



## IN BRIEF

### **EU/Consumer Rights: Alternative dispute resolution**

On 16 March 2011, the European Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) Committee held a public hearing on alternative dispute resolution (ADR). The conclusions of the hearing, following the closure date of the public consultation about ADR schemes, will feed into an upcoming legislative proposal by the European Commission on an EU-wide ADR scheme, expected by November 2011.

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

### **EU/Single Market: Member States perform well with implementation of Single Market rules**

On 21 March 2011, the European Commission announced by means of the Internal Market Score Board that Member States continue their efforts to respect deadlines for transposing Single Market rules into national laws. Indeed, Member states seem to be in line with the 1.0% target as set in 2007. Furthermore, there has been a reduction of 40% in terms of extra time needed for transposition, as well as a decrease in the number of infringements.

To learn more about the Internal Market Scoreboard, please click [here](#)

### **EU/Consumer rights: MEPs postpone final position**

On 24 March 2011, the European Parliament approved and updated version of the EU's Consumer Rights Directive. However, MEPs decided to adjourn the adoption of a final position in view of reaching agreement with the Council.

To learn more about Consumer Rights Directive, please click [here](#)

### **EU/Council: Anti-austerity protests at EU summit**

On 24 March 2011, the opening of the EU summit in Brussels attracted thousands of protesters who campaigning against the social consequences of the austerity measures which they believe to be an imposition by the EU on the Member States. Their march was part of a coordinated campaign organised by European trade unions in an attempt influence the decisions of the EU leaders on social policies and economic governance.

To read the Council conclusions of 24 and 25 March, please click [here](#)

### **EU/Patent: Google involved in patent translations**

On 24 March 2011, the European Patent Office (EPO) and Google have signed an agreement to cooperate on a computer assisted system of translation of European patents into 32 languages. The Internet giant will provide its computer generated translation technology to translate the corpus of patents held by EPO.

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

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### **EU/Finance: European Progress Microfinance Facility**

On 25 March 2011, the European Commission announced its program to help facilitate access to finance for developing SMEs. The European Progress Microfinance Facility issues guarantees to providers of micro-financing (sharing the risk of loss) and increases their micro-credit volume. This program is managed by the European Investment Fund on behalf of the European Commission and works in collaboration with selected microfinance institutions from the Member States.

To learn more about European Progress Microfinance Facility, please click [here](#)

### **ESBA/US: ESBA President addresses US students on entrepreneurship**

On 28 March, ESBA President Tina Sommer spoke to both students and faculty members of Hartford University, Connecticut during a guest lecture which she was invited to give. During her address, aimed at providing an insight into the EU, lobbying and SME issues in particular, Ms. Sommer touched upon topics such as EU competencies, the Single Market, taxation and investing in entrepreneurship. The lecture was followed by a lively debate with the audience.

To learn more about this, please visit: [www.esba-europe.org](http://www.esba-europe.org)

### **EU/ Enterprise and Industry: Erasmus for Young Entrepreneurs not yet reached full potential**

The “Erasmus for young entrepreneurs” (EYE) program, launched by the European Commission in February 2009, has attracted considerable interest of young and aspiring entrepreneurs as 2,000 have applied for the programme. However, only 600 young entrepreneurs have found a placement so far. The main reason for this has been a lack of hosting companies willing to participate in the project. The European Commission has expressed hope of improvement, now that the scheme and its successes are becoming more known amongst entrepreneurs. The project serves as a good opportunity for entrepreneurs to reach out and establish partnerships, for instance with likeminded companies in other Member States.

To learn more about the Erasmus for young entrepreneurs program, please click [here](#)

### **EU/Single Market: European Parliament discusses Single Market proposals**

On 6 April 2011, during the Strasbourg Plenary session, the European Parliament is set to discuss three reports, containing concrete proposals for improving the Single Market. However, discussions in the Parliament’s Committees over the past few weeks have been difficult and efforts are made to create a last-minute compromise as Parliament’s priorities will need to have a strong backing to be taken up by Commissioner Michel Barnier. He is expected to present the Commission's plans for a ‘single market act’ on 13 April.

For an overview of the Parliament’s Plenary agenda, please click [here](#)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **EU/Economy: Economic Sentiment Indicator**

On 30 March 2011, the European Commission issued its Economic Sentiment Indicator. The document presents statistics depicting confidence in different sectors such as industry or services.

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

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **ONGOING:**

#### **European Small Business Alliance – Brussels Office**

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### **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**

*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**

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### EU Institutions: Important dates

04 to 07 April 2011 – European Parliament plenary sessions (Strasbourg)  
04 to 07 April 2011 – European Parliament committee meetings (Strasbourg)  
05 April 2011 - Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners  
11 and 12 April 2011 – European Commission European Consumer Summit  
11 and 12 April 2011 – Justice and Home affairs Council  
11 to 13 April 2011 – Competitiveness Council informal (Hungary)  
13 April 2011 - Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners  
13 April 2011 – General affairs Council  
11 to 14 April 2011 – European Parliament committee meetings (Brussels)

### Other SME-related events

#### **Towards an Open and Competitive Economy**

**05 April 2011, 9.00 am**

##### **Budapest, Hungary**

The Hungarian Ministry for National Economy, the National Innovation Office and the European Commission's Joint Research Centre are organising a conference about how science can help to reach the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy. This conference will bring together policy makers, representatives from industry and scientists to share their knowledge.

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

#### **Energy Efficiency for Business**

**11 and 12 April 2011**

##### **London, UK**

This conference aims at clarifying the way of implementing innovative technologies within green policies. This conference will bring together senior industry experts to discuss this matter linked to the launch of the CRC scheme in the UK. The conference will focus on finding best practices and understanding the benefits of clean technology and ecodesign.

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

#### **Digital Media Europe 2011**

**11 to 13 April 2011, 9:30 am**

##### **London, UK**

The World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers' conference on digital topics will take place during three days:

- Digital Trend Day: Solid growth as digital media come into their own
- Mobile Media Day: Time to set targets in the mobile world
- iPad & Tablet Day: Tablet confidential

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

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