



HEADLINES

EU/ European Commission: Adapting EU regulation to the needs of micro-enterprises

On 23 November 2011 the European Commission published a report on minimising regulatory burden for SMEs and adapting EU regulation to the needs of micro-enterprises. The report includes a list of initiatives already taken as well an examination on a case-by-case basis as to whether small companies should be exempted (partially or temporary) or given a lighter regulatory regime in the future. The report is a result of commitments by both European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso and Vice-President Antonio Tajani to “promote the best possible conditions for growth and job creation”. Both stress that micro-businesses are the most important growth engine for the EU but at the same time form the most vulnerable group of businesses. Barroso stressed that complying with regulation can be ten times more expensive for micro-businesses than for large companies. Concrete measures to be taken include a ‘reversed burden of proof’, where the need to regulate micro-businesses must be proven before adding additional regulatory burden. Furthermore, a new micro-enterprise dimension will be added to the SME test and a scoreboard for the “think small first” principle will be created to ensure proper implementation of micro-business related EU legislation in the Member States.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA has been advocating very actively the importance of making a distinction between micro-businesses and larger SMEs when regulating Small and Medium Enterprises and warmly welcomes the Commission’s report. Although exemptions are far from ideal and should by no means become rule, they can be useful and are often necessary crisis measures for alleviating some of the regulatory burden off our smallest companies, enabling them to grow and create jobs. More importantly, ESBA is very happy to see concrete developments towards improved implementation of the *Think Small First* principle. A perfect implementation of this principle would render the need for exemptions obsolete, as micro-businesses would be taken as a vantage point when considering new legislation. However, as long as this is not the case, exemptions and lighter regimes are valid short-term solutions.

For more information on the Better Regulation Agenda please click [here](#)
To access the Commission report, please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/ Entrepreneurship: Code of Conduct for micro-credit provision

On 8 November 2011, the European Commission published a new European Code of Good Conduct for micro-credit provision. As the European Commission seeks to improve investment to small businesses, the code is meant to level the playing field among the Member States, it sets management standards and enhances transparency of business to investor relations. With the facilitation of credit at depressed levels and SMEs struggling to access finance, this Code of Conduct could support entrepreneurship and increase the cash flow of businesses.

To learn more about the EU’s support instruments for micro-credit, please click [here](#)

EU/ Council: Europe divided over Financial Transactions Tax

On 8 November 2011, the EU finance ministers formally discussed the possibility to impose a tax on financial transactions. Based on a proposal by the European Commission, the intention of the tax is to raise the costs of short term financial transactions, making financial speculation less attractive as well as providing the EU increased revenue. The idea is generally supported by France and Germany but faces opposition from the UK which would accept the principle only if the tax were implemented world-wide. Other concerns that have been voiced include a possible hampering of the provision of credit to businesses as it would raise the operational costs for financial institutions as well.

To access the European Commission proposal for a financial transaction tax, please click [here](#)

EU/ Internationalisation of SMEs

On 9 November 2011, the European Commission published a communication on the need to strengthen the support for EU SMEs who are now or aspire to be active on a global level. While there are many economic opportunities in growth markets such as China, India, Russia and the regions of South East Asia and Latin America, only 13 % of EU SMEs are active on third markets. To increase the number of EU SMEs active on a global level as a means of economic growth promotion, the Commission aims to develop a new, more coherent and effective EU strategy for the internationalisation of SMEs.

To read more about the internationalisation of SMEs, please visit the DG Enterprise and Industry webpage [here](#)

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

EU/Gender and Entrepreneurship: Helping female entrepreneurs get started

On 15 November 2011, the European Commission launched a new initiative intended to help promote female entrepreneurship within the EU. Through a new European network, woman entrepreneurs can receive guidance from mentors who are willing to share their working knowledge and experience with the aspiring entrepreneurs. By increasing female entrepreneurship the Commission hopes to help women who have lost their jobs during the economic crisis create their own employment. The initiative engages 170 mentors and covers 17 European countries.

To learn more about this initiative, please visit the Commission's webpage [here](#)

EU/ Commission: Commission Work Programme 2012 presented

On 15 November 2011, the European Commission revealed its work programme for 2012. Strong emphasis is placed on growth and economic recovery. The European Commission aims at strengthening economic governance and the swift implementation of adopted legislation by Member States. Among the key initiatives are a comprehensive employment package and an instrument for Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) for business to business situations. New to the Work Programme is a dedicated section on simplification and administrative burden reduction, covering 28 policy fields.

