



HEADLINES

EU/Exempting micro-entities from EU accounting rules

Today, the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament voted in favour of a Commission proposal to exempt micro-entities from certain disproportionately burdensome accounting rules. The vote signals an important step forward for the EU's overall goal to reduce administrative burden by 25% by 2012.

At present, micro-entities, meaning very small companies with less than 10 employees, are required to draw up elaborate annual accounts and have them audited. In addition to diverting valuable manpower from these small companies with an average of 3 or 4 staff, the requirements denote annual costs of €1.200 per micro-entity on average, and up to €6.2 billion per year EU wide. Advised by the High Level Group of Independent Stakeholders on Administrative Burdens, the Commission concluded that the generally locally operating micro-entities have no real use for keeping these accounts and should be exempted from these rules.

A negative first vote on the proposal in the European Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs in October 2009, severely threatened the credibility of the EU's promises to reduce administrative burdens and to create a healthier regulatory environment for SMEs. However, judging by today's vote in the Legal Affairs Committee, it seems as though the Members of the European Parliament have regained their grasp of the vital importance of the EU's Administrative Burden Reduction Plan for small businesses and the EU economy as a whole.

ESBA OPINION

The European Small Business Alliance is happy with the results of today's vote, as it indicates a healthy mindset amongst MEPs towards small business. However, this is only a first step in the right direction. The proposal still needs to be voted on in Plenary and will have to find agreement in Council. Therefore, ESBA urges the European Parliament and the Council to keep their eye on the prize and make sure this important Commission proposal reaches its intended beneficiaries.

EU/European Commission: Tajani passes Parliament's test

On 19 January, the Commissioner-designate for DG Industry and Entrepreneurship, Antonio Tajani, faced the Parliament's Industry, Research and Energy Committee for a three-hour hearing. In his opening statement, Mr. Tajani outlined his view of a new industrial policy in Europe, based on SMEs, sustainable economy and innovation. He pledged to improve SMEs' access to finance, boost their innovation and ensure the full implementation of the Small Business Act. Equally, the Italian Commissioner gave a promise that all new legislative proposals would include a SME impact assessment. He also vowed to cut further red tape for businesses and to introduce new SME-friendly guidelines on public procurement.

The Parliament has given green light to 25 candidates up until now, with the Bulgarian Commissioner-designate, Kristalina Georgieva, set to face the last hearing on 3 February. The Parliament will then vote on the whole college on 9 February in Strasbourg. In the case of approval, the new Commission will take office the next day, on 10 February. Shortly afterwards, it is expected

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to present its detailed Legislative and Work Programme for 2010, setting out strategic priorities and policy initiatives.

ESBA Opinion

ESBA urges the Commission to start its work as soon as possible, as it needs to provide an economic stimulus to the European economy and ensure stability in governing the block of 27 Member States. The period between the European Parliament elections and the entry into office of the new Commission lasted for 7 months; now the time is ripe to start action and produce tangible results based on the promises given. ESBA supports Commissioner-designate Tajani's priorities to strengthen European SMEs and is looking forward to a fruitful cooperation with the Commission services to improve the business environment in the EU. Facing the many challenges ahead, only a constructive dialogue between all stakeholders will lead to substantial results for the business community.

EU/Council: 'Trio' Presidency presents its three-year programme

On 21 January, Spain, Belgium and Hungary presented their joint 18-month programme, which will serve as a basis for their 'trio presidency' at the helm of the EU. The main priorities include implementation of a post-crisis strategy to ensure sustainable growth and jobs and a successful implementation of the 'EU 2020' Strategy. In this light, the three countries pledged to enhance SME competitiveness across the EU. Equally, they reiterated the EU's commitment to the Better Regulation Agenda and to the administrative burden reduction target of 25% by 2012. Strengthening the Internal Market and tapping the potential of digital economy will also be high on the agenda. The three countries are the first to coordinate their presidency work programmes, as dictated by the Lisbon Treaty. Their 'trio' programme was officially adopted in December 2009 at the General Affairs Council.

ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the 'trio presidencies' commitment to strengthen European SMEs and to deliver on earlier promises to improve the regulatory environment for businesses. Coordination efforts, brought about by the Lisbon Treaty, are necessary to ensure the continuity of work and smooth implementation of policies between the Member States. ESBA trusts that the work of the present 'trio presidency' will result in tangible improvements towards the European business community.

