



HEADLINES

ESBA opinion / Supply Chain Security: Welcomes call to withdraw draft Regulation

On 7 December, 2006, Dutch Liberal MEP, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert, Rapporteur on the European Parliament's Transport Committee, called on the European Commission to withdraw and reconsider its draft Regulation on enhancing supply chain security. The proposal seeks to protect freight transport against terrorist attacks by obliging Member States to offer "Secure Operator" status, to road, rail and inland waterways companies, which comply with detailed security requirements.

Whilst the small business community is fully committed to tackling the threat of terrorism, ESBA has led calls for withdrawal of the proposal at EU level. The measures proposed in the draft regulation would cost SMEs up to 55 billion Euros, without any clear security benefits. Other key concerns include the proposal's scope (SMEs from the factory to the shop would be affected), its real security dividend and the authenticity of the proposed voluntary approach for operators, given market pressures.

ESBA is however particularly worried that organisations representing small businesses were insufficiently consulted during the draft Regulation's preparation, contrary to the 'think small first' principle and the EU's Better Regulation Agenda.

Commenting on the announcement, ESBA President, Tina Sommer said, "We are pleased that the needs of SMEs are being taken into consideration by the European Parliament. We now call again on the Commission to work more closely with business to reach practical and effective solutions to the challenges posed by the threat of terrorism."

To see the Rapporteur's Press Release, please go to:

http://www.alde.eu/index.php?id=42&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=8244&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=1&cHash=6a718d7277

To see the ESBA press release in full, please go to:

[657E1/News/Press_Releases/07_Dec_2006_-_ESBA_welcomes_MEP_s_call_to_withdraw_ESCS_Plan.aspx](http://www.alde.eu/News/Press_Releases/07_Dec_2006_-_ESBA_welcomes_MEP_s_call_to_withdraw_ESCS_Plan.aspx)

For more information regarding Ms. Hennis-Plasschaert's announcement, please go to:

http://www.alde.eu/index.php?id=42&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=8244&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=1&cHash=6a718d7277

ESBA Opinion / REACH: Compromise adopted in plenary

On 13 December 2006, Parliament voted in plenary on the second reading of REACH, the major European chemicals legislation controlling the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals. The vote, which gave overwhelming support to the compromise between Parliament and Council, contains some positive aspects for small businesses but a number of problem areas remain. The 'One Substance One Registration' (OSOR) principle has been kept, albeit in a compromised form, with companies able to opt-out under certain conditions. Regarding the Substance Information Exchange Fora (SIEF), ESBA had hoped that costs would be distributed according to the volume

ESBA Bulletin of 15 December 2006 – Volume 8 – Number 18

produced, as supported by Parliament's Environment Committee. However, the compromise has determined that costs should be divided equally amongst all participants. This will lead to greater relative costs for SMEs.

Having said this, in a major improvement over Parliament's previous position, the compromise ensures that substances produced in quantities of 1 to 10 tonnes per year will not require chemical safety reports. This promises to significantly cut red tape for SMEs.

ESBA understands the need for an EU-wide chemicals policy, and welcomes the fact that Parliament and Council have avoided the unpredictable process of conciliation. However, the ability of SMEs to continue to operate effectively is vital to the EU's economy. ESBA calls for REACH to be implemented sensitively. In addition, the Commission and national governments now have a duty to help SMEs to fully understand and meet their obligations. A vital step in the right direction would be to forge a close partnership between the Agency and SMEs.

To see the ESBA press release in full, please go to:

B8576/News/Press_Releases/13_Dec_2006_-_REACH_vote_in_plenary_mixed_result_for_SMEs.aspx

ESBA opinion / Commission WP 2007 : Better Regulation the backdrop to a full schedule for SMEs

The European Commission's Work Programme for 2007 has undergone significant revision, in comparison with 2006. Alongside the identification of just 21 concrete strategic priorities, the new streamlined document highlights a series of simplification initiatives, a programme to withdraw certain pending legislation, and a list of priority actions, intended to take the Better Regulation Agenda to a new phase in the coming year.

ESBA welcomes the Commission's commitment to Better Regulation. This year, the Alliance raised concerns about the impact on SMEs of certain initiatives, which did not appear in the Commission's Legislative Plan for 2006. In conjunction with the new Work Programme, the Commission's 'forward programming' document and execution reports, which contain monthly updates on all of the Legislature's work, should facilitate improved transparency, better consultation and impact assessments taking full account of SMEs needs.

Given that the SMEs account for 99% of all enterprises in the EU, many of the policy objectives in the Work Programme for 2007 will have a direct or indirect impact on entrepreneurs. Those of more general significance for SMEs, however, include initiatives on Energy and Migration, and the proposed Communications on the Single Market, Flexicurity, the Market Access Strategy and Labour Law. ESBA looks forward to engaging on these and other policy initiatives with EU policy makers and other stakeholders next year.

