



HEADLINES

EU/ European Council: Emphasis on economic recovery and jobs

On 30 January 2012, in a joint statement after the informal meeting of the European Council, the Members of the European Council emphasised the need for “*growth-friendly consolidation and job-friendly growth*”. In light of the crisis and high unemployment figures, the Members tried to outline measures to increase momentum towards economic recovery. The statement focussed on three particular courses of action: stimulating employment, completing the single market and boosting the financing of the economy, especially for SMEs. Among the measures envisaged are: the direct stimulus of the economy by using EU funds, a swift implementation of initiatives already on the table and stronger support for SMEs whose businesses are suffering from the credit crunch.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the emphasis on growth and recovery and supports the Council’s focus on SMEs as crucial ingredients towards the EU’s economic recovery. Boosting SME finance is absolutely vital, as bank lending is becoming increasingly squeezed as a result of the new capital requirements and talks about financial transaction taxes. However, ESBA urges the institutions to follow these words up by actions, as the phrase ‘SMEs are the backbone of our economy’ has been stretched to its limits with only little to show for to date.

To read the full statement of the Members of the European Council, please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/ European Council: No final agreement yet on the European Patent

On 30 January 2012, upon conclusion of the European Council informal summit in Brussels, the Member States reiterated their commitment to reach a final agreement on the European Patent by June 2012. The quarrel over the languages in which a patent could be filed already dragged the negotiations for years, now the issue to be solved is the location of the European Patent Court. The establishment of a European-wide patent would reduce the costs of patents by 80 per cent and give valuable impetus to innovation.

To find out more about the European Patent, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: The European Commission and British PM David Cameron clash over Financial Transaction Tax

On 26 January 2012, during his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, the British Prime Minister David Cameron argued the proposal of the European Commission for a Financial Transaction tax to be ‘madness’. Mr Cameron pointed out that the European Commission’s own figures indicate a devastating effect of the tax on the European economy. The European Commission reacted by stating that if revenues of an FTT would be reinvested in the economy, there would be no negative effects of the tax on growth.

To read more about a Financial Transaction Tax, please click [here](#)

To access the European Commission’s proposal, please click [here](#)

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EU/ Council: Danish Presidency will focus on economic growth

On 25 January 2012, on the occasion of the Danish Presidency reception organised by The Parliament's Magazine, the Danish Minister for European Affairs Nicolai Wammen reiterated that restoring growth of the European economy will be the main focus during the Danish Presidency. He stressed the need for cooperation of the institutions and the fact that the EU should invest in the future and be more than a "day to day crisis management tool".

To read more about the programme of the Danish Presidency, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: Commission adopts proposal on new EU data protection rules

On 25 January 2012, the European Commission unveiled a proposal aiming towards a better protection of online personal data across the EU. If approved by the European Parliament and by the Council, the rules will strengthen citizens' rights on their personal data. The main element is the obligation for companies to ask for citizens' explicit consent before using their data. Companies breaching the rules could be exposed to penalties reaching up to 2% of their global annual turnover.

To read the full text of the proposal, please click [here](#).

To learn more about data protection, please click [here](#).

EU/ European Parliament: Divisions over bank capital rules - MEPs and industry fear credit squeeze

On 24 January 2012, the draft report on prudential requirements for financial institutions by senior Member of the European Parliament Othmar Karas was discussed in the European Parliament Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs. The revision of the Capital Requirements Directives has been the source of fierce debate for months. Various MEPs, Member States and entrepreneurs have voiced their concern on the impact of very strict implementation while the Commission remains blind for the threat of reduced credit availability in already troubled economic times.

To learn more about the Commission's proposal on Capital Requirements, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Parliament: Agreement reached on update of Electronic Waste Directive

On 19 January 2012, the European Parliament approved an update of the Waste Electrical and Electronic equipment (WEEE) Directive. The update appeared necessary, as only a third of waste electrical and electronic equipment was actually treated according to the previous rules. The updated directive harmonises reporting and registration obligations so that producers need only undertake administrative proceedings in one Member State. Member States will have to collect 45% of e-waste by 2016, and 65% by 2019. The text now has to be formally adopted by the Council of Ministers.

To read the decision of the European Parliament, please click [here](#).

EU/ European Parliament: Malcolm Harbour MEP urges Member states to 'Think Small First'

On 16 January 2012, the European Commission published a study showing that 85% of new jobs are created by SMEs. In reaction to the study, senior Member of the European Parliament, Mr Malcolm Harbour urged the Member States to consider the impact of their actions on small businesses. Moreover, Mr Harbour stated: "These statistics should focus our minds. Small businesses will act as the engines to pull us out of the economic quagmire. If we stand in their way then we stand in the way of economic growth and employment."

To read the full report on SMEs and job creation by the European Commission, please click [here](#)

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PUBLICATIONS

EU/ Eurostat: Unemployment rate for December 2011 unchanged compared with November 2011

On 31 January 2012, Eurostat published the unemployment figures for December 2011. The euro area (EA17) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 10.4% in December 2011, unchanged compared with November. It was 10.0% in December 2010. The EU27 unemployment rate was 9.9% in December 2011, also unchanged compared with November. It was 9.5% in December 2010.

