



HEADLINES

EU/Digital Agenda: European Commission presents Broadband Package

On 20 September, the European Commission has adopted a broadband package which is aimed to provide access to ultra-fast broadband internet to all European citizens and businesses in the EU, one of the key targets of the Digital Agenda for Europe and the EU 2020 strategy. The package comprises of three complementary documents which should bring the EU closer to high-speed internet. The Broadband Communication indicates possibilities for public authorities on how the investment in competitive networks can be boosted. The Recommendation on regulated access to Next Generation Access Networks provides National Regulatory Authorities with instruments to support investment and protect competition at the same time. The Proposal on establishing the first Radio Spectrum Policy Programme sets a target to make the wireless broadband and internet accessible from each area in the EU by 2013. The ultra-high speed networks would give SMEs the opportunity to make use of 'cloud computing' enabling them to expand their businesses significantly without substantial additional costs. According to the Commission, it is crucial for local authorities to invest in high speed broadband.

ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the Commission's plans to make high speed Broadband internet a universally accessible service for all EU businesses. Many areas within the European Union are still not included in the EU's 'e-infrastructure'. As small businesses are increasingly forced to comply with new regulation that involves use of the internet, a proper infrastructure including all inclusive broadband rollout in all regions –both rural and urban- is absolutely crucial. However, ESBA urges the Commission to also focus its resources on increasing e-skills and e-learning within the small business community, as a connection to high speed internet alone is not enough.

To learn more about the NGA Recommendation please click [here](#)

To read more about the Proposal on Radio Spectrum Policy Programme please click [here](#)

To read more about the Broadband Communication, please click [here](#)

EU/Maternity leave: New rules on EU maternity leave would burden SMEs with additional costs

On 16 September, an impact assessment carried out by the European Parliament's Directorate General for Internal Policies on the proposed changes to the Maternity Leave Directive was finalised. A proposal drafted by the Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee suggests an extension of maternity leave across Europe to 20 weeks at full pay. Currently, EU law dictates a minimum of 14 weeks maternity leave at a reduced pay rate. The EU average, however, is already at 18 weeks. Moreover, Member States will have to give fathers the right to 2 weeks of fully paid paternity leave. The proposal on Maternity Leave Directive is scheduled to be voted on at plenary session on 18 October.

ESBA Opinion

Tina Sommer, President of the European Small Business Alliance said: "We all want adequate, flexible maternity and paternity leave but it should be for governments in dialogue with parents and their employers to decide how much their economy can afford to give and how it is to be delivered. These proposals should be about setting minimum EU standards for the health and

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safety of pregnant workers - not adding new payroll costs for overburdened companies and national social security systems.

This is yet another example of how well-intentioned EU employment law is actually exacerbating our unemployment crisis. Such a costly and exaggerated measure may send our most vulnerable small businesses over the edge.

To read the Commission Proposal on ‘Maternity Leave Directive’ please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/Financial market: Basel III to impose stricter rules on banking sector

On 12 September, the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision announced new capital reforms for the European banking sector. The Group of Governors and Heads of Supervisions agreed to raise the capital requirements with the aim of strengthening long-term financial stability and sustainable growth. The major points settled in the Committee include the augmentation of the minimum requirement for common equity from 2% to 4.5% and the obligatory hold of the capital conservation buffer of 2.5%. Even though the adjustment period is set for 9 years, the banking sector argues that the new set of Basel rules is likely to hamper access to finance for SMEs, as the intensified capital requirements will result in fewer and more expensive loans. The rules will be included in the fourth revision of the Capital Requirements Directive in 2011 after they will be approved by the G20 group meeting in November.

To read the full press release on higher capital standards please click [here](#)

EU/Europe 2020 strategy: The Commission launches ‘Youth on the Move’

On 15 September, the European Commission has launched ‘Youth on the Move’, one of the EU 2020’s seven flagship initiatives, targeted at improving the employability and mobility of young people in the EU. The position of young Europeans in the labour market has substantially deteriorated since the financial crisis hit and youth unemployment has been recorded at 20.9%. Criticized by some for lacking a clear strategy, the flagship initiative aspires to increase the quality of education and training across the EU, to intensify the mobility of young students and employees, raising their competitiveness in the future labour market as well as a set of new measures to fight youth unemployment.