To access the 'Trio' Presidency programme, please click:

http://eutrio.es/export/sites/presidencia/comun/descargas/programatrio_EN.pdf

IN BRIEF

EU/Eurostat: EU Member States generate up to a quarter of their income by e-commerce

On 19 January, a Eurostat survey unveiled that e-commerce constituted 12 percent of enterprises' turnover in the 27 Member States in 2008. In some countries, such as Ireland, Finland and Sweden, this figure reaches one quarter of all revenue. Most of e-commerce-related income is generated nationally. The survey has further estimated that more than 90 percent of all European entrepreneurs have access to the Internet, with an almost universal broadband coverage in Finland, Denmark, Austria and Slovakia. The survey on ICT was conducted at the beginning of 2009 and included all 27 EU Member States, Croatia and Norway.

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

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EU/Ombudsman: Consultation on Commission's late payment problems launched

On 12 January, the newly re-elected European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has launched a public consultation on the Commission's late payment problems. Individual citizens, enterprises, non-governmental organisations and all other stakeholders are invited to contribute their opinions. The aim of the consultation is to analyse ways and measures as to how the Commission could improve its late payment record.

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

EU/Parliament: Commission's late payment proposal to get significantly amended

On 21 January, the European Parliament indicated that it would like to considerably amend the Commission's late payment proposal with regard to public authorities. In place of the 5 percent flat-rate penalty, initially proposed by the Commission, the Parliament is considering a more flexible approach, starting with a 1% penalty and increasing it as time elapses. The proposal's Rapporteur, Barbara Weiler, has also indicated that some derogations for hospitals could be introduced, in order not to compromise their competitiveness vis-à-vis private health centres. The proposal currently lies with the Parliament's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, which expects to vote on the draft report on 23 February.

To access the Late Payment Directive (recast), please click [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: 'The impact of publicly-funded research on innovation'

The Commission has published this report in the framework of the PRO INNO Europe initiative. The report provides an analysis of the European Framework Programmes for Research and Development, focusing on the link between research, technological advancement and innovation in particular.

To read the report, please click [here](#)

European Commission: 'European Company Study 2009'

The Eurofound research agency, on behalf of the Commission, has conducted a survey of European companies with the aim of analysing what measures they employ to withstand the current economic crisis and the challenges posed by global competition in general. While the final results will not be published until March, some early findings indicate that most enterprises favour flexible measures in relation to hiring and remuneration policies.

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

European Commission: 'Learning from peers: 200 real, compelling e-Business cases from European SMEs'

The Commission has published an online brochure listing 200 success e-Business stories from European SMEs. The idea behind this brochure is to inspire SMEs across Europe to tap the potential offered by digital economy.

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

CONSULTATIONS

Public consultation on the interconnection of business registers

Closes on 31 January 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation to invite all stakeholders to comment on its Green Paper on possible ways to improve access to information for EU businesses and on its Progress Report on the interconnection of European business registers.

To read more about the consultation and to access the questionnaire to be filled in by stakeholders, please click [here](#)

Public consultation on the final report of the Expert Group on e-Invoicing

Closes on 26 February 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation in relation to a report by the Expert Group on e-Invoicing published earlier this month. The consultation particularly welcomes contributions from SMEs, with the aim of collecting and analysing stakeholders' opinions on the use of electronic invoicing.

To read more about the consultation and to access the questionnaire to be filled in by stakeholders, please click [here](#)

Public consultation on the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities

Closes on 12 March 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the International Financial Reporting Standard for SMEs, with the aim of analysing the views of EU Stakeholders. The consultation is part of the review of the 4th and 7th Company Law Directives by the Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services.

To read more about the consultation and to access the questionnaire to be filled in by stakeholders, 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 the online consultation, please click [here](#)

COMING UP

Other SME-related events

18 February: the European Commission is organising an EU Finance Day for SMEs, to take place in the Hague, the Netherlands. The event is part of the series of events organised by the Commission to

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raise awareness with regard to financial instruments available for SMEs and is aimed at enterprises and national government representatives.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemshortdetail.cfm?item_id=3995&lang=en

1-5 March: the European Commission is organising the first European e-Skills Week, to take place Brussels, Belgium. The event aims to bring together a vast number of participants and will focus on the rising demand for skilled ICT staff in the industry.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3998&lang=en

17-18 June: Faculty of Management and Economics of Gdansk University of Technology and ICAN Institute - Harvard Business Review Polska are organising the Fourth Enterprise in Modern Economy (ENTIME) Conference, to take place in Gdansk, Poland.

http://www.zie.pg.gda.pl/ekonomia/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=44&Itemid=147