



HEADLINES

EU/Think Small First: ESBA calls on the EU to increase support for SMEs

On 3 May 2011, the 'Parliament Magazine' held its first Brussels spring briefing in London. The event gathered different stakeholders including approximately 80 MPs, MEPs, representatives of the European institutions and NGOs. A special appearance was made in the form of the EU's new SME Envoy and deputy Director-General for Enterprise and Industry, Mr. Daniel Calleja-Crespo. The panel, moderated by ESBA President Tina Sommer, who was also a speaker, attempted to tackle various issues from health policy to ways of generating EU growth and jobs. The SME envoy stressed the European Commission's committed towards the implementation of the "Think Small First" principle, aimed at simplification of EU legislation. Tina Sommer, who is also Chairman for EU and International Affairs at the UK Federation of Small Businesses, urged the European Institutions to majorly improve their consideration of small and micro-businesses when legislating.

ESBA opinion:

ESBA commends the European Commission for its commitments towards improving the implementation of the *Think Small First* principle into the EU legislative process but stresses that much remains to be done in this respect. Ever since the financial crisis hit the EU, it has become ever more evident that small companies are the lifeblood of our economy. It is therefore only logical to take these companies into consideration *first* before tabling any new EU proposals. A systematic and structured application of the 'SME test' in Commission impact assessments is an indispensable step towards this end.

To read more about the event, please visit the Parliament Magazine's website [here](#)

IN BRIEFS

EU/Unemployment: Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani speaks on the fight against youth unemployment

On 9 May 2011, on the occasion of Europe Day 2011, European Commission Vice- President Antonio Tajani held a speech at the University of Milano- Bicocca. As youth unemployment rate remains high, Tajani wishes to prioritize this issue. In his speech he emphasized the importance of creating new small enterprises to create new jobs as a means of boosting youth employment.

To read more about fostering entrepreneurship, please click [here](#)

EU/Euro area: Decline in volume of retail trade

On 4 May 2011, Eurostat, the European Union's statistical body, issued a study comparing the volume of retail trade in the Euro area and in the EU27 in the months of February and March 2011. In comparison with February, the volume of retail trade declined by 1% in the Euro area and 0.8% in EU 27. Retail trade fell in thirteen Member States, including Portugal (-4.7%) and Slovenia (-3.0%) which show the highest decreases, whilst in eight other Member States an increase was noticed.

For Eurostat's study, please click [here](#)

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EU/Digital Agenda: Commission launches Internet of the Future (FI-PPP)

On 3 May 2011, European Commission Vice-President Neelie Kroes launched a public-private partnership on the Internet of the Future (FI-PPP) in eight areas, amounting to €600 Million. Businesses are going to cooperate with the public sector in order to handle the increase in online data. The aim is fostering innovation and the creation of jobs in the mobile, software and service industries.

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

EU/Contract Law: Expert group presents feasibility study on European contract law

On 3 May 2011, the European Commission published the results of a feasibility study on European contract law created by an expert group composed of legal practitioners, former judges and academics from across the EU. Stakeholders now have until 1 July 2011 to express their views on the study. The European Commissioner for justice, Viviane Reding said in a public hearing on 3 May that European contract law could have the potential to reduce costs and bring legal certainty for SMEs by removing the need to adapt to 27 different legal systems. Commissioner Reding furthermore guaranteed a high level of consumer protection.

To read the expert group's feasibility study, please click [here](#)

To read ESBA's response to the Commission's consultation, please visit the website [here](#)

EU/ European Systemic Risk board: More instability for EU's financial system.

On 2 May 2011, two deputy chairs of the European Systemic Risk Board (ESRB) warned for the continuous risks the EU's financial system has to cope with. The European Systemic Risk Board, an independent EU body responsible for the macro-prudential oversight of the financial system within the Union, gave a firm analysis of the current state of capitalism in the EU. The ESRB expects the impact of the crisis to be felt for many more years. In particular, warnings were uttered regarding a rise in long-term interest rates and the risk of non-reasoned behavior by banks after the results of a bank 'stress-test', to be released in June.

To learn more about the European Systemic Risk Board, please visit the website [here](#)

PUBLICATION

EU/Small Business Act: European Economic Forecast – Spring 2011

On 2 May 2011, the European Commission Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs published its European Economic Forecast. The document provides a study of the Economic developments at the aggregated level and also numerous figures and graphs for each Member State. The spring 2011 edition confirms the on-going recovery of the EU economy even though the growth rate still varies considerably between Member States.

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

CONSULTATIONS

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,

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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](#)

ONGOING:

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

18 May 2011 - Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners
23 to 26 May 2011 - European Parliament committee meetings (Brussels)
25 May 2011 - Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners
30 May 2011 - European Parliament committee meetings (Brussels)

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Other SME-related events

Brussels Economic Forum

18 May 2011

Brussels, Belgium

The 12th edition of the Brussels Economic Forum will bring around the table a large range of stakeholders; from economists and high level decision makers to social partners and the media. Several sessions will be held during the day with different topics such as the European Semester, the reformed economic governance framework and Economic policy in Europe.

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

European Business Summit 2011

18 and 19 May 2011

Brussels, Belgium

The European Business Summit will hold its 9th edition on 18 and 19 May 2011. This edition will focus on the place of Europe in the global economy and how to help Europe to become an economic leader and reach better growth.

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

Mobilising SMEs for the Future of Europe

24 and 25 May 2011, 8.30 am

Gödöllő, Hungary

This conference, jointly organised by the European Commission DG Enterprise and Industry and the Hungarian EU presidency, will focus on identifying solutions to the problems that SMEs face at a local and a regional level and on the implementing of the Small Business Act.

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

ICT Finance Market-Place Venture Academy and Investment Forum for SMEs

15 – 16 June 2011

Brussels, Belgium

The Venture Academy is a one day training event where experienced coaches will provide help to ICT SMEs to improve their access to finance. The day after, the investment forum will offer SMEs the opportunity to present their businesses in front of different corporate investors. An award for the best investor presentation will be given by Commissioner Kroes during the Digital Agenda Assembly.

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