To read more on the Commission’s proposal, please click [here](#)

To learn more about the flagship initiative, please visit Youth on the Move website [here](#)

EU/Gender Equality: Commissioner unveils 5-year strategy for gender equality

On 21 September, the European Commissioner for justice, fundamental rights and citizenship, Viviane Reding, has revealed her 5-year Strategy for equality between men and women, emphasizing five major areas: increasing equality in the economy and labour market; equal pay for equal work; promoting equality in higher positions; fighting the gender violence; and supporting gender equality outside the EU. The implementation of the strategy will be assessed on a yearly basis through a Gender Equality Dialogue. Furthermore, an annual ‘European Equal Pay Day’ has been established to highlight the fact that women earn on average 18 percent less than men. The strategy is met with criticism for being too rhetorical and offering little concrete actions.

To learn more about the new Strategy for equality between men and women please click [here](#)

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EU/Financial market: The establishment of financial supervision approved by MEPs

On 22 September, the European Parliament gave its final approval to a package of EU legislative proposals on financial supervision, establishing the creation of three new European Supervisory Authorities covering banks, insurers and stocks as well as a European Systemic Risk Board responsible for monitoring the financial market as a whole. A political agreement was already reached last December, but MEPs were prompt to identify the deal as overly watered-down and expressed their opposition. Even though the majority of MEPs wanted the financial watchdogs to be stronger, a final agreement was reached. The financial bodies will intervene only in case of a dispute or breach of financial law and will be able to impose decisions and recommendations to national bodies in case of emergency. The new rules will enter into force on 1 January 2011 with the aim of preventing risks and threats on the EU financial market.

To read the Commission's proposal for new financial supervisors in the EU please click [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: New skills for new jobs: China and the EU

European Commission published a report which focuses on new challenges on the labour market and compares the situation in the EU with that in China, drawing a comparison between different approaches to treating the different aspects of labour market issues after the economic crisis.

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

OECD: Trade and Economic Effects of Responses to the Economic Crisis

OECD issued a publication which analyses the grounds of the economic crisis, its effects on trade and the financial and labour market, and possible exit strategies.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Green Paper from the Commission on policy options for progress towards a European Contract Law for consumers and businesses

Closes: 31 January 2011

The European Commission has issued a green paper on how the internal market could be strengthened by making progress in the area of European Contract Law. The Commission is interested in collecting opinions and suggestions from citizens, organizations and public authorities.

To access the consultation please click [here](#)

ONGOING:

Consultation on Net Neutrality

Closes: 30 September 2010

The European Commission has issued a consultation on "net neutrality." The Commission's stated goal is to ensure that Internet users have a wide range of choices regarding the content they can see and the products they can buy. The Commission is therefore asking stakeholders to assess whether internet providers should be allowed to favour certain types of Internet content over others. It also

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asks them to evaluate whether there is a sufficient amount of competition among various Internet providers.

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

Consultation on electronic commerce in the internal market

Closes: 15 October 2010

The Commission has issued a consultation on the future of electronic commerce in the internal market aimed at improving cross-border trade, facilitating access of European citizens to a greater variety of products, and increasing the quality of products.

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

Consultation on cross-border inheritance tax obstacles in the EU

*Closes: 22 October 2010 – **extended period to respond***

The European Commission has issued a consultation, asking stakeholders to suggest possible approaches for dealing with cross-border inheritance tax problems. Member State legislation regarding cross-border inheritance may prevent individuals and businesses from fully realizing their right to freedom of movement within the EU. Transfer of ownership of small businesses could be especially hindered by national taxation of cross-border inheritance.

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

Consultation on taxation of cross-border interest and royalty payments

Closes: 31 October 2010

The European Commission issued a consultation on a recast of the Council Directive on taxation applicable to interest and royalty payments between associated companies. It strives to avoid double taxation issues relating to cross-border payments. The Commission is interested in gathering the views from corporate taxpayers, business and labour organizations, tax experts and other stakeholders that are potentially affected.

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

Consultation on VAT collection procedures

Closes: 31 October 2010

The Commission has launched a consultation on possible adoption of VAT collection procedures with regards to “centralized clearance”. According to the VAT Directive (directive 2006/112/EC) the importers are subject to VAT obligation in the Member State to which goods are imported. The Commission welcomes the views of both EU citizens and organizations.

