



HEADLINES

EU/ESBA Launches Written Declaration on Administrative Burdens

On 13 October, the European Small Business Alliance launched its Written Declaration on reducing administrative burdens for SMEs. The event, hosted by MEP Giles Chichester in the European Parliament, attracted MEPs from across the political spectrum, as well as non-institutional stakeholders from a variety of sectors. ESBA President Tina Sommer and FSB National Chairman John Walker saw their incitements geared towards the Institutions to respect and renew their 2007 commitments regarding admin burden reductions backed by Parliamentary speakers Malcolm Harbour (ECR) and Dennis de Jong (GUE/NGL). The declaration was tabled by supporting MEPs from 5 of the groups.

ESBA OPINION

In 2007, the European Commission, advised by the High Level Group on Burden Reduction, presented its Action Programme for the reduction of administrative burdens in the European Union, in which it committed itself to reducing red tape for EU SMEs by 25% by 2012. Whilst the Commission has made significant efforts to this end, most proposals are currently stuck in the European Parliament. ESBA urges the Institutions to honor their commitments and make a concerted effort towards achieving these goals.

To learn more about the Written Declaration, please visit: www.actionnotwords.org

EU/Financial market: SME Finance Forum launches High Level Group

On 28 September, the first meeting of the SME Finance Forum, chaired by Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, took place in Brussels. The Forum examined specific ways to ease access for SMEs to financial resources. The High Level Group on SME Finance was set up with the aim of exploring ways to improve the current situation. Measures proposed by the SME forum include the introduction of a grace period, allowing SMEs to postpone payments of interest in case of financial difficulties and the use of a credit mediator to assist businesses with their loan applications, which has proven successful in several Member States. Loan guarantees are to make it easier for SMEs to borrow money and awareness must be raised of SME financing options and conditions.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the launch of the High Level group on SME Finance, as the initiative shows that the European Commission acknowledges that access to finance is still one of the major obstacles for small businesses. However, ESBA does urge the vice-president to ensure adequate cooperation with the European Parliament and Council towards turning proposals by the High Level Group into tangible policy outcomes to the benefit of SMEs.

For further information about the SME Finance Forum please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/EPA 2010: ESBA nominated EPA Awards 2010

The European Small Business Alliance is pleased to be nominated for the European Public Affairs Awards (EPA) 2010 in the categories 'Campaign of the Year' and 'Trade Association of the Year'. Over the past years, ESBA has been fighting for the recognition of micro-businesses as a separate group of enterprises, requiring a fitted regulatory approach. The nomination is a welcome acknowledgement to this end.

To learn more about the shortlisted nominees and to cast your vote, please visit: <http://www.epaawards.com/>

EU/Europe 2020: New EU's innovation strategy disclosed by the Commission

On 6 October the European Commission tabled its 'Innovation Union', one of the flagship initiatives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. The document is aimed at boosting EU research and innovation to avoid lagging behind other fast-growing markets, particularly Asia. The new EU innovation strategy will focus on eliminating the main obstacles that prevent innovative ideas from turning into tangible products and services. Some important elements include improved access to credit, government commitment to public procurement of innovative products and services, and an improved intellectual property regime. The Innovation Union was topic of discussion at the Competitiveness council of 12 October and will be on the agenda of the December European Council.

To learn more about the 'Innovation Union' please click [here](#)

EU/Impact assessments: Impact Assessment system reviewed by auditors

On 28 September, the European Court of Auditors published a report evaluating the efficiency of the Impact Assessment system carried out by the European Commission. Based on an analysis of more than 100 impact assessments, the report shows that although contributing to 'Better Regulation' in general, the system lacks the dynamic element of revising impact assessments as proposals make their way through the policy cycle. The European Commission, stimulated by the audit, has set out to improve its current Impact Assessment system.

