



HEADLINES

EU/ Financial Transaction Tax: Wrong means to a justified end

On 28 September 2011, the European Commission tabled its proposals for a Financial Transaction Tax, otherwise known as the 'Tobin tax'. The tax is intended to end short time financial speculations and is said to make the financial sector more stable. Revenues are claimed to amount up to € 57 Bln and would flow in the budget of the European Union. Although the tax is backed by both France and Germany the opposition is fierce. The British Prime Minister David Cameron has assured he will use his veto as the tax would put a bomb under London's financial district. In the meantime, warnings are coming from the banking sector and from academics, arguing that the tax would not reach its objectives. The current political debate is in full course, especially after the statement of Danish Economy Minister Margrethe Vestager on 10 January 2012 that the Commission's proposal is "not very robust" and the tax might lead to losses of jobs in the EU.

ESBA OPINION

The danger in this proposal lies in the fact that the end user will have to pay for all this as it is highly likely that banks will pass these extra charges on to small businesses. SME bank lending is already endangered severely by the upcoming CRDIV requirements where banks are required to retain capital, which in turn will not be distributed to SMEs in the form of loans. By taxing banks for financial transactions, there will be even less tier 1 capital available. We all see the need for a solid financial sector, as well as a healthy EU budget. However, this may not be at the expense of small businesses whilst at the same time expecting them to get Europe out of this crisis. We should be helping SMEs do business, not putting obstacles in their way.

EU/European Commission: New study confirms small businesses as drivers of job creation

On 16 January 2012, the European Commission published a study showing that SMEs are responsible for 85 per cent of all newly created jobs. Moreover, the study emphasised that SMEs fare much better than large companies in this field and stressed that especially micro-businesses and innovative firms take up a significant proportion of net job growth. With the demand of products and services declining and operational capital becoming unattainable, the current economic crisis has hit small businesses hardest. Therefore, the results of this study clarify once more that SMEs are vital for economic recovery.

To read the full report issued by the European Commission, please click [here](#)

ESBA OPINION

The figure presented by the Commission does not come as a surprise to ESBA. It is about time that micro businesses receive the attention they deserve as carriers of the European economy. It has been advocated profusely over the past year that micro businesses are responsible for more than two thirds of total EU employment. The 85% figure adds to this and shows how important, innovative and agile micro businesses are to the economy. If each SME would employ one extra person, the European unemployment problem would cease to exist. ESBA urges the European institutions to act in accordance with the presented figure when proposing legislation affecting micro and small businesses.

IN BRIEF

EU/ European Commission: Action plan for E-commerce launched

On 11 January 2012, the European Commission presented its Communication on E-commerce, setting out the main aspects of the E-commerce Action Plan. By facilitating high-speed internet access; the development of a solid telecoms infrastructure; reliable online consumer services; secure electronic payments; efficient and affordable delivery services; transparency of online businesses and their price settings and data protection, the Commission hopes to boost E-commerce across Europe. However, the proposal has already been subject to criticism as some believe it will jeopardize the liability of on-line traders.

To read the full text of the Communication, please click [here](#)

To learn more about Europe's current E-commerce framework, please click [here](#)

EU/ Council: Denmark publishes its Presidency Programme for the first half of 2012

On 6 January 2012, Denmark presented its Council Presidency programme, envisioning a more responsible, green and safe Europe. The Danish affirmed that they will continue the work of the Polish presidency on the completion of the single market in order to achieve its full growth potential, including SME-related initiatives. The Presidency also intends to proceed with the development of the twelve key initiatives as set out in the Single Market Act, with special emphasis on the public procurement directive, the standardization package, the revision of the accounting standards, the proposal for a regulation of venture capital funds, the common European patent system, the directive on better enforcement of the posting of workers, the digital single market, negotiations on the e-signature and several directives on public sector information.

To read the complete Denmark presidency programme, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Investment Bank: Renewed support for Belgian SMEs

On 26 December 2011, the European Investment Bank and BNP Paribas Fortis renewed their partnership for the dispensation of € 150 million worth of loans geared towards investment to Small and Medium-sized Enterprises. This credit line will allow Belgian SMEs to make the necessary investments in times of widespread distrust and reduced availability of private bank loans. Since the start of the 'EIB loans for SMEs' program in October 2008, over 7000 SMEs have received such loans, for which applications have risen significantly due to the current crisis.

