

# UEAPME Newsflash

## **SMEs are still the driving force of European economy**

President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller and Secretary General Véronique Willems participated in the European SME Assembly in Tallinn, organised by the European Commission. The SME Assembly is the flagship event of the European SME week since 2012. During these three days, SME policy and decision makers and entrepreneurs gather to network, exchange best practises and formulate proposals on how to create the best possible environment for SMEs. UEAPME fully supports this event and considers it to be an opportunity for its member organisations to exchange views on European and national/regional policies to strengthen SMEs. Ms Rabmer-Koller [stated](#) that entrepreneurs need a stimulating environment without unnecessary administrative burdens, where people with the right skills can cooperate to ensure the development of SMEs and where these skills provide access to the resources required to run their business.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

## **Skills shortages: a threat for SMEs**

The 2<sup>nd</sup> European Vocational Skills Week was a real [opportunity](#) to showcase the high value of Vocational Education and Training in Europe. Many UEAPME members organised national, regional and local events across Europe to promote and recognise the importance of vocational skills acquired on the job. Indeed, Crafts and SMEs need the right skills to develop their business. The [UEAPME EU Craft & SME Barometer](#) recently indicated that SMEs have put forward the skills shortages and mismatches as starting to have a negative impact on growth and job creation within their companies. Vocational Education and Training (VET), especially in dual systems where training takes place in companies, is the most adequate way for learners to acquire the skills needed on the labour market. They learn practical and technical skills, as well as highly relevant soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, creativity and adaptability.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## **Social partners' involvement in EU Semester reviewed by EMCO**

UEAPME members (FR, IT, RO, SI) participated in a review of national social partner's involvement in the EU Semester organised by the Employment Committee (EMCO) and the EC's DG EMPL. This multilateral surveillance is part of the EU efforts to strengthen social dialogue in line with the new European Pillar of Social Rights and the Employment Guidelines. This year, it focussed on 12 Member States that had to explain how they involve social partners in the Semester process, National Reforms Programme and Country Specific Recommendations' implementation. Employers and trade unions put forward their views and requests for improvements. Despite some progress, there is still room for improvement and a need for further capacity building. Social Affairs Director Liliane Volozinskis concluded that besides genuine consultation, active bipartite social dialogue and tripartite partnership are essential for more ownership and acceptance of reforms in Europe.

Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

## **Improved collateral enforcement to improve bank lending**

The EC's DG FISMA invited business organisations for an exchange of views on a European initiative for "Accelerated Collateral Enforcement" legislation. The aim of the initiative is to tackle non-performing loans by allowing banks an easier recovery of values from collaterals granted by companies if a loan is not paid back. The Commission is looking for an out-of-court procedure which is faster and less costly for banks and would therefore also reduce the costs for bank lending. Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer agreed that there is a problem with the realisation of collaterals in some countries. However, the situations differ very much between Member States and are linked to legal and regulatory differences, including insolvency procedures. Therefore, Mr Huemer raised doubts that a European legislation is appropriate to tackle this problem and underlined that such a procedure for banks must in no case weaken the rights of other creditors.

Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

## **Digitalisation: SMEs need to be included in the policy process**

UEAPME Hungarian member IPOSZ, with the support of the Visegrad Fund, organised an international [conference](#) in Budapest on "The Impact of Industry 4.0 on the SME sector". Enterprise Policy Director Luc Hendrickx presented the European SME position and stressed that any policy should include traditional small enterprises. Furthermore, there is a real need for smart regulation that is futureproof and based on the 'Think Small First' principle. There is a huge need for exchange of best practices as well as awareness raising and capacity building of and through the SME organisations. In addition, the skills gap needs to be closed. Public authorities should better include SME organisations in all the discussions regarding digitalisation. Considering the problems SMEs face are similar all over Europe, Mr Hendrickx called on the Visegrad countries to support UEAPME's political requests.

Contact: [Luc Hendrickx](#)

----- News from UEAPME Sector Fora -----

## Construction Forum focuses on CPR and innovation

At the second Construction Forum of 2017, a DG GROW representative gave an update on the upcoming review of the Construction Products Regulation (CPR), displaying one of the most important legislations for construction companies. The Forum members generally recognised the need for a better and more flexible application of the CPR, focusing especially on the needs of SMEs. Additionally, the European Construction Technology Platform was presented, the platform connects people and organisations from across the supply chain of the built environment in regard to innovation, knowledge transfer and research. Other topics discussed included the latest results of the [UEAPME EU Craft & SME Barometer](#) in the construction sector, developments regarding the Energy Performance of Buildings Directive (EPBD) and the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED), the Carcinogens and Mutagens Directive, as well as the Posting of Workers Directive.

Contact: [EBC](#)

## EU funding event: opportunities for SMEs to engage in projects

For the first time, UEAPME and EBC co-organised an EU Funding Event focusing on European projects, such as Horizon2020, Interreg and Erasmus+. The main idea was to offer UEAPME and EBC member organisations a general overview of when, where and how construction SMEs and their national organisations can engage in current European projects, get inspired for possible future projects, receive tips and tricks for applications, and network with different stakeholders' associations, regional authorities and consultancies. Projects presented during the event included "New competences for building professionals and blue collar workers (NEWCOM)", "Circular Economy for SMEs (CESME)", "Co-creation of energy-efficient territorial solutions for the eco-renovation of heritage in ancient centres (ENERPAT)", "Matching graduates' competencies and companies' needs (EDU-SMEs)", as well as "Exchange and training in the renewable energy sector".

Contact: [EBC](#)

### EVENTS AHEAD:

- General Data Protection Regulation (27.11, contact [Luc Hendrickx](#))
- SBS training - standards & digitisation (29.11, [Tessa Delville](#))

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