

## ESBA Bulletin of 17 December – Volume 12 – Number 19



### IN BRIEF

#### **EU/Digital Agenda: EU outlines plan to increase online usage of public services**

On 15 December, the European Commission unveiled a five-year eGovernment Action Plan which lists forty concrete measures to improve public e-services for citizens and businesses in the internal market. As a part of the Digital Agenda for Europe it intends to boost the usage of eGovernment services by companies to 80% in the next 5 years. The Commission will have to work closely with Member States to ensure that the actions are implemented at local, national and regional level. The aim is to cut red tape, make it simple to set up and run a business from any Member State and use online public services, including e-signatures and e-procurement.

To learn more about the European eGovernment Action Plan for 2011-2015, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/Brussels I: EU to secure easier and less expensive cross-border court cases for companies**

On 14 December, the European Commission presented its proposal to simplify and reduce the cost of cross-border legal disputes for companies and citizens. Under the reform of the so-called 'Brussels I' Regulation of 2001, companies and citizens will, amongst other things, no longer be subjected to a lengthy and costly procedure in a cross-border court case as the decision taken by a court in one Member State will be automatically recognized and enforced in any other EU country. The proposal will be submitted for agreement to the European Parliament and the Council.

To learn more about the Commission's proposal for a reform of the 'Brussels I' Regulation, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/Patent: Commission presents proposal for enhanced cooperation on unitary patent**

On 14 December, the European Commission's proposal for enhanced cooperation on an EU Patent was presented after 12 EU Member States had requested it. Other Member States are free to join at a later stage. Following a series of tough and unsuccessful negotiations, the majority of EU ministers decided during the Competitiveness Council of 10 December to proceed under enhanced cooperation. Under this regime, the participating countries will be able to set common rules for a unitary patent, thereby decreasing the excessive administrative and translation costs of companies. Businesses from all EU countries will be eligible to join the unitary patent scheme but their patents will only be protected in those Member States which have signed to the system. The Commission's proposal needs to be approved in Council by a qualified majority and agreed upon by Parliament.

To read more about the Conclusions of the Competitiveness Council of 10 December, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/Consumer rights: Council to agree on Consumer Rights Directive**

On 10 December, the Belgian Presidency of the European Union presented its compromise text on the Consumer Rights Directive to EU ministers during the Competitiveness Council. The document is based on the Commission's proposal of 2008 which aims to shelter the existing four pieces of legislation concerning consumer rights under a single directive. This is expected to lead to enhanced consumer protection in cross-border purchases and better functioning of the single market in terms of business-to-consumer relationships. A common agreement on the issue in Council is expected during the Environmental Council on 20 December.

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### PUBLICATIONS

#### **European Commission: ‘SMEs and the Environment in the European Union’**

The European Commission published a study which concentrates on estimating the impact of environmental legislation on SMEs as well as the effect of small and medium businesses on the environment. Furthermore it identifies business opportunities for SMEs arising from investments in eco-innovation.

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

#### **European Commission: ‘Joint Report on Pensions’**

The European Commission in cooperation with Working Groups issued a joint report examining different models of pension systems in the European Union. It analyses the impact of recent reforms and crises on these systems and predicts possible future developments.

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

#### **OECD: ‘OECD Information Technology Outlook 2010’**

The OECD published a report which analyses the impact of the crisis on IT industries, compares ICT policies in OECD countries and predicts future developments in this field. The study focuses mainly on improving e-skills. Environmental challenges are also taken into account.

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

### CONSULTATIONS

#### **ONGOING:**

#### **Public consultation on disclosure of non-financial information by companies**

*Closes: 24 January 2011*

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the disclosure of corporate social and environmental information by enterprises with the aim of improving reliability and transparency.

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](#)

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### **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](#)

### **Consultation on the Review of Rescue and Restructuring aid Guidelines**

*Closes: 2 February 2011*

The European Commission issued a consultation which is targeted at collecting views from businesses and financial institutions regarding their experiences with rescue and restructuring aid, especially during the financial crisis.

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

### **Public consultation on a possible successor to the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)**

*Closes: 4 February 2011*

The European Commission has launched a public consultation which aims to identify the key issues for the CIP II Programme. It strives to find ways to better support SMEs, reinforce competitiveness and innovation, and stimulate wider utilisation of ICT tools across the EU.

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](#)

### **Consultation on the future harmonisation of numbering resources for the provision of business services**

**Closes: 28 February 2011**

The European Commission has launched a public consultation which aims to gather opinions from businesses, customers, telecoms operators and public authorities on possibility of using a single business telephone number within the European Union.

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

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## **Consultation on the 'Green Paper on the future of VAT- Towards a simpler, more robust and efficient VAT system'**

*Closes: 31 May 2011*

The European Commission has launched a consultation which aims to assess the current VAT system at the European and national level. The intention is to transform it into a more efficient and transparent system that would respond to the needs of the European single market.

To access the online 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**

**20 December 2010 – Environment Council**

**10 January 2011 – European Parliament Committee Meetings**

**13 January 2011 – European Parliament Committee Meetings**

### **Other SME-related events**

#### **Towards integrated economic governance in the EU: The European Semester**

**12 January 2011**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The European Commission is organising a conference which will discuss the strengthened fiscal and macroeconomic surveillance in the European Union. The purpose of the conference is to present the first European Semester which will aim to improve economic policy coordination in line with EU's 2020 strategy for jobs and growth.

<https://www.economic-governance.eu/>

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