

UEAPME Newsflash

EFSI 2.0 will give further push for investment and innovation

President Ulrike Rabmer-Koller [welcomed](#) the final approval of EFSI 2.0 at the European Parliament. This decision is a big success for SMEs. The prolongation and extension of the European Fund for Strategic Investments will increase the volume from 21 to 33.5 billion euros and aims to initiate investment of up to 500 billion euros. This initiative is especially important for the financing of investments and innovation in smaller companies. Financial support for the extra 88 billion euros investment has been approved and more than 500,000 SMEs will benefit from it. With these figures, the EFSI's SME finance window ends up being the most successful one and it contributes to the current recovery of SMEs all over Europe. In order to further increase the impact, UEAPME asks for strong focus on long-term finance and more risk taking to help SMEs restart investments, to allow SMEs to invest in digitalisation and in greening their business as well as to support innovation. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

UEAPME expresses views on future EU Labour Authority

At a dedicated hearing of social partners on the future European Labour Authority (ELA), organised by the European Commission, UEAPME supported higher cross-border mobility but also better enforcement of EU rules. While the ELA should respect national competences, it could contribute to more accessible information for businesses and citizens. Reinforcing administrative capacity when necessary, sharing information as well as more coordination among Member States are welcome but additional bureaucracy and overlap with existing structures should be avoided. The ELA's added value in particular in providing a possible dispute resolution mechanism should be carefully considered, since it is the primary European Court of Justice's competence. Finally, if the Authority has to become an agency, social partners should be involved. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

EFSI 2.0: Stakeholders discuss results and future developments

Stakeholders were invited to a consultation meeting with the [EFSI Steering Board](#) and the [Management of EFSI \(EIB and EIF\)](#) where the [results of EFSI](#) were presented and to discuss future developments. Until November 2017, EFSI approved financing for about €50 bn, which should transfer into €250 bn in investments. 30% of the financing went to smaller companies. During the debate about infrastructure projects, Economic Policy Director Gerhard Huemer referred to the importance of investment platforms, where smaller projects (more accessible for SMEs) can be bundled into bankable projects. However, the most important and most successful part of EFSI so far is the SME finance pillar, where national intermediaries receive support to finance SMEs and mid-caps. Here, Mr Huemer asked the European Investment Fund to also support the creation of intermediaries in countries where it is needed. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Research has to be turned into innovation to create impact

Secretary General Véronique Willems met with EC Director General Robert-Jan Smits (DG RDI) to discuss experiences with the current SME Instrument in Horizon 2020 and SMEs' [expectations](#) for the next Framework Programme for Research and Innovation (FP9). On H2020, UEAPME asks for better advice services and improvement as regards the impact of the "Seal of Excellence" to tackle the problem with too low success rates. For the next framework programme, SMEs want to see a strong focus on investments to create impact from research. Therefore, UEAPME supports the creation of a European Innovation Council, if it covers the whole innovation cycle and recommends a more integrated approach towards financial instruments of the commercialisation phase. At the same time, UEAPME underlines the need for grants to support projects before they are able to attract finance from the market. Finally, Ms Willems asked to keep a dedicated budget for SMEs. Contact: [Gerhard Huemer](#)

Member experts kick start brainstorming on the future of VET

UEAPME national experts for Education and Training held a fruitful discussion on core issues concerning Vocational Education and Training (VET). Taking into account the rapid changes in society and the economy, VET needs to evolve. They expressed their views, as practitioners in contact with Crafts and SMEs, on employers' and learners' future needs and expectations to avoid further skills shortages. Moreover, they talked about quality apprenticeship as well as the Erasmus+ mid-term review to foster mobility in VET. The experts concluded the meeting with a state of play of the European Skills Agenda, in particular Graduate Tracking and the next Key Competence Framework. Contact: [Liliane Volozinskis](#)

CPME women entrepreneurs visit UEAPME

Secretary General Véronique Willems welcomed a delegation of women entrepreneurs from member organisation CPME during their visit to UEAPME and the European Institutions. Ms Willems gave an overview of UEAPME's role, functioning and activities. She also spoke about the decision making process in the European Union, regulatory monitoring, advocacy and lobbying, and networking with experts from other SME organisations. Moreover, she discussed the potential challenges and added value of the European Union with the entrepreneurs as well as their views on several specific files (e.g. e-card, SME definition, ...). Contact: [Véronique Willems](#)

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

A Better Functioning of the Food Supply Chain

The [agenda](#) of the High-level Forum for a Better Functioning of the Food Supply Chain featured the digitalisation of the food supply chain, a fairer trading environment and an assessment of barriers to the Single Market for food as well as the work of the Commission's Joint Research Centre on a methodology to identify dual food quality of branded foodstuff in different markets. On fairer trading conditions, UEAPME is concerned with late payment issues and with the contract environment in which small operators have to maneuver, being too often at the mercy of supermarkets and market halls. Moreover, the category of hand-crafted production has to be protected.

Contact: [Birte Day](#)

EVENTS AHEAD:

- [Rethink your business \(model\)](#) - Envision (18.01, Vienna, contact [Gerhard Huemer](#))

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