



## IN BRIEF

### **EU/Patent: Enhanced co-operation on unitary patent to be voted on in the Parliament**

On 27 January, the European Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee will vote on the European Commission's proposal for enhanced co-operation in the area of a unitary EU patents system. The Commission proposal came after 12 Member States 14 December 2010 requested it against the backdrop of a longstanding debate on a single EU patent, opposed notably by Spain and Italy. The Parliament's recommendation by draftsman MEP Klaus-Heiner Lehne advises the Parliament to vote in favour of the proposal. Once the document passes through the Parliament's plenary, the Council will have to approve by qualified majority.

To read the Draft recommendation by MEP Klaus-Heiner Lehne, please click [here](#)

To read the Commission's proposal on enhanced co-operation on EU patent, please click [here](#)

### **EU/Public Procurement: Commission set to overhaul public procurement policy**

On 27 January, the European Commission will present a Green paper on the modernisation of EU public procurement policy. The purpose of the consultation is to find ways to make the process of public procurement more effective, less bureaucratic and easier for small and medium sized companies to access. Another major target is to link the environmental and innovation objectives with obtaining a public contract. SMEs in general are wary of binding societal objectives as these may hamper their chances of obtaining a public tender. The outcome of the consultation will serve as the basis for a legislative proposal that is scheduled to be published early 2012.

To learn more about public procurement policy in the EU, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ Construction products: MEPs approve new labelling requirements for building materials**

On 18 January, MEPs voted in favour of the draft legislative act laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products in the second reading. With the intention of providing enhanced protection and safety in the workplace, the new rules require enhanced labelling of building materials, listing all substances and clearly specifying those that are classified as hazardous under the REACH legislation. The Council will now have to endorse the regulation which will then become effective 20 days after its publication in the EU's Official Journal. A transitional period is foreseen until mid-2013 to allow businesses to adjust to the new requirements.

To read the text adopted by the European Parliament in the second reading, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ Finance: Eurogroup considers ideas for debt crisis way-out**

On 17 January, a Eurozone finance ministers' meeting was held to debate on further actions to be taken to end the deepening debt crisis. Ministers discussed a European Commission proposal to augment the effective lending capacity of the European Financial Stability Facility from 250 billion to 440 Billion euros as views broaden on the Euro area rescue fund deficiency for the near future. Another key point mentioned during the meeting was the possibility of decreasing the interest rates of loans from the rescue fund to enable member countries to regain financial stability more rapidly. The possible options mentioned will be discussed in more detail during the March 2011 EU Summit.

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To read more about the European Financial Stability Facility, please click [here](#)

## **EU/ Food labelling: Commission postpones EU food labelling legislation**

Consumer groups have recently expressed their discontent with the postponing of an EU legislative proposal that would guarantee reliable nutritional information of food products for consumers. The European Commission was expected to publish a list of specific nutritional profiles that would anticipate accordance of nutrition and health claims in 2009. The delay in adopting the legislation is a result of lobbying by some Member States who fear that some of their traditional foods would not be eligible for a health claim. While the legislation on nutritional profiles is currently blocked, the regulation on health claims is well ahead and due to be published by June 2011.

To read the Commission's Working document on the setting of nutrient profiles, please click [here](#)

## **EU/Consumer rights: EU deadlocked over Consumer Rights Directive**

As the debate on the Consumer Rights Directive is deepening in the European institutions, opinions differ among Member States on whether a full or minimum harmonisation of the legislation is desirable at EU level. Initially the Commission's proposal for the directive was aimed to unify the four existing pieces of legislation relating to consumer rights into a single directive. However, views are now inconsistent and a common approach on further steps is absent. The European consumer group BEUC suggested that a mixed harmonisation approach might be the way forward and stressed that finding a common ground on the issue is vital for guaranteeing an adequate level of rights for consumers in the EU. The dossier will be discussed in the European Parliament in the coming weeks and it is scheduled for plenary voting on 8 March 2011.