To access the European Investment Bank's 'Loans for SMEs' program, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: Proposal on reduction of noise produced by motor vehicles

On 9 December 2011, the European Commission adopted its proposal for a regulation on the sound level of motor vehicles. The Commission hopes by the measures contained in the proposal to reduce vehicle nuisance by 25%. The harmonisation of requirements for vehicles should set an international standard making Europe's car industry more competitive. Accompanying the proposal are both a new test method for vehicle noise and an optional scheme for manufacturers to equip their vehicles with sound generation devices to improve their safety.

To read the full text of the European Commission proposal, please click [here](#)

To read more on noise emissions of motor vehicles, please click [here](#)

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EU/ European Commission: Proposal on Public Procurement published

On 20 December 2011, the European Commission adopted its proposal on public procurement, aiming at a thorough modernization of the current system by simplifying existing rules and creating more flexible procedures. Through a reduction of the administrative requirements and an adjustment of the financial capacity guidelines for the submission of tenders, the Commission seeks to improve SMEs' access to public procurement projects.

To access the European Commission proposal on public procurement, please click [here](#)

To read more about the EU legislation on public procurement, please click [here](#)

EU/ European Commission: Extension of consultation period

As of 1 January 2012, the European Commission has increased the public consultation period for new policies and legislation to 12 weeks instead of 8 weeks as it was previously the case. The Commission aims to involve more citizens and NGO's in the EU policy making process at an earlier stage. The Communication also introduced an alert service for upcoming initiatives. Organisations who have signed up to the European Union's Transparency Register will be notified by the Commission on the existence of new roadmaps for initiatives in their field of interest.

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

PUBLICATIONS

EU/ Eurostat: Industrial production down by 0.1% in both euro area and EU27

On 12 January 2012, Eurostat published data on the industrial production in November 2011. In Compared with October 2011, seasonally adjusted industrial production fell by 0.1% in both the euro area (EA17) and the EU27. In October production decreased by 0.3% in both zones.

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

EU/ Business Climate Indicator: December 2011

On 6 January 2012, the European Commission published the Business Climate Indicator (BCI) for the month December. In December 2011, the Business Climate Indicator for the euro area increased for the first time in ten months. The improvement in the BCI in December was mainly driven by increased optimism about production expectations, as well as by a more positive assessment of production trends observed in recent months and export order books.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Industrial producer prices November

On 5 January 2012, Eurostat published data on industrial producer prices in November 2011. Compared with October 2011, the industrial producer price index rose by 0.2% in the euro area (EA17) and by 0.3% in the EU27.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro area inflation in December

On 4 January 2012, Eurostat published data on the estimate of euro area inflation in December 2011. A flesh estimate of Eurostat believes that the Euro area annual inflation is expected to be 2.8% in December 2011. It was 3.0% in November.

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

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EU/ Eurostat: Third quarter of 2011

On 16 December 2011, Eurostat published on the third quarter of 2011. The hourly labour costs rose by 2.7% compared with 3.3% for the previous quarter.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW

Guidelines for public procurement of ICT systems

Closes: 14 February 2012

As part of Action 23 of the Digital Agenda, the European Commission will develop guidance on the link between ICT standardisation and public procurement to help public authorities to use standards to promote efficiency and reduce lock-in. Draft guidelines are available now, and a web consultation on the guidelines as well as on the measures to be taken to make them adopted is open and you are invited to participate.

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

Consultation: Review of the EU state aid rules for research, development and innovation

Closes: 24 February 2012

This public consultation follows publication of a mid-term review on the application of the current Community Framework for State aid for R&D&I in August 2011. By way of a questionnaire, the Commission invites Member States and interested parties to submit their input and views on the review of the EU state aid rules for supporting R&D&I ahead of the expiry of the R&D&I Framework end of 2013. The Commission is in particular interested in statistical information and qualitative comments on national R&D&I policies at large and on national state aid support measures for R&D&I in particular.

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

Public Consultation on the revision of Directive 2009/142/EC on appliances burning gaseous fuels (GAD)

Closes: 11 March 2012

The main objective of the public consultation on the revision of Directive 2009/142/EC on appliances burning gaseous fuels (GAD) is to collect views and opinions of stakeholders and citizens on various issues that may need to be addressed when the GAD is revised.

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

Consultation on Delivering more Sustainable Consumption and Production

Closes: 3 April 2012

The European Commission wants to gather views and additional information on the possible introduction of EU wide measures related to Sustainable Consumption and Production. The consultation offers an opportunity to all interested parties to express their views, to give their opinion on the proposed policy options.

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

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Consultation on Green Paper – Towards an integrated European market for card, internet and mobile payments

Closes: 11 April 2012

The purpose of this consultation is to collect information from all interested stakeholders on the existing situation of the card, internet and mobile payments market and the potential hurdles for integration at European level in these markets.