To see the European Commission's Work Programme for 2007, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm

IN BRIEF

EU / Lisbon Agenda: Commission urges Member States to use 'window of opportunity'

On 12 December, the Commission delivered its second progress report on the relaunched Lisbon Strategy. Although the report suggests that economic reforms are working, EU Commission President, Jose Manuel Barroso, stated that "every Member State needs to pick up the pace and perform to its full potential" to take advantage of the 'window of opportunity' presented by the current economic upturn. As well as recommending a more strategic approach to innovation based

ESBA Bulletin of 15 December 2006 – Volume 8 – Number 18

on developing the agreement at Lahti, the report also raised the possibility of reductions in red tape for businesses.

For more information on the report, please go to:
http://ec.europa.eu/growthandjobs/index_en.htm

EU / Enterprise Awards 2006 : Y4 from Finland wins the inaugural Grand Prize

At the European Enterprise Awards in Brussels on 7 December 2006, the Y4 Ideology, which unites 36 public organisations behind the vision of making Central Finland 'the world's most entrepreneur-proactive region,' scooped the Grand Prize. Y4's aim is demonstrated by its name, which derives from the Finnish words. 'Promote Entrepreneurship in Society through Co-operation.' 5 other projects from across the EU also won recognition for their initiatives to support entrepreneurship. The new Award was described by Finnish Minister Mauri Pekkarinen as 'an outstanding tool for spreading best policy practice'.

To see more information on all of the winners, please go to:
<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/06/465&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=fr>

EU / Education: Copenhagen Process reviewed in Helsinki conference

On 4-5 December, the Commission, education ministers and social partners met in Helsinki to review the Copenhagen Process. Discussions centred on ways to remove barriers to mobility so those who gain a vocational qualification in one Member State will have it recognised in every other. The resulting communiqué called for a more focused approach, a limitation on the number of priority areas and clearer targets.

For more information on the Helsinki Communiqué, please go to:
http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/vet2006/pdf/Helsinki_Communique_en.pdf

EU / FP7: ITRE Committee completes second reading on FP7

On 29 November 2006, the European Parliament's Industry, Transport and Research Committee (ITRE) adopted a set of amendments in its second reading of the Seventh Framework Programme. Several of the 39 new amendments are significant for SME's, including new rules of participation for companies and the Risk Sharing Finance Facility (RSFF), which aims to encourage bank lending to research projects. Furthermore rapporteur and Polish MEP Jerzy Buzek submitted an amendment to ease SME's participation. The amendments were approved by the European Parliament on 29th November.

For more information on FP7 click on
http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7/home_en.html

France / innovation: Major management consultancy warns of trouble for innovation drive

President Jacques Chirac's government may take a blow if, as predicted by an expert from the management consultancy, KPMG, many of France's 67 clusters of competitiveness, launched last year, fail due to political weaknesses. KPMG states that many of the clusters, which were designed to stimulate innovation between public and private research may run into trouble because there is long-term suspicion between France's public and private communities and dissatisfaction on the part of business with their partnerships with researchers.

CONSULTATIONS

Green Paper: "Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century"

As part of the Commission's drive to modernise Labour Law, both companies and workers are invited to participate in the debate and to put forward their views. See the ESBA Opinion above.

You will find information and the questionnaire at the following link:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=labourlaw&lang=en>

Closes 31 March 2007

The EU's Market Access Strategy in a changing global economy

The Review of the EU's Market Access Strategy intends to increase its effectiveness in a rapidly changing global economy. This paper asks for your views on ways in which it might be improved.

You will find information and the questionnaire at the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/sectoral/mk_access/cs101106_en.htm

Closes 12 January 2007

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important Dates

18-21 December 2006 Committees

15-18 January 2007 European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg

22-25 January 2007 Committees

SME related Events

19 December 2006 The Priorities of the German Presidency of the EU with H.E. Willem SCHÖNFELDER, Permanent Representative of Germany to the EU; organised by CEPS; Brussels; more info <http://www.ceps.be/Events.php>

20 December 2006 Breakfast briefing with Philip Lowe, DG Competition; organised by the British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; to register, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/>

10-11 January 2007 GEM Forum: 10th and 11th January 2007, Café Royal, London; organised by the National Entrepreneurship Observatory; for more information, please go to: http://www.neo-wales.co.uk/events/item/gem_forum_10th_and_11th_january_2007_caf_royal_london

11 January 2007 Breakfast briefing on 'The Role of Company Director' with David Demetrius, President of the European Management Development Institute (EMADIN); organised by the British Chamber of Commerce; for more information, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/>

17 January 2007 Joos van Roost, CEO of ExxonMobil Belgium 'Driven by Innovation' CEO luncheon series; organised by the American Chamber of Commerce; to register, please go to: <http://www.amcham.be/cgi-bin/events.cgi?Action=display&id=352>

28 February 2007 5th Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research; arranged by ISBE; taking place in Montpellier, France; to register, please go to: www.iecer.org

To subscribe / unsubscribe: email secretariat@esba-europe.org

ESBA Brussels Office - 54 rue Vautier - B-1050 Brussels

Tel: +32-2-639 62 31 - Fax: +32-2-644 90 17 - E-mail: secretariat@esba-europe.org

ESBA Bulletin of 15 December 2006 – Volume 8 – Number 18

Web: <http://www.esba-europe.org>