To access the full document with the Commission Work Programme 2012, please click [here](#)
Annexes can be found [here](#)

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EU/ Entrepreneurship: EU actively promotes social entrepreneurship

On 18 November 2011, on the occasion of the European Conference on Social Entrepreneurship, Michel Barnier, the European Commissioner responsible for the Internal Market stressed the necessity of creating new business models for a sustainable future. Embedded in the ‘Social Business Initiative’ and the ‘2020 Strategy’, the EU intends to provide extra incentives for businesses that operate socially and responsibly. Key provisions in this programme include the allocation of EUR 90 million through a new social investment fund and the cutting of red tape for businesses.

To read more about the EU’s Social Business Initiative, please click [here](#)

To learn more about Europe’s 2020 Strategy, please click [here](#)

EU/ Unitary patent stepping into the next gear

On 22 November 2011, the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament approved a mandate which will open the negotiations for the creation of a unitary patent. The Parliament in its negotiations with the Member States will consider all proposals regarding the unitary patent as a single package. This ‘all or nothing’ package is meant to significantly reduce costs for SMEs when applying for a patent in Europe. To date, Spain and Italy still do not wish to be part of a unitary patent which is why the form of an Enhanced Cooperation remains the basis for discussion.

To read the draft report on enhanced cooperation in the area of the creation of unitary patent protection please click [here](#)

To learn more about the translation arrangements please click [here](#)

For the draft report on the Jurisdictional system for patent disputes please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: 2012 Annual Growth Survey

On 23 November 2011, the European Commission presented its Annual Growth Survey (AGS) which will set of the second European semester for economic governance. As a follow up to the unsuccessful 2011 survey, the Commission is trying to step up their game by increasing the numbers of pillars from 3 to 5. The new focal points are fiscal consolidation; ensuring access to capital for enterprises; structural reforms in the field of services, network industries, public sector and the digital economy; battling unemployment and modernisation of public administration.

To read the European Commission’s 2012 Annual Growth Survey please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: “Erasmus for all”

On 23 November 2011, the European Commission presented its proposal “Erasmus for all”. This programme will replace seven existing Commission programmes with one all-encompassing programme. The Commission is eager to tackle youth unemployment and believes that fostering entrepreneurship amongst young people could increase employment. By offering young people the possibility of undertaking high quality internships or studying abroad, the skills gap could be narrowed, increasing chances of adequate employment.

To read the Commission’s communication “Erasmus for all”, please click [here](#)

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

PUBLICATIONS

EU/ Eurostat: Industrial orders in the Eurozone down in September 2011

This publication shows that industrial orders within the Euro area went down by 6.4% in September 2011 compared with a rise of 1.9% in August 2011.

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

EU / Eurostat: Volume of retail trade sank in September 2011.

This publication shows that the volume of retail trade during September 2011 went down by 0,7 % in the Euro area and by 0,3 % in the EU 27, as opposed to during August 2011 having gone up by 0,1 % in the former while remaining stable in the latter.

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

CONSULTATIONS

ONGOING:

Consultation on reducing CO2 emissions from road vehicles

Closes: 9 December 2011

This consultation seeks to collect opinions on EU strategy and options for reducing CO2 emissions from road vehicles.

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

Consultation on Directive 2006/114/EC concerning Misleading and Comparative Advertising and on unfair commercial practices affecting businesses

Closes: 16 December 2011

The European Commission is launching a public consultation to gather more information from companies and others affected on the nature and scale of the unfair practices, including online scams. Following the consultation, the Commission will then assess how best to stop rogue traders exploiting loopholes in the rules and make sure that legitimate traders are effectively protected.

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

Online consultation on administrative burdens reduction

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

28 -29 November 2011- Education, youth, culture & sport Council
29-30 November 2011- European Parliament committee meetings
30 November 2011- Economic & financial affairs council
30 November 2011 – Foreign affairs council
30 November 2011- EC weekly meeting of the College

1 December 2011 – European Parliament plenary session
1 December 2011 – European Parliament Committee meetings
1-2 December 2011 – employment, social, health & consumer affairs council
5 December 2011 – European Parliament committee meetings
5 December 2011- Competitiveness Council
5 December 2011 – General affairs Council
6 December 2011- Competitiveness Council
7 December 2011- EC weekly meeting of the College
8 December 2011 - European Parliament committee meetings
8 December 2011 – Governing Council of the European central bank
9 December 2011 - European Council
12-13-14-15 December 2011 - European parliament committee meetings
12-13-14-15 December 2011 - European Parliament plenary session
12 - 13 December 2011 - Transport, telecommunication & Energy (transport) Council
13-14 December 2011 - Justice and home affairs Council
19-20 -21 December 2011 – European Parliament committee meetings
19 December 2011 Environment Council
20 December 2011 – EC weekly meeting of the college

