in Member States where they are not active and which law will be applied. Despite the efforts in the Parliament, legal certainty was not achieved. The internal market is still fragmented but specific measures should be used to overcome this. However, this regulation alone will not solve the fragmentation but instead pose an additional barrier for SMEs wanting to enter the online market. Contact: [Chiara Aprea](#)

SME finance: Capital Markets alone are not sufficient

Secretary General Véronique Willems was invited to speak at the [Capital Market Summit 2018](#) organised by [Politico](#) in Paris. In a panel with EC Vice-President Katainen and the [EIF](#) CEO Gilibert on facilitating access to capital for SMEs, she supported the Capital Market Union project, but said that this alone will not be sufficient to improve the situation. Fast growing SMEs are not only lacking access to equity finance, but suffer from the fact that growing in Europe is much more costly and time-consuming than in the USA or in Asia due to the incomplete single market in many areas. Furthermore, the fact that the majority of SMEs do not have access to capital markets and depend on debt finance must be acknowledged. Therefore, the banks' capacity to lend to SMEs has to be improved by more adequate banking regulations. Financial instruments like COSME and EFSI should focus more on long-term and riskier projects to allow SMEs to innovate and invest. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Next RDI Programme needs strong focus on innovation

The UEAPME Working Group on Research and Innovation met with the EC's DG RDI to discuss possibilities to support innovative SMEs within the successor programme of Horizon 2020 (FP9: 2021-2027). Based on UEAPME comments made in the [position paper](#) for the mid-term review of H2020, UEAPME experts argued the need for a programme aiming to turn research and knowledge into business opportunities to create jobs and growth. Progress should be made in three areas: (i) applied research projects should already be evaluated regarding their potential for solving societal challenges and their market potential, (ii) the future European Innovation Council should provide financial instruments to allow successful start-ups to commercialise and grow, and (iii) FP 9 has to be open for innovative SMEs with a real European project. Finally, UEAPME members asked to at least keep the current 20% target for SME participation. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

SMEs and the future of work discussed at EGE roundtable

At a roundtable on the future of work, organised by the European Group on Ethics in Science and new Technologies (EGE), Secretary General Véronique Willems said that digitalisation needs to be managed, and not stopped. She outlined the different scenarios for SMEs: some are frontrunners, others need to adapt. The focus should be on helping people respond to change, in particular to those groups less able to adapt to the changing labour market. Upskilling is needed for all, including entrepreneurs, to capitalise on the opportunities offered by the digital economy. Ms Willems emphasised that SMEs will always remain the backbone of Europe's economy. The increased share of self-employed in Europe also related to the inflexibility of today's labour markets. Premature solutions should be avoided, and security for self-employed to thrive in the digital economy could be achieved by clarifying B2B contracts. Contact: [Arnold de Boer](#)

SME policy scrutinised in Italian EESC hearing

As a follow-up to the European Economic and Social Committee's opinion on "Improving the effectiveness of EU policies for SMEs", the EESC and UEAPME member organisation Confartigianato Imprese organised a [hearing](#) in Rome. Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx spoke in the panel on "The European approach to promoting SMEs". There is an urgent need for a visible, horizontal SME policy that should take into account the needs of our traditional and smallest enterprises. A change of the SME definition is not necessary to this end as the actual one is still fit for purpose. A thorough application of the 'Think Small First' principle needs to ensure SME interests are taken into account by decision makers. Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

----- News from UEAPME Projects -----

Vice-President Almgren re-elected as SBS President

At the SBS Board of Directors meeting, Vice-President Gunilla Almgren was re-elected as President. The meeting also included a presentation from an [EFTA](#) representative and an update on the implementation of the SBS strategy and work programme for 2018. Contact: [Doris Rabetge](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- UEAPME Workshop at Industry Day - [Registration](#) (22.02, [Gerhard Huemer](#))

SUBSCRIBE / UNSUBSCRIBE / PAST ISSUES

To subscribe to, unsubscribe from or read and download all the issues of the UEAPME Newsflash, please visit the following link: <http://www.ueapme.com/spip.php?rubrique14>

UEAPME Newsflash
Compiled by: [Jenny Manin](#)
Press and communications officer
Phone: +32 2 230 7599
Mobile: +32 496 520 329