



### HEADLINES

#### **Still Time to Register for ESBA's Annual event 2012: "Micro-Business: Your Favorite Employer"**

On 28 June 2012, the European Small Business Alliance will organise its annual event. This year's topic will be "Micro-Business: Your Favorite Employer" putting the role of micro businesses in generating employment for Europe in the spotlight. The event will facilitate an interactive debate between entrepreneurs, Members of the European Parliament, officials of the European Commission and other stakeholders. Recent figures show that micro-companies are responsible for a great deal of new job creation. How can we help them to create even more jobs? How can we ensure that policy is adapted to the needs of micros, enabling them to play their crucial role in the EU economy? Live, during the event, the Dutch SME 'ModelMinds' will create a visual representation of the debate's findings in the form of an artwork actively involving the audience via an 'offline Twitter feed'. ESBA is delighted to host Vice-President of the European Commission, Antonio Tajani, who will deliver the keynote speech, as well as Member of the European Parliament and President of SME Europe Ms Nadezhda Neynsky who will address the audience with a special message.

Join us for this important debate and share your ideas with us!! Please register before 18 June, by sending an email to [secretariat@esba-europe.org](mailto:secretariat@esba-europe.org)

For more information and the programme of the event, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/ Health: Fighting depression at work**

On 5 June 2012, Stephen Hughes MEP (S&D, UK) hosted a roundtable on depression and work after responding favourably to an open letter sent by the European Depression Association (EDA). He called upon EU policy-makers to put fighting depression at work at the centre of occupational health and safety legislation. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), depression results in high socio-economic costs and is on its way to becoming the greatest cause of worker disability by 2030. The EDA is organising an awareness campaign "Depression and the Workplace" to take place during the whole month of October 2012.

To read the open letter to MEPs by the European Depression Association, please click [here](#)

To learn more about the roundtable organized by Stephen Hughes MEP (S&D, UK), please click [here](#)

### ESBA OPINION

The European Small Business Alliance acknowledges the seriousness of depression and the adverse effects it can have on the workers. However, emphasizes that there must be a thorough evaluation of whether stress is in fact work-related or whether it stems from private situations. Whereas the former implies responsibility by the employer, the latter should not. In other words, we must ensure that employers do not end up paying for stress that does not originate in the workplace.

### IN BRIEF

#### **EU/ Access to finance: International cooperation to enhance finance for SMEs**

On 7 June 2012, the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the International Finance Corporation opened the annual forum of development finance institutions, in Luxembourg. The forum takes place in the context of the G20's SME Finance Working Group, meeting annually to reflect on policy models to increase sustainable SME finance and encourage business friendly regulation in support of SMEs in developing countries. On this occasion, Vice President of the EIB, Plutarchos Sakellaris, stressed that "Ensuring funding for small-business investment and supporting the real economy are key priorities for EIB".

To learn more about the SME Finance Working Group, please click [here](#)

To learn more about the International Finance Corporation, please click [here](#)

To learn more about the EIB's support to SMEs, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/ Entrepreneurship: OECD report shows business creation still below pre-crisis level**

On 6 June 2012, the OECD published the second edition of its report 'Entrepreneurship at a glance 2012', giving an overview of the state of entrepreneurship in its member countries. Recent data show that the economic crisis has had a profound impact on start-up rates since 2008. Although there are signs of slow revival, the number of new businesses is still below pre-crisis levels. One of the findings of the report highlighted the persisting gender inequality in entrepreneurship as women are generally running fewer and smaller firms than their male counterparts.

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

#### **EU/ Data Protection: European Parliament starts scrutiny of Commission proposals**

On 31 May 2012, the European Parliament started its deliberations on the proposed data protection legislation. The two proposals, published by the European Commission in January, were discussed in the European Parliament Committees on Civil liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, and the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy. The rapporteur for opinion Sean Kelly (EPP, IE) pointed out the unintended consequences the data protection Regulation could have on small businesses. He emphasised the need for an adequate balance between fundamental rights and the need to provide a level-playing field throughout the Member States.

To read more on the reform of the data protection legislation, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/ Research and Innovation: Council takes a step forward on the 'Horizon 2020' Programme**

On 31 May 2012, the European Competitiveness Council reached a general partial agreement on the new EU Framework Programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020. The programme is one of the EU's key new funding instruments supporting research and innovation initiatives and links in closely with Europe's R&D targets for the year 2020. An essential element in the proposed framework is to bring new and innovative research to the market. Furthermore, it aims to simplify the rules of participation for SMEs as compared to its predecessor, the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). The European Parliament is currently preparing its position

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on the proposal, after which negotiations with the Council are expected to kick off by the end of this year.

