

## UEAPME's representation at EU level in the area of sustainability

In the area of sustainability UEAPME is currently represented in 19 committees and working groups set up at EU level, some by the EU Commission (mainly by DG Environment and DG Energy) and some by ECHA, the European agency based in Helsinki and in charge of managing REACH.

It goes without saying that the committees and working groups where UEAPME is represented can sometimes be very technical. Consequently, UEAPME does not operate here with its own Secretariat but through experts working for its national members or its European branch organisations.

Most of these committees can be grouped in big areas: the first one deals with the greening of SMEs. In this case UEAPME is part of the Task Force for the Implementation of the Green Action Plan (GAP) for SMEs, which is the section of the Circular Economy Package specifically devoted to help SMEs going from linear to circular in their activities. UEAPME is also subcontractor in the setting up of ERIK (European Resource Efficiency Excellence Centre), the virtual centre being built in the framework of the GAP as main instrument to support SMEs become more resource efficient.

Always in the area of the circular economy, UEAPME is a member of the Informal Expert Group 'Support to Circular Economy Financing', set up by DG Research to address one of the main barriers of the switching from linear to circular economy, namely access to finance to cover the high upfront expenses and investments. UEAPME has also been member of CEPS' (Centre for European Policy Studies) Task Force on the Role of Business in the Circular Economy. The task force had quite a wide scope, aimed at understanding why businesses, including SMEs, can be interested in circular economy and how they can contribute to its deployment in our society. A final report will be published by CEPS soon.

The second big group is embedded in the setting up of the Energy Union, where UEAPME, in its capacity of European social partner, is regularly consulted by Vice-President Šefčovič on all the different packages proposed by the Commission, namely on legal acts such as the Energy Efficiency Directive, the Renewable Energy Directive, the Energy Labelling and the Effort Sharing Decision. On top of this UEAPME is also a member of the EEFIG II (Energy Efficiency Financial Institutions Group), which aims at proposing solutions to make energy efficiency projects more bankable also for SMEs.

The third group concerns the REACH regulation. In this case UEAPME is member of several committees set up by ECHA on different aspects of REACH as well as of Committees set up by the EU Commission together with the Member States and ECHA. The most interesting committee is the Directors Contact Group on the Implementation of REACH (DCG), which regroups the EU Commission, ECHA, UEAPME and several other businesses umbrella and branch organisations in Brussels. Its aim is to find practical solutions which diminish the costs and the red tape linked to the implementation of REACH, which is very important for micro and small businesses. This is particularly relevant with the view of the third and final registration deadline under REACH of 31<sup>st</sup> May 2018, which will concern substances put on the market at 1 ton or more per year and, therefore, mainly manufactured or imported by SMEs.