



HEADLINES

EU / FINANCIAL SERVICES Brussels 02/04/2001: Draft directive on collateral

The European Commission recently proposed a Directive to create a simple minimum Community regime for the use of collateral in financial transactions. The European Commission believes that through the suggested EU regime, the use of collateral, notably cross-border collateral, will become less expensive and will benefit from more legal certainty. A Business Impact Assessment has been prepared before the proposal was issued by the European Commission. Nonetheless, it seems that only financial institutions have been approached during the consultation phase.

AS CERTAIN ASPECTS OF REGULATION ON COLLATERAL ARE IMPORTANT FOR SMES, ESBA WILL SEEK TO ASSESS WHETHER THIS PROPOSAL FOR A NEW REGULATION COULD AFFECT DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY THE ACCESS FOR FINANCING BY SMES WITHIN THE EUROPEAN UNION.

EU / TRADE Brussels 03/04/2001: Business consultation meeting on trade facilitation

The European Commission, DG Trade, recently held a consultation meeting with the business community on trade facilitation aspects of the WTO trade negotiations. ESBA was invited to speak of behalf of small business interests (present were mostly organisations representing large businesses, trade intermediaries, and sectoral representatives). This subject includes a set of measures aiming at simplifying all processes to trade (logistics, customs procedures, financial transactions, .) in WTO countries, notably by enhancing the use of new information technologies. As the debate is heating up on a to be launched new WTO negotiation round in Qatar at the end of 2001, this consultation aimed at refining the EU position on this matter.

ESBA BELIEVES THAT TRADE FACILITATION MEASURES REPRESENT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR SMES IN THIS ROUND OF TRADE NEGOTIATION UNDER THE WTO. ESBA ALSO THINKS THAT THIS SUBJECT SHOULD BE DIRECTLY LINKED TO THE "EVERYTHING BUT ARMS" INITIATIVE, LAUNCHED BY THE EU, TO REDUCE ALL TARIFFS FOR IMPORTS FROM THE 48 LDCS. MOST ECONOMIC ACTORS IN THESE COUNTRIES ARE SMES; THEY NEED A SIMPLE TRADE ENVIRONMENT TO BE ABLE TO BENEFIT FROM FREER TRADE MECHANISMS. AS THE INTEREST OF SMALL BUSINESSES MIGHT DIVERGE AGAINST THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED BY LARGE CORPORATION OR TRADE INTERMEDIARIES, IT IS IMPORTANT TO MONITOR THE DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS FIELD OF TRADE NEGOTIATION. ESBA ALREADY DRAFTED A POSITION PAPER WHICH WILL BE FINALISED IN APRIL AND SEND TO THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION AND THE WTO IN GENEVA. ESBA WILL ALSO RAISE THE DEBATE WITH OTHER SMES ORGANISATIONS WITHIN WASME, THE WORLD ASSOCIATION OF SMES, REPRESENTED IN 112 NATIONS.

EU / GOVERNANCE Brussels 06/04/2001: EC launches Interactive Policy Making initiative

The European Commission has outlined a new plan to improve governance by using better the Internet. The Interactive Policy Making initiative forms part of the Reform White Paper of the European Commission (action 8b) and is linked to the Commission's governance and the regulatory policy initiatives. The need for such action was also confirmed during the Internal Market Forum

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(28/29 November 2000). The initiative, intended to start gradually by the end of this year, consists of two main mechanisms: - Collection of spontaneous feedback via existing intermediaries (based on the already existing Business Feedback Mechanism, which will be applied to all other EU policy areas and a wider range of intermediaries); and - More rapid and structured consultations to new initiatives directly addressed to a target group.

EU / TEMPORARY WORK Brussels 09/04/2001: social partners have until May to reach an agreement

The European negotiations on temporary work between employers and trade unions have been granted another month by the Commission in order to reach an agreement still (see ESBA WEEKLY Vol. 3 - N. 14). If not successful the Commission is expected to draw up proposals instead.

IT IS CLEAR THAT THE COMMISSION WISHES THE SOCIAL PARTNERS TO SUCCEED THEMSELVES AS IT IS ALREADY THE SECOND EXTENSION PERIOD THE COMMISSION HAS PROPOSED THE SOCIAL PARTNERS AFTER THE INITIAL NINE MONTHS OF NEGOTIATIONS.

EU / ENTERPRISE POLICY Brussels 09/04/2001: Members of the Enterprise Policy Group

The list of the 35 selected candidates for the professional chamber (as a part of the Enterprise Policy Group) (see ESBA WEEKLY Vol 3 - N. 18) is now available under: (copy/paste full link) http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/epg/members.htm

OF THE 35 THERE ARE: 18 SMES, 24 HEADS OF ENTERPRISES, 10 WOMEN, REPRESENTATIVES OF ALL MEMBER STATES, AND ALL MAIN SECTORS IN MANUFACTURING AND SERVICES ARE REPRESENTED. ESBA IS CURRENTLY INQUIRING WHETHER ANY OF THOSE 35 MEMBERS ARE SOLE TRADERS, AS THIS SPECIFIC CATEGORY OF ENTERPRISES (UNINCORPORATED SMALL BUSINESSES OR SELF-EMPLOYED) FACE SPECIFIC CONCERNS. SOLE TRADERS REPRESENT A SIGNIFICANT SHARE (IF NOT THE LARGEST) OF ALL ENTERPRISES THROUGHOUT THE EU.

EU / COPYRIGHT Brussels 09/04/2001: Council approves EU copyright directive

The adopted text, quicker than initially expected, includes all proposed amendments of the European Parliament during its February 2001 plenary session (see ESBA WEEKLY - Vol 3 - N. 11). The Directive seeks to provide a legal framework for copyright and related rights in the information society. It will give artists and producers exclusive rights to their work, with certain exceptions and limitations to copying for private use. The Directive should now be implemented in national legislation within 18 months.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/intprop/intprop/news/copy_right.htm

EU / ENLARGEMENT Brussels 11/04/2001: Maximum 7-year ban on workers from CEECs

After having presented last month five possible options to deal with the issue of free movement for workers of the candidate countries (see ESBA WEEKLY - Vol 3 - N. 14), and after having consulted all EU Member States, the European Commission came up with a proposal for a common EU position: transitional arrangements. The proposal suggests a general transition period of 5 years with a possible extension by individual Member States for a further 2 years. Germany and Austria had expressed the strongest concerns about a possible influx of East European workers after enlargement. The EU Member States still have to adopt a common position on this issue after which

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the issue will be negotiated between the EU and each candidate country. The candidate countries have already sharply criticised the Commission proposal.

More information

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/01/561|0|RAPID&lg=EN