To read more about the Horizon 2020, the new framework programme for research and innovation, please click [here](#)

To know more about the Europe 2020 strategy, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ Red tape: Lighter reporting requirements for listed SMEs**

On 31 May 2012, the Competitiveness Council reached agreement on the recast of the Transparency Directive. The latter text contains mandatory requirements on the disclosure of information by listed companies. According to the compromise document, listed SMEs would be exempted from a number of these obligations, notably the compulsory publication of quarterly reports. This should contribute to significantly reducing the administrative burdens for smaller companies. The European Parliament is now expected to take a decision on the proposal before negotiations can go forward.

To read more about the proposal amending the existing Transparency Directive, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ Transport: MEPs welcome the revision of the Tachograph Regulation to ensure better compliance with rules on driving times and rest periods**

On 31 May 2012, the European Parliament Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted the report of Silvia-Adriana Țicău MEP (S&D, RO) on the Commission proposal for a revision of the Tachograph Regulation. Digital tachographs are on-board equipment recording driver activities, like driving hours and rest periods, as well as the distance travelled. In her report, Mrs Țicău calls for the mandatory use of "smart" tachographs, connected to global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) in heavy goods vehicles by 2020, allowing remote checks and consequently fewer road inspections. The vote in plenary is scheduled for July 2012; if adopted, the new Regulation could be implemented by 2017.

To learn more on the legislation on recording equipment in road transport, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ Competitiveness: Danish presidency running late on patent package agreement**

On 30 May 2012, during a press conference following the meeting of the Competitiveness Council, the Danish Minister for Business and Growth, Mr Ole Sohn, stated that no agreement had been reached on the Common EU Patent. London, Munich and Paris are still fighting to host the Central Division of the Court of First Instance of the future unitary patent jurisdiction. Sohn is still optimistic about reaching an agreement before the end of the Danish presidency. Heads of States and Governments of the EU committed to agree on the EU patent package before the end of June 2012, the location of the Court being now the only outstanding issue. The seat of the Patent Court will be on the agenda of the next European Council on 28 and 29 June 2012.

To learn more about the unitary patent protection, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ CSR: EESC adopts opinions on Social enterprises and Corporate Social Responsibility**

On 23 and 24 May 2012, the plenary session of the European Economic and Social Committee adopted opinions on both the Social Business Initiative and the European Social Entrepreneurship Fund. The EESC calls upon the European Commission and Member States to take measures to foster

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the development of social enterprises, mostly SMEs, in particular concerning access to finance and access to public tenders. Furthermore, the EESC adopted an opinion on the new Commission strategy for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). According to the EESC, the European Commission has not properly taken into account the needs of SMEs in its CSR strategy and simply applied a one-size-fit-all approach.

To read the EESC's opinion on the Social Business Initiative, please click [here](#)

To read the EESC's opinion on the European Social Entrepreneurship Fund, please click [here](#)

To read the EESC's opinion on Corporate Social Responsibility, please click [here](#)

### PUBLICATIONS

#### **EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on GDP**

On 6 June 2012, Eurostat published an estimation of GDP growth. Compared with the first quarter of 2011, GDP growth that had been estimated at 0.0% for the Euro area is revised to -0.1% and remains unchanged at +0.1% for the EU27.

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

#### **EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on volume of retail trade**

On 5 June 2012, Eurostat published a monthly comparison of volume of retail trade, revealing a drop by 1% between March and April 2012 in the Euro area and 1.1% in the EU27.

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

#### **EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on industrial producer prices**

On 4 June 2012, Eurostat published its indicator on industrial producer prices for April 2012, showing stability in industrial producer prices in both the Euro area and the EU27 compared to March 2012.

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

#### **EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on unemployment rate**

On 1 June 2012, Eurostat published the unemployment rates in the Euro area (11%) and in the EU27 (10.3%) for April 2012.

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

#### **EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on inflation in the Euro area**

On 31 May 2012, Eurostat published its flash estimate of inflation in the euro area. It finds that euro area inflation reached 2.4% in May, compared to 2.6% in April.