To access this publication, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: Economic Sentiment Indicator January 2012

On 30 January 2012, the European Commission published the Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) for January 2012. The Economic Sentiment Indicator rose by 1.2 points in the EU and by 0.6 points in the euro area, to 92.8 and 93.4, respectively - the first pick-up in sentiment since March 2011. The improvement was mainly driven by increasing confidence in the services sector and - to a lesser extent - among consumers and in the construction sector.

To access this publication, please click [here](#)

EU/ Business Climate Indicator: January 2012

On 30 January 2012, the European Commission published the Business Climate Indicator (BCI) for the month of January 2012. In January 2012, the Business Climate Indicator for the euro area rose for the second month in a row. The improvement in the BCI was mainly driven by a more positive assessment of production trends observed in recent months and of export order books.

To access this publication, please click [here](#)

EU/ Eurostat: Industrial orders decreased in November 2011

On 24 January 2012, Eurostat published the industrial order index for November 2011. In November 2011 compared with October 2011, the euro area (EA17) industrial new orders index fell by 1.3%, after a rise of 1.5% in October. In the EU27 new orders decreased by 1.4% in November 2011, after an increase of 0.2% in October.

To access this publication, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: Protecting European enterprises and workers from unsafe products

On 20 January 2012, the European Commission published a summary of its conference on market surveillance and machinery, which was held in Brussels on 24 November 2011. With nearly 170 000 enterprises (mostly SMEs) in this field, mechanical engineering alone employs some 3.3 million EU citizens.

To access this publication, please click [here](#)

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation on the review of directive 96/53/EC: Weights & Dimensions

Closes: 27 February 2012

Weights and dimensions of heavy-duty vehicles operating international and national transport in the EU are ruled by Directive 96/53/EC. This Directive aims at ensuring fair competition between

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hauliers, ensuring that transport operations may not be refused between two Member States on the basis of the dimensions of the vehicle used. The present questionnaire will provide input for the considered revision of Directive 96/53/EC and the impact assessment to be carried out beforehand. The questionnaire addresses issues related to the energy and CO2 performance of heavy-duty vehicles, inter-modality and innovation in transport needs, specific legal issues raised by the current directive, and improvement of compliance with the regulations through controls and enforcement.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on the restructuring and anticipation of change: What lessons from recent experience?

Closes: 30 March 2012

This Green Paper aims to identify successful practices and policies in the field of restructuring and adaptation to change in order to promote employment, growth and competitiveness as part of the Europe 2020 strategy and in particular the industrial policy flagship initiative of October 2010, the "Agenda for new skills and jobs" adopted in November 2010.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on the revision of the European Union rules on regional state aid

Closes: 26 April 2012

As a derogation to the general prohibition to grant aid the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) provides that state aid to promote regional development can, under certain conditions, be considered compatible with the internal market pursuant to Articles 107(3)(a) or (c) of the TFEU. The compatibility criteria to be fulfilled as regards such aid are defined by the European Commission and laid down in the Guidelines on national regional aid for 2007-2013 (RAG), the Communication concerning the criteria for an in-depth assessment of regional aid to large investment projects (IDAC) and the relevant provisions of Commission Regulation (EC) No 800/2008 of 6 August 2008 declaring certain categories of aid compatible with the common market in application of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty (GBER). The RAG and the GBER will expire on 31 December 2013. The present public consultation offers stakeholders the opportunity to provide input to the Commission at an early stage of policy making. Member States and other interested parties are invited to express their views on the EU rules currently applicable to regional state aid and to suggest possible amendments to these rules.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

ONGOING:

Consultation on the Revision of the rules for the assessment of licensing agreements for the transfer of technology under EU competition law

Closes: 3 February 2012

This consultation seeks to collect the opinion of stakeholders on the revision of EU competition rules for the assessment of licensing agreements for the transfer of technology. For the purpose of the EU competition rules, a technology transfer agreement is an agreement where one party (the licensor) authorizes another party (or parties, the licensee(s)) to use its technology (patent, know-how, software license) for the production of goods and services.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on the Renewable Energy Strategy

Closes: 7 February 2012

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The legislative framework as regards renewable energy is laid down in the Renewable Energy Directive which sets an obligatory target of 20% renewable energy in final energy consumption as well as a 10% target in transport for 2020. Given the long-term perspective of investors it is necessary already now to look beyond that date. This public consultation has the aim of soliciting the view of interested parties to assess how far the orientations of the current policy framework remain valid in the medium term, i.e. until 2030.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on guidelines for public procurement of ICT systems

Closes: 14 February 2012

As part of Action 23 of the Digital Agenda, the European Commission will develop guidance on the link between ICT standardisation and public procurement to help public authorities to use standards to promote efficiency and reduce lock-in. Draft guidelines are available now, and a web consultation on the guidelines as well as on the measures to be taken to make them adopted is open and you are invited to participate.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on the review of the EU state aid rules for research, development and innovation

