



HEADLINES

EU/Late Payments: European Parliament approves rules on Late Payments

On 20 October, Members of the European Parliament gave a strong backing to the Recast of the Late Payments Directive, establishing a general payment deadline for public authorities and businesses at 30 days. Business-to-business payments may be prolonged beyond 60 days provided that the creditor expressly agrees and the conditions are not 'grossly unfair' to him. The version adopted by the European Parliament was a compromise agreement previously negotiated in the 'trialogue' meetings, making adoption in the Council virtually a formality. In general, businesses broadly welcome this legislative, intended to secure their financial liquidity.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the Parliament's decision, the inclusion of business-to-business payments in particular. Uncertainty still remains, however, in terms of enforceability as a small company, often reliant on a small number of larger contractors, is unlikely to risk future business by taking its client to court to retrieve late payments. Also, a two-year implementation period given to Member States is very long for what is initially meant to be a crisis measure.

EU/Maternity Leave: 20 weeks maternity leave approved by the European Parliament

On 20 October, the European Parliament voted in favour of a controversial report on 'Maternity Leave Directive' by a socialist MEP Edite Estrela by a large majority. The legislative act strives to extend minimum maternity leave from 14 to 20 weeks at compulsory full pay and introduces a two-week entitlement to paternity leave. In light of economic crisis and budgets austerity, the bill is likely to be strongly opposed by some Member States when debated in the Council of Ministers. The Commission will have to find an acceptable compromise between the two institutions, reflecting the current economic situation across the EU and safeguarding the rights of mothers.

To read more about the adopted text on Late Payments and official position of the European Parliament please click [here](#)

ESBA OPINION

Adequate, flexible maternity and paternity leave is of significant importance. It should, however, 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 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 European Parliament's position on the 'Maternity Leave Directive', please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/Single Market: Commissioner Barnier to present Single Market Act

On 27 October, the European Commission published the Single Market Act, a long expected report which aims to put the European single market back on track. The document specifies a total of 50 proposals which will be put to a four-month EU-wide public debate with the purpose of identifying priorities to be implemented in a 2-year period and connecting European citizens and civil society to the decision-making process. Key elements of the Single Market Act include improving access to finance and public procurement for SMEs as well as simplifying cross-border operations, accounting rules and promoting e-commerce. On 9 November, the European Parliament will host a public hearing on the future direction of the Single Market policy analysing challenges and opportunities for businesses and consumers.

To read the Communication on 'A Single Market Act', please click [here](#)

EU/Europe 2020: EU Commissioner outlines plans for future industrial policy

On 28 October, Commissioner Antonio Tajani for industry and entrepreneurship saw his Communication on "An integrated industrial policy for a globalised era" adopted by the European Commission. The proposal outlined the Commission's determination to put a greater emphasis on traditional industries, to increase competitiveness of European industrial sectors in the world market and to improve the business environment of SMEs. The initiative highlights the need to examine the impact of all legislative proposals on competitiveness as well as the need to check the burdens posed on businesses by existing legislation. The proposal is accompanied by a report analysing competitiveness of the 27 Member States and the EU as a whole.

To learn more about the Communication on 'An Industrial Policy for the Globalisation Era', please click [here](#)

EU/Labelling: MEPs vote in favour of 'Made In' Labels

On 21 October, the European Parliament voted in favour of new labelling laws, better known as the 'made in' labels. Under this legislation, product label will have to indicate the country in which the majority the product was manufactured, except for the EU countries, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Turkey. These requirements are likely to affect consumer's behaviour which might result in a major impact on imports from non-EU countries, particularly from Asia. The draft legislation will have to be adopted in the Council of Ministers, where the position is not unanimous as some Member States still oppose the labelling laws.

To read the report on 'Made In' labels, please click [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: 'The Economic Recovery in Industry'

The European Commission published a report which deals with the economic trends in the field of industry and manufacturing and analyses data between years 2008 and 2010. It also investigates how diverse sectors have been affected by the crisis and examines differences between Member States.

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

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European Commission: 'Guide for EU exporters'

The European Commission issued a publication which looks at ways to tackle unfair instruments in international trade imposed by non-EU countries. The guidebook offers advice to EU exporters on issues that they face very often and aims to enhance international trade beyond EU borders.

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

OECD: 'From Crisis to Recovery'

The publication by OECD describes causes and effects of the financial crisis and provides ways to sustainable recovery. It explains the roots of the global downturn, reach and responses to it as well as the impact on the labour market which will take several years to recover.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Public consultation on a Roadmap for a low carbon economy by 2050

Closes: 8 December 2010

The Commission has issued a public consultation which intends to explore ways to decarbonise energy and transport sectors in the European Union and to promote low carbon innovation for future the economy. The Commission aims to collect ideas from citizens, businesses, institutions, NGOs, public authorities and stakeholders.

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

Consultation on the Green Paper on expanding the use of e-Procurement in the EU

Closes: 31 January 2011

The Commission has launched a consultation on how e-procurement could be used more extensively in order to simplify the process of public procurement and enable parties from different Member States to take part in the procedure. The aim is to find possible ways which would facilitate faster introduction of e-procurement enhancing transparency and efficiency.

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

Consultation on the Single Market Act

Closes: 28 February 2011

The European Commission has launched a consultation on 50 proposals included in the Single Market Act which was published on 27 October. The main objective of the consultation is to gather opinions from citizens and organisations in order to identify priorities for implementation.

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

ONGOING :

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

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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: 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](#)

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

8-9 November 2010 – European Parliament Committee Meetings

10 November 2010 – Weekly Meeting of College of Commissioners

10 – 11 November 2010 – European Parliament Session, Brussels

11 November 2010 – Economic and Financial Affairs Council

11 – 12 November 2010 – G20 Seoul Summit

Other SME-related events

3 November 2010 Future Patent Policy in Europe

Brussels, Belgium

This conference is organised by the Federal Public Service Economy in partnership with the DG Internal Market and Services of the European Commission. The aim of the event is to highlight the importance of reaching a final agreement on the EU patent, necessary to boost the innovation and growth in the EU.

<http://economie.fgov.be/fr/register4/index.jsp>

9 November 2010 Single market Forum

Brussels, Belgium

The EP's Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection in cooperation with the European Commission and the Belgian Presidency of the EU is organising a public hearing which will discuss the future prospects of the European Single Market policy, the challenges and opportunities for enterprises and customers.

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201010/20101005ATT85168/20101005ATT85168EN.pdf>

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/document/activities/cont/201010/20101013ATT86970/20101013ATT86970EN.pdf>

9 – 10 November 2010 Conference on Microfinance in Europe

Brussels, Belgium

The first conference on Microfinance in Europe is jointly organised by the DGs for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; Regional Policy; Economic and Financial Affairs; and Enterprise and Industry. The event will talk about achievements and challenges of microfinance services in the EU in light of financial crisis.

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=88&langId=en&eventsId=300&furtherEvents=yes>

11 – 12 November 2010 Young European Entrepreneurs' Seminar 2010

Brussels, Belgium

The European Economic and Social Committee's Employer's Group is organising a seminar for young entrepreneurs, facilitating a dialogue between business stakeholders and young people, enabling them to acquire a deeper knowledge of the functioning of the European institutions.

<http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.events-and-activities-young-entrepreneurs-2010>