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

#### **EU/ Commission: Convergence report 2012**

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On 30 May 2012, the European Commission published its biennial European convergence report. It examines whether Member States wanting to join the Euro have made progress with regards to the convergence criteria (price stability, public finances, exchange rate stability, long-term interest rates) to enter the third stage of the European Monetary Union (EMU).

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

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

On 30 May 2012, the Commission published the monthly Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) for May 2012. It decreased sharply in May, falling by 2.7 points in the EU and by 2.3 points in the euro area, to 90.5 and 90.6 respectively.

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

### **EU/ Commission: Business Climate Indicator for the euro area**

On 30 May 2012, the Commission published the Business Climate Indicator (BCI) for the euro area for May 2012. It decreased by 0.26 points compared to April 2012, to -0.77.

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

### **EU/ EIF: Working Paper "European Small Business Finance Outlook, May 2012"**

On 29 May 2012, the European Investment Fund (EIF) published a working paper providing an overview of the main markets relevant to the EIF (equity, securitisation, microfinance). The following items are covered: main aspects of equity finance, the SME Securitisation market, important aspects of microfinance in Europe.

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

## CONSULTATIONS

### **NEW:**

#### **Consultation on procedures for notifying and acting on illegal content hosted by online intermediaries**

*Closes: 5 September 2012*

This consultation aims at making a contribution to the development of legal certainty and trust in cross-border online services. It also aims at combating illegality on the internet, and ensuring better fundamental rights compliance of notice-and-action procedures. Those elements are crucial to enhance the Digital Single Market, which is an important source for growth.

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

#### **Consultation for the review of the EU fruit and vegetable regime**

*Closes: 9 September 2012*

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The European Commission is conducting an analysis of the current EU regime in respect of the fruit and vegetables sector in relation to its CAP 2020 reform proposals. In this context, this public consultation aims at informing and allowing interested parties to submit their views on the problem definition, challenges and options proposed, and at gathering facts and analytical documents to help the impact assessment.

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

### **ONGOING:**

#### **Consultation on bank accounts**

*Closes: 12 June 2012*

The Commission is collecting stakeholders' viewpoints on the necessity of taking action and on the possible policy tools to be used to improve the transparency and comparability of bank account fees, bank account switching and access to a basic payment account.

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

#### **Consultation on the Access to Interoperability Information of Digital Products and Services**

*Closes: 20 June 2012*

The Commission will analyse how the market situation could change if the significant market players were legally forced to disclose interoperability information and if necessary will draft Commission Communication or a Directive by 2012. This consultation particularly focuses on owners and potential users of interoperability information that is not covered by standards.

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

#### **Consultation on the future of European Insolvency Law**

*Closes: 21 June 2012*

The Commission has put the revision of Regulation (EC) No 1346/2000 on insolvency proceedings in its Work Programme for 2012. The revision is one of the measures in the field of "Justice for Growth" set out in the Commission's Action Plan implementing the Stockholm Programme. This consultation gives interested parties the opportunity to present their views on the future of European insolvency law.

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

#### **Consultation on an EU strategy to reduce injuries resulting from road traffic accidents**

*Closes: 22 June 2012*

This consultation will serve as input for the drafting of a strategy to reduce the severity of injuries caused by road traffic accidents. The questionnaire addresses general issue related to road safety and more specific issues on how to improve the data available on victims of accidents and their collection at EU level, and on how to target some specific groups of road users.

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

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### **Consultation on the governance of the 'Internet of Things'**

*Closes: 10 July 2012*

The Internet of today offers access to content and information through connectivity to web pages and to multiple terminals (e.g., mobiles, TV). The next evolution will make it possible to access information related to our physical environment, through a generalised connectivity of everyday objects. The Internet of Things holds the promise of significant progress but it is likely to have a profound impact on society, in areas like privacy, security, ethics, and liability. The European Commission envisions a recommendation addressing the main issues.

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

### **Exploiting the employment potential of the personal and household services**

*Closes: 15 July 2012*

The staff working document on personal and household services aims to have views of all stakeholders to comment on possible actions to address the issue of promoting new jobs in the personal and household services sectors. In particular, the Commission is interested in ways to improve measurement and monitoring of the employment levels in PHS, taking into account the impact of the on-going crisis, loss of purchasing power, labour market exclusion issues and the potentially positive effect on the creation or growth of SMEs.

