



HEADLINES

EU/Competition: Council green lights EU Patent

On 10 March 2011, 25 out of 27 member states decided to proceed with a European patent system. The decision to make use of the option of an 'Enhanced Cooperation Agreement', for the second time in EU history, is the result of a deadlock between the Member States of approximately a decade, mainly centring on language issues. The European Parliament had given its approval to Enhanced Cooperation on 15 February 2011. Non participants Spain and Italy had been blocking the negotiations towards a unitary EU patent as they feared a competitive advantage for the Member States whose languages would be used as official patent languages (English, French and German). Now that the language matter has been resolved within the framework of the agreement, the main remaining issue is the question of whether or not to install a single jurisdictional system, including a common Court to settle patent related disputes.

To read the Council's press release, please click [here](#)

ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the Council's decision to move ahead with the European Patent. Although it is regrettable that Spain and Italy are not joining at this stage, this measure has been long awaited by SMEs in the EU. Simplifying the complex and costly patent system will make it more accessible to Europe's smallest companies, advancing the EU's drive for more and faster innovation. ESBA expresses hopes of Spain and Italy joining the system in the future, levelling the playing field.

IN BRIEF

EU/Competition: ECJ rules against European Patent Court

On 8 March 2011, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) delivered its opinion, opposing plans to establish a 'Community Patent Court'. According to the ECJ's ruling, such a court would not be in line with the EU treaties. The European commission, in its reaction, specified that the ECJ's decision will have no impact on the creation of an EU-wide patent system as such, as the issue of jurisdiction will be dealt with separately.

To read the Court's opinion, please click [here](#)

For the Commission's response, please click [here](#)

EU/WEEE: Council revises rules on recycling of electronic devises

On 14 March 2011, the Environment Council reached an agreement on revised EU rules concerning waste electric and electronic equipment (WEEE). The aim of the WEEE directive is to improve the collection and recycling of used electric and electronic equipment and to prevent illegal exports of WEEE outside of the EU.

To read the Council's press release, please click [here](#)

For the Commission's proposal, please click [here](#)

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EU/Single Market: Council debates on the Single Market Act

On 9 and 10 March 2011, the Competitiveness Council held a debate on the priority measures of the “Single Market Act” aimed at creating growth and jobs. Prior to the debate, the Commission presented the main findings of the consultation on the Single Market Act which ended on 28 February. The discussion focused on how to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy. Commission is expected to present a selection of initiatives soon, promoting growth and employment.

To read the Council’s press release, please click [here](#)

EU/Digital Agenda: Neelie Kroes underlines the need for ICT in Europe

During an event organised by the international association of semiconductor manufacturers (SEMI), EU Digital Agenda Commissioner and Vice-President Neelie Kroes said that Europe “cannot solve its problems without ICT”. She also underlined that semi-conductors are one of the key-enabling technologies (KETs) identified by the commission. KETs are vital to ensure the competitiveness of European industries in the knowledge economy.

To learn more about KETs, please click [here](#)

For information on the Digital Agenda, please click [here](#)

EU/EU2020: 24 countries set national employment targets

On 7 March 2011, EU commissioner for employment, social policy and inclusion László Andor declared that three Member States have not yet set national employment targets in their draft national reform programmes. UK Employment Minister Chris Grayling supports financial incentives rather than numerical targets and deploring "one-size-fits-all programmes". European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) policy coordinator, Sian Jones, called it "a lack of ambition to really make an impact on poverty".

To see United Kingdom's draft NRP, please click [here](#)

Commission on the Annual Growth Survey, please click [here](#)

European Commission: ‘Regulation of European Parliament and Council’

On 7 March 2011, The European Commission tabled a proposal amending certain regulations relating to adoption procedures within the Common Commercial Policy. The purpose of this proposal is to increase transparency in a broad range of topics such as anti-dumping regulations and trade defense instruments. A second proposal is expected this summer, bringing EU trade legislation more in line with the Lisbon Treaty.

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

PUBLICATIONS

OECD: 'Main Economic Indicators (MEI)'

The OECD has published the second issue of its monthly Main Economic Indicators (MEI). This publication provides an overview of economic developments through key short-term statistics which cover national accounts, business surveys and consumer opinions, leading indicators, retail sales,

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production, construction, prices, employment, unemployment, wages, finance, international trade and balance of payments.

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

EU/Eurostat: 'ICT security in enterprises'

Eurostat issued a publication presenting the main results of the special module on "ICT security" of the 2010 Community survey on "ICT usage and eCommerce in enterprises". In the context of the survey, ICT security referred to relevant incidents as well as measures, controls and procedures applied by the enterprises on ICT systems in order to ensure integrity, confidentiality, and availability of the data and the IT systems.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation on permit granting procedures for energy infrastructure projects

Closes: 30 April 2011

The European Commission has launched a consultation which aims at identifying possible measures which could be proposed by the Commission in order to ensure that the energy infrastructure needed to make our networks fit for the 21st century will be built in time. The commission is looking for consultation responses of a wide range of stakeholders including SMEs and industry associations.

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

ONGOING:

Consultation on the modernisation of EU public procurement policy

Closes: 18 April 2011

The European Commission has launched a consultation with the aim of updating the European public procurement legislation. 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.

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

Towards a coherent European approach to Collective Redress

Closes: 30 April 2011

The European Commission has launched a consultation aimed at identifying common legal principles and examining different forms of collective redress in the EU. It also strives to evaluate the potential added value that common principles on collective redress could bring to the improvement of EU legislation enforcement.

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

Green Paper on a Common Strategic Framework for future EU Research and Innovation Funding

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Closes: 20 May 2011

The European Commission issued a Green paper which aims at simplifying the complexity of EU research funding. The intention is to link the Seventh Framework Programme for research, Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, and the European Institute for Innovation and Technology. The outcome of the consultation will serve as a basis for proposals to be adopted in June.

To access the 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](#)

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

21 and 23 March 2011 - European Parliament Committee Meetings

21 March 2011 - General affairs' Council

23 March 2011 - Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners

24 and 25 March 2011 - Environment Council (informal)

24 and 25 March 2011 - European Council

28 and 31 March 2011 - European Parliament Committee Meetings

01 April 2011 - Committee of the regions plenary sessions

Other SME-related events

European Forum on Eco-Innovation

22 March 2011, 9.00 am

Birmingham, UK

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The Forum will present business case studies on sustainable material management, encourage innovation through cross-fertilisation between disciplines and sectors, identify and prioritise the key issues that need to be addressed by Government and EU action.

To learn more about the event, please click [here](#)

Debate: European industry and the battle for global markets

22 March 2011, 6.00 pm to 9.00 pm

Brussels, Belgium

"European Voice" organises a debate that will bring together competing and dissenting voices to discuss the situation of European industry in the context of the current economic crisis.

To learn more about the event, please click [here](#)

The Brussels Tax Forum 2011

28 March 2011, 1.00 pm

Brussels, Belgium

The Brussels Tax Forum is an annual conference that brings together policy makers, experts, stakeholders and the general public from all over the world to discuss tax issues of particular political and general interest.

To learn more about the event, please click [here](#)