To read the Commission's proposal on the Consumer Rights Directive, please click [here](#)

To read the draft report by the European Parliament's committee responsible, please click [here](#)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Eurostat: 'Internet Usage in 2010 – Households and Individuals'**

This study compares internet access and use amongst EU Member States and analyses activities carried out online. It reveals that the broadband connection of European households is twice as high as it was in 2006.

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

### **OECD: 'The Impacts of Nanotechnology on Companies'**

The OECD has issued a publication which deals with the definition and possible economic impact of nanotechnology which is foreseen as a source for innovation and research. The study outlines a number of case studies from several countries and summarises outcomes and policy issues.

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

### **European Commission: 'Energy 2020'**

The European Commission has published a study examining the energy policy of the European Union in the period until 2020, when the transition to low-carbon economy is expected to be completed, in light of climate change and recent global market turbulences.

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

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## **European Commission: 'Supporting European Enterprise and Industry in the Global Economy'**

The European Commission's DG Enterprise and Industry issued a short report which details its work and efforts to assist European Small and Medium businesses to improve their competitiveness in the global economy.

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

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **NEW:**

#### **Public consultation on Energy Roadmap 2050**

*Closes: 7 March 2011*

The European Commission has issued a public consultation on the future energy policy. It seeks to gather contributions from relevant stakeholders and citizens on priorities of the EU energy policy to be taken into consideration in the Energy Roadmap 2050, scheduled for adoption in the second half of 2011.

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

#### **Consultation on the use of Alternative Dispute Resolution as a means to resolve disputes related to commercial transactions and practices in the European Union**

*Closes: 15 March 2011*

The European Commission launched a public consultation on alternative dispute resolution schemes which aims to boost consumers' trust in cross-border shopping in the single market by guaranteeing easier, less expensive non-judicial dispute settlement between buyer and seller at EU level. The outcome of the consultation will constitute a basis for the legislative proposal due to be published in November 2011.

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

### **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](#)

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

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*Closes: 31 January 2011*

The European Commission's has launched a consultation on its Green Paper setting out a number of proposals for progressing towards a European Contract Law for consumers and businesses. 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](#)

## **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](#)

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## Online consultation on administrative burdens reduction

### *On-going*

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**

21 January 2011 – Residential seminar of the College of European Commissioners

24 -27 January 2011 – European Parliament Committee Meetings

31 January 2011 – General Affairs Council

31 January – 1 February 2011 – European Parliament Committee Meetings

2 – 3 February 2011 – European Parliament Mini Plenary Session (Brussels)

4 February 2011 – EU Summit

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

#### **'Ready to grow?' Conference on the future of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP)**

**25 January 2011**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The European Commission welcomes all business representatives and interested stakeholders to join the debate on the future successor of CIP. The conference will strive to identify the major priorities of the forthcoming programme with the aim of fostering the competitiveness of European businesses. It will also look for possible improvements in business environment.

[http://ec.europa.eu/cip/cip\\_conference/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/cip/cip_conference/index_en.htm)

#### **Knowledge Transfer: Bridging Science and Business for a New Sustainable Economic Paradigm 26 – 28 January 2011**

**Lisbon, Portugal**

A conference organised by PROTON Europe in cooperation with the European Commission will gather knowledge transfer managers from universities and business development officers from research-based companies from across the Europe.

[http://www.protoneurope.org/index2.php?sm=proton\\_europe\\_en-23&cat=1&idnews=201010270001](http://www.protoneurope.org/index2.php?sm=proton_europe_en-23&cat=1&idnews=201010270001)

#### **IMI and the Services Directive – Releasing the full potential**

**27 January 2011**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The European Commission is organizing a conference which will focus on evaluation of the Internal Market Information System established in Member States under the Services Directive. It will aim to examine weaknesses of the system and look at the potential future progress.

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/imi-net/conferences/2010/27\\_01\\_en.html#what](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/imi-net/conferences/2010/27_01_en.html#what)

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