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

Consultation on the Review of the Measuring Instruments Directive 2004/22/EC

Closes: November 2010

The Commission issued a consultation on the review of the Measuring Instrument Directive which was implemented on 30 October 2006. The Commission is interested in receiving feedback from SMEs, private organizations, consumer organizations and public authorities on the implementation of the Directive and possible impacts that the changes suggested by the stakeholders might bring.

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

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Consultation on the future of the pensions

Closes: 15 November 2010

The European Commission has announced a public-debate on how to achieve adequate pensions for the future generation. The Green paper brings up several questions, including the sustainability of retirement income and balance between work and retirement. The consultation is open to all stakeholders.

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 admin burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% in 2012.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

29 September 2010 – Weekly Meeting of the College of Commissioners

27 – 30 September – European Parliament Committee week, Brussels

30 September – 1 October 2010 - Economic and Financial Affairs Council

6 – 7 October 2010 – European Parliament Session, Strasbourg

7 – 8 October 2010 – Justice and Home Affairs Council

Other SME-related events

ICT 2010 - Digitally Driven

27 – 29 September 2010

Brussels, Belgium

This conference is organized by the European Commission in cooperation with the Belgian presidency of the EU and will be concentrating on the latest advances in the ICT sector. The aim of the event is to highlight the impact of ICTs on our everyday lives, the importance of research, and sustainability of growth in the EU.

<http://europa.eu/eucalendar/event/id/2646-ict-2010--digitally-driven/mode/window>

ICT Finance Market Place

27-28 September 2010

Brussels, Belgium

This event takes place in light of ICT 2010 – Digitally Driven, organized by the European Commission in partnership with the Belgian presidency of the EU and aims to focus on enhancing the access of SMEs to financial resources. Within this 2-day event, a coaching session (Venture Academy) and an investment workshop will be held.

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http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/newsroom/cf/news.cfm?redirection=1&item_type=news

Optimising EU Financial Reforms for Achieving Resilience, Growth and Competitiveness

27-30 September 2010

Brussels, Belgium

This conference is organized by the EUROFI Financial Forum in association with the Belgian presidency of the EU. The four-day event will focus on the financial services sector in the EU and specific regulatory facilities that need to be improved to ensure positive economic growth and competitiveness of the EU.

<http://www.eurofi.net/Events/>

Technology and business matchmaking event

29 – 30 September 2010

Plovdiv, Bulgaria

This conference is organized by the Applied Research and Communications Fund in partnership with the Enterprise Europe Network – Bulgaria and will be held during the International Fair in Plovdiv, Bulgaria. The first day will be dedicated to discussions and presentations on financial opportunities whereas the second day will offer an opportunity for pre-scheduled bi-lateral meetings between companies and organizations.

<http://www.eubusiness.com/topics/research/een.plovdiv.10>

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/public/bemt/home.cfm?EventID=2363>

Revisiting Taxation in the Wake of the Crisis: National or European Tax Sovereignty? Tax Competition or Tax Harmonization?

28 September 2010

Brussels, Belgium

The Madariaga-College of Europe Foundation, in partnership with the Belgian Presidency of the EU and the Committee of the Regions, is organizing a conference on whether public finance can be sustainable in light of an ageing population and whether tax competition can be damaging to employment policy.

<http://www.madariaga.org/upcoming-events/351-revisiting-taxation-in-the-wake-of-the-crisis-national-or-european-tax-sovereignty-tax-competition-or-tax-harmonization>

SME Finance Forum

28 September 2010

Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission is organizing the first SME Finance Forum chaired by Vice-President Antonio Tajani, which will discuss the current situation in the internal market and will focus on facilitating easier access to financial instruments for small and medium entrepreneurs.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/finance/financing-environment/sme-finance-forum/index_en.htm

Youth on the move - Achieving mobility for all!

5-6 October 2010

Antwerpen, Belgium

The Belgian presidency of the EU in cooperation with the Directorate-General for Education and Culture of the European Commission is organizing a conference which will discuss the challenges of the mobility of European citizens, especially young people, in the labour market.

<http://www.eutrio.be/youth-move-achieving-mobility-all>

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