Closes: 24 February 2012

This public consultation follows publication of a mid-term review on the application of the current Community Framework for State aid for R&D&I in August 2011. By way of a questionnaire, the Commission invites Member States and interested parties to submit their input and views on the review of the EU state aid rules for supporting R&D&I ahead of the expiry of the R&D&I Framework end of 2013. The Commission is in particular interested in statistical information and qualitative comments on national R&D&I policies at large and on national state aid support measures for R&D&I in particular.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on the revision of Directive 2009/142/EC on appliances burning gaseous fuels (GAD)

Closes: 11 March 2012

The main objective of the public consultation on the revision of Directive 2009/142/EC on appliances burning gaseous fuels (GAD) is to collect views and opinions of stakeholders and citizens on various issues that may need to be addressed when the GAD is revised.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on Delivering more Sustainable Consumption and Production

Closes: 3 April 2012

The European Commission wants to gather views and additional information on the possible introduction of EU wide measures related to Sustainable Consumption and Production. The consultation offers an opportunity to all interested parties to express their views, to give their opinion on the proposed policy options.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on Green Paper - Towards an integrated European market for card, internet and mobile payments

Closes: 11 April 2012

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The purpose of this consultation is to collect information from all interested stakeholders on the existing situation of the card, internet and mobile payments market and the potential hurdles for integration at European level in these markets.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

Online consultation on administrative burdens reduction

Ongoing

The European Commission has launched an online consultation on the reduction of administrative burdens. Inspired by examples of Best Practice in Belgium and the Netherlands, the consultation invites entrepreneurs to identify unnecessary red tape in order to help the EU improve the quality of its legislation. The consultation is part of the Action Programme to reduce administrative burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% in 2012.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#)

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

30 January 2012 – Informal meeting of the European Council
30 and 31 January 2012 – European Parliament Committee meetings
1 February 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College
1 and 2 February 2012 – European Parliament plenary session (Brussels)
2 February 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings
1, 2, 3 February 2012 – Coreper I and II meetings
2 and 3 February 2012 – Competitiveness Council
6 and 9 February 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings
8 February 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College
8 and 9 February 2012 – Coreper I and II meetings
13, 14, 15, 16 February 2012 – European Parliament plenary session (Strasbourg)
13, 14, 15, 16 February 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings (Strasbourg)
14 February 2012 – Transport, Communications and Energy Council
14 February 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College
15 and 16 February 2012 – Coreper I and II meetings
17 February 2012 – Employment, Social, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
20 February 2012 – Meeting of Eurogroup
20 and 21 February 2012 – Competitiveness Council
21 February 2012 – Economic and Financial Affairs Council
22 February – EC weekly meeting of the College
22 and 23 February 2012 – Coreper I and II
23 February 2012 – Agriculture and Fisheries Council

Other SME-related events

European competition forum

2 February 2012

Brussels, Belgium

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The first European competition forum will welcome ministers, parliamentarians, competition policy experts and the media to debate priorities for competition policy and enforcement in the coming years to identify the challenges ahead and exchange ideas. Three panel sessions on competition policy and competitiveness, state aid control at a cross-roads and the European competition model will cover all competition policies - antitrust, mergers and state aid.

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#)

Public Hearing on the Financial Transaction Tax

6 February 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The European Parliament Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs is organising a public hearing on the Financial Transaction Tax. The Committee's chair, Ms Sharon Bowles MEP and the rapporteur, Ms Anni Podimata MEP, will speak, as well as experts in the field of financial services.

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#)

Conference on smart use of ICT in transport and logistics

16 February 2012

Brussels, Belgium

This is the final DiSCwise conference where innovation in logistics is portrayed. Under the heading of "Smart use of ICT in transport and logistics: Integrating SMEs in global digital value chains", supply chain & logistics managers, IT developers, shippers, freight forwarders, transport operators, manufacturers and retailers will share their ideas about collaboration & interoperability in logistics.

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#)

European entrepreneurship summit

21 February 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The EIT's 2011/2012 Entrepreneurship Competition highlights and encourages entrepreneurial ventures within the EIT's three thematic areas: climate change adaptation and mitigation, the future of information and communication society and sustainable energy.

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#)

Conference on a single digital market by 2015

27 and 28 February 2012

Copenhagen, Denmark

The conference will focus on the establishment of a fully functioning single market for e-commerce and digital services, thereby contributing to economic growth in Europe. The full title of the conference is "A single digital market by 2015 – A driver for economic growth and jobs".

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#)

Brussels tax forum 2012

5 and 6 March 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The Brussels tax forum is an annual conference that brings together policy makers, experts, stakeholders and the general public from all over the world to discuss tax issues of particular political and general interest. The topic chosen for 2012 is 'Tax policy under a common currency'. The

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conference will focus on the tax policy challenges that the need for fiscal consolidation and growth-enhancing reforms poses to countries belonging to a monetary union.

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#)

European Competition and Consumer Day

8 March 2012

Copenhagen, Denmark

This conference will focus on how to strengthen competition and how to promote consumer active behaviour. A more vibrant competition and active consumption will be exposed as a possible solution to the challenge raised by European productivity and growth.

To learn more about this event, please click [here](#).

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