Other SME-related events

Export Europe: Opportunities on your doorstep

30 November 2011

Edinburgh, Scotland

Whether you're a small company new to exporting, or an established multinational, this Smart Exporter event, delivered in partnership between Scottish Development International and UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) will provide the ideal opportunity to: Refresh your international trade ideas/ Speak first-hand with UKTI and SDI commercial officers from a range of European countries/ Find out more about doing business in these markets.

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

Conference on improving the regulatory environment for microcredit

2 December 2011

Brussels, Belgium

In the current economic climate, microcredit is an important tool for generating growth and jobs in the EU. Several countries have introduced reforms to promote microcredit and foster the emergence of microcredit providers as a complement to traditional channels of credit distribution.

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

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CE marking Seminar, Athens, Greece

5 December 2011

Athens, Greece

The CE marking seminar in Athens will provide participants with general background information about the CE marking as well as specific practical information that is useful for the daily work life of producers, importers or distributors.

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

Innovation Convention organised by the European Commission

5-6 December 2011

Brussels, Belgium

This first edition of the Innovation Convention will be opened by President Barroso one year after the adoption of the Innovation Union flagship initiative, the EU's roadmap to turn Europe into a more innovation-friendly and competitive continent. Research and innovation are the main motors for sustainable job creation and the only way to achieve a sustainable exit from the current economic crisis. This conference will bring together world leading experts in research and innovation to share their views on building a global innovation economy.

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

Restructuring forum: Socially responsible restructuring worldwide

5-6 December 2011

Brussels Belgium

The Restructuring Forum, organised by the Commission in cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), will bring together experts from around the world to exchange views on the way restructuring is addressed in different socio-economic and institutional contexts.

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

Conference on social services as key to reaching the Europe 2020 targets

7 December 2011

Brussels, Belgium

A study by the Danube University Krems (Austria) on the topic of "Women and the Economic crisis: Integration of social services as a response to the economic and structural crisis", commissioned by the Austrian Federal Chamber of Labour and the ÖGB, which will be presented for the first time at the conference in Brussels, examines how investments in social services increase levels of employment and how a high-quality supply of social services like childcare and care facilities prove to be a relief for women trying to enter the labour market.

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

Public hearing on the changes for Europe's banking sector with the new financial rules

9 December 2011

Brussels Belgium

The Consultative Commission on Industrial Change is organising a hearing with the title "What changes for Europe's banking sector with the new financial rules?" that will take place on 9 December 2011 at the Committee's JDE building.

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

European Small Business Alliance – Brussels Office

rue d'Idalie 9-13, B - 1050 Bruxelles

Tel. : +32 (2) 639 62 30 – Fax. : +32 (2) 644 90 17 – email : secretariat@esba-europe.org

Public conference on the CEN e-Invoicing workshop

12 December 2011

Brussels Belgium

The mass adoption of e-invoicing within the EU would lead to significant economic benefits to European enterprises, in particular SMEs. The Commission wants to see e-invoicing become the predominant method of invoicing by 2020 in Europe, and is committed to working in close cooperation with the Member States and all other stakeholders who will be instrumental to achieve such goal. The Communication COM (2010) 712 on "Reaping the benefits of electronic invoicing for Europe" describes a set of needed priorities and actions.

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

A labour market for all: Efficient and innovative assistance to jobseekers

13 December 2011

Stockholm, Sweden

The conference, which will take place in Europahuset in the Centre of Stockholm, will look at how assistance to job seekers can be improved. The conference will have three thematic sessions: "The Swedish model for providing aid to job seekers", "Other national examples of providing aid to job seekers" and "How can we develop assistance to job seekers from groups facing specific difficulties?". Among the speakers will be the State Secretary to the Swedish Minister for Employment, the President of the EESC and the President of the Confederation of Swedish Trade Unions (LO).

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

Intellectual Property for Eco-innovators

14 December 2011

Hampshire, UK

The majority of eco-innovative firms own or create intellectual property (IP) in the form of trademarks, copyright, patents, database rights or registered/unregistered designs. In developing innovative environmental products and technologies, many smaller businesses are not fully aware of the opportunities to protect and exploit their IP. Knowledge of the range of protection and licensing options should complement each eco-innovator's approach to competing effectively.

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