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

### **Public Consultation on an EU Initiative to Reduce the Cost of Rolling Out High Speed Communication Infrastructure in Europe**

*Closes: 20 July 2012*

High-speed Internet underpins all sectors of the economy and will be the backbone of the Digital Single Market. For every 10% increase in the broadband penetration the economy grows by 1 to 1.5%. In this context the European Commission is seeking views on how to cut the costs of setting up new networks for high speed internet in the EU. In particular, the Commission wants to explore how to reduce the costs associated with civil engineering, such as the digging up of roads to lay down fibre, and which can account for as much as 80% of the total cost. The Commission believes it could cut the cost of broadband investments by a quarter. Input is sought from all interested public and private parties including telecoms and utility companies for instance, investors, public authorities and consumers.

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

### **Consultation on Industrial Policy Communication 2012**

*Closes: 7 August 2012*

The European Commission industrial policy flagship of 2010 laid out a strategy for sustainable growth, competitiveness and job creation in the context of Europe 2020. The 2012 review of the industrial policy communication will be adopted by the Commission in September 2012. The new communication should focus on a limited number of new initiatives capable of effectively delivering

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results. The responses to the questionnaire will help the Commission identify policy priorities and develop appropriate policy responses.

To access this 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 administrative burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% in 2012.

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

## COMING UP

### **EU Institutions: Important dates**

10-11 June 2012 – Informal Meeting of Ministers and State Secretaries for European Affairs (GAC)

11 June 2012 – Environment Council

11-14 June 2012 – Plenary session of the European Parliament

12 June 2012 – Agriculture and Fisheries council (Fisheries issues)

12 June 2012 – Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners

13 June 2012 – Meeting Coreper II

14 June 2012 – Meetings Coreper I & II

15 June 2012 – Transport, Telecommunications and Energies Council

18 June 2012 – Agriculture and Fisheries Council (Agriculture issues)

18-21 June 2012 – European Parliament Committees meetings

20 June 2012 – Meetings Coreper I & II

20 June 2012 – Weekly meeting of the College of Commissioners

21 June 2012 – Eurogroup Meeting

21-22 June 2012 – Employment, Social policy, Health and Consumer affairs Council

21 June 2012 – Meeting Coreper II

22 June 2012 – Economic and Financial affairs Council

22 June 2012 – Meeting Coreper II

### **Other SME-related events**

#### **Conference on Education in Entrepreneurship**

**18-19 June 2012**

**Horsens, Denmark**

Organised in Denmark by the Danish presidency this conference will focus on the methods of learning and learning outcomes of education in entrepreneurship and creativity.

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

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### **2<sup>nd</sup> Digital Agenda Assembly**

**21-22 June 2012**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The two-day conference aims at identifying and assessing problems and solutions in the implementation of the Digital Agenda for Europe, the European Commission's roadmap comprising different initiatives to boost growth through the digital economy. Stakeholders are invited to give their opinion online in preparation of the event.

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

### **Research Roadmap for Horizon 2020**

**25 June 2012**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The Future Internet Assembly Working Group on Research Roadmapping is organising a workshop to review and extend the current FIA Research Roadmap as a core input to the next EU Framework Programme ("Horizon 2020").

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

### **Conference on Electronic Procurement – Challenges and Opportunities**

**26 June 2012**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The European Commission has recently proposed that e-procurement should become mandatory across the EU by mid-2016. This conference is co-organised by the Commission and the European Parliament.

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

### **Public Hearing 'Improving access to finance for SMEs'**

**28 June 2012**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The European Economic and Social Committee will gather representatives from SMEs and financial institutions to conduct a public hearing on the Commission's Action plan to improve access to finance for SMEs. In a context of crisis, it is particularly difficult for SMEs to access capital.

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

### **EU-US Workshop on Small and Medium-sized Enterprises**

**12-13 July 2012**

**Rome, Italy**

This workshop is organised in the framework of the Transatlantic Economic Council. It will focus on initiatives that could be taken to promote EU and US SMEs participation in international trade.

### **East-Meets-West on Innovation and Entrepreneurship**

**1-4 September 2012**

**Nicosia, Cyprus**

This event organised by the European office of Cyprus will feature an international congress and an exhibition. It aims at promoting collaboration between science, technology and business.

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

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### **Universities and Regional Innovation: From Policy to Practice**

**20 September 2012**

**Brussels, Belgium**

The EU-DRIVERS annual conference, organised by the European Centre for