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

ONGOING

Consultation on the Revision of the rules for the assessment of licensing agreements for the transfer of technology under EU competition law

Closes: 3 February 2012

This consultation seeks to collect the opinion of stakeholders on the revision of EU competition rules for the assessment of licensing agreements for the transfer of technology. For the purpose of the EU competition rules, a technology transfer agreement is an agreement where one party (the licensor) authorizes another party (or parties, the licensee(s)) to use its technology (patent, know-how, software license) for the production of goods and services.

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

Consultation Renewable Energy Strategy

Closes: 7 February 2012

The legislative framework as regards renewable energy is laid down in the Renewable Energy Directive which sets an obligatory target of 20% renewable energy in final energy consumption as well as a 10% target in transport for 2020. Given the long-term perspective of investors it is necessary already now to look beyond that year. This public consultation has the aim of soliciting the view of interested parties to assess in how far the orientations of the current policy framework remain valid in the medium term i.e. until 2030.

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

Online consultation on administrative burdens reduction

Ongoing

This on-line questionnaire has been designed to register your problems and suggestions on administrative burdens. Your input will be taken into account in the preparation of EU measures reducing administrative burdens. Contributions and feedback from the Commission will be summarised in periodic reports published on the Enterprise and Industry website.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

16, 17, 18, 19 January 2012 – European Parliament plenary session

16, 17, 18, 19 January 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings

17 January 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners

23, 24, 25, 26, 27 January 2012 – European Commission at the international green week 2012

23, 24, 25, 26 January 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings

23 January 2012 – Agriculture and Fisheries Council

23 January 2012 – Euro group

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23 January 2012 – Foreign Affairs Council
24 January 2012 – Economic & Financial Affairs Council
25 January 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College
25 January 2012 – Start of the world economic forum
26 January 2012 – Informal meeting of Ministers of Justice and Home Affairs
30, 31 January 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings
30 January 2012 – European Council
31 January 2012 – General Affairs Council

1-2 February 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings
1-2-3 February 2012 – Meeting of ministers responsible for competitiveness (informal)
1 February 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners
6, 9 February 2012 – European Parliament committee meetings
8 February 2012 – EC weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners

Other SME-related events

Conference on working together for growth

20 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

On 20 January 2012, the Commission will host a conference on how to develop and foster mutual supportiveness of external and internal market opening policies, in particular in goods and services regulations. The EU's "internal" policies are critical for the EU's effectiveness internationally and the EU's external policies also shape the competitiveness of the internal market.

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

Conference on the economic crisis, education and the labour market

24 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

In times of crisis, it should be reiterated that education is a fundamental human right and a public good, which should be guaranteed for everyone under equal conditions. A well-educated young generation able to make its own choices is a prerequisite for emerging successfully from the crisis. Member States should therefore pay particular attention to public investment in education and vocational training as well as in research and innovation.

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

Conference on the European tourism quality label

25 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission is inviting all interested stakeholders to participate in an open conference on 25 January 2012 on the European tourism quality label.

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

Conference on how to grow regional economies through digital collaboration

26 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The overall objective of this event is to ensure that regional policy makers are aware of both the good practices and also the potential benefits accruing from effective deployment of the new digital technologies and applications. It also aims at helping regions to prepare for the transfer of these

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good practices into the relevant mainstream funding programmes. The conference is organised by ERISA.

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

Conference on the European citizens' initiative

26 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

This conference on "Warming up for the citizens' initiative" is hosted by Commissioner Maroš Šefčovič, responsible for inter institutional relations and administration.

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

Conference: The European Union moving towards a European energy community

31 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

In a context of strong interdependency between the EU's Member States, this conference aims to promote joint – rather than national – responses to the major energy challenges facing the EU today.

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

Workshop on 'Logistic and Supply Chain Security

31 January 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The objective of the workshop organized by the "Security Research and Development" Unit within DG Enterprise & Industry is to discuss the roadmap and priorities that should be taken into consideration for a future FP7 European demonstration programme on "Logistic and Supply Chain Security".

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

European competition forum

2 February 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The first European competition forum will welcome ministers, parliamentarians, competition policy experts and the media to debate priorities for competition policy and enforcement in the coming years and to identify the challenges ahead and exchange ideas.

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

Public Hearing on the European Consumer Agenda

9 February 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The Commission's Directorate-General for Health and Consumers and the Directorate General for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, are currently preparing the next multiannual European strategy in the field of consumer policy. The public hearing would be an occasion to bring together all interested parties and allow an exchange of views, enabling us to work together towards building a new strategic approach to consumer policy.

More details of this event will be published shortly on the website of the DG for Health and Consumers

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