To access the report of the European Court of Auditors, please click [here](#)

EU/Patents: Member States unable to agree on EU-wide Patent

On 29 September, at an informal meeting of the Competitiveness Council, the Belgian presidency of the EU presented a compromise solution on the long pending issue of creating an EU wide patent system. The Commission proposal to reduce translations of EU patents to the official languages of English, French and German has been heavily contested by some Member States, notably Spain and Italy. In an attempt to please the contesting Member States, Belgium suggests to introduce a transitional period in which English will be the only language into which Patents should be translated. After the translation machines of the Members States are up to par, however, patent translations will have to be done in the three official languages as set out by Commissioner Barnier.

To read the European Commission's proposal on the Translation Arrangement for the European Union patent please click [here](#)

EU/Procurement: EU Procurement to be reviewed

The European Commission is set to examine public procurement procedures in the EU and is preparing to table two green papers, targeted on e-procurement and societal objectives, with the aim of adopting a legislative proposal in 2011. The incentive for these actions stems from an

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unsatisfactory usage of e-procurement due to a failure of EU Member States to put the necessary electronic system into service. The improvement of the situation is likely to reduce costs for SMEs and to increase cross-border tender operations. The second green paper is aimed at reaching societal targets in public procurement. Businesses have generally spoken out against binding measures as these may lead to distorted competition.

To read more about electronic public procurement, please click [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: ‘European Sectoral Social Dialogue – recent developments – 2010 edition’

The European Commission issued a publication providing an overview of recent developments in the European sectoral social dialogue with an emphasis on issues such as gender equality, working conditions, lifelong learning and health and safety at work.

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

Robert Schuman Foundation: ‘The State of the Union 2010’

The Robert Schuman Foundation published a report which analyses the developments of the European Union since the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty. The report studies the complex position of the EU in relation to the new economic powers.

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

European Commission: ‘Monitoring tax revenues and tax reforms in EU Member States 2010’

DG ECFIN in cooperation with DG TAXUD published a report which examines recent changes in Member States’ tax systems. The emphasis lies on the influence of the financial crisis on tax revenues.

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

CONSULTATIONS

ONGOING:

Consultation on cross-border inheritance tax obstacles in the EU

Closes: 22 October 2010

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

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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: 1 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](#)

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](#)

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](#)

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](#)

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COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

18-21 October 2010 - European Parliament Plenary Session

19 October 2010 - Economic and Financial Affairs Council

19 October 2010 - Weekly Meeting of the College of Commissioners

21 October 2010 - Employment, Social, Health & Consumers Affairs Council

25 October 2010 – General Affairs Council

27 October 2010 – Weekly Meeting of the College of Commissioners

Other SME-related events

18 October ‘Anticipating and managing restructuring in a socially responsible way. New partnerships to preserve employment’

Brussels, Belgium

This conference is organised by the Belgian presidency of the EU alongside the European Commission and will be concentrating on how jobs can be maintained and created in the light of a fast changing economic environment and how the process of restructuring can be managed in a responsible manner.

<http://www.eutrio.be/anticipating-and-managing-restructuring-socially-responsible-way-new-partnerships-preserve-employme-0>

21-23 October 2010 - ‘Entrepreneurship, Family Innovation and Business’

Çukurambar, Turkey

The international conference organised by the Çankaya University in Ankara will discuss topics concerning female entrepreneurship, family businesses, technology and innovation, offering a platform for an exchange of views between academics and entrepreneurs.

<http://entre2010.cankaya.edu.tr/>

25-26 October 2011 – ‘Closing the salary gap, discussion of professional gender inequalities in the employment market’

Brussels, Belgium

The aim of this conference organised by the Belgian presidency of the EU is to discuss the motives of the existing salary gap between men and women at the European and national level. Furthermore, possible ways to reduce these differences will be explored.

<http://www.eutrio.be/closing-salary-gap-discussion-professional-gender-inequalities-employment-market>

28-29 October – ‘Active labour market policies for the EU2020 Strategy: ways to move forward’

Brussels, Belgium

This conference, organised under the auspices of the Belgian presidency of the EU, aims to highlight the need for an active labour market policy in the European Union as a part of the Europe 2020 Strategy. Experts will provide a deeper insight into the impacts of different approaches on employment policy.

http://www.werk.be/projectinfo.be/en_US/home/events/eu-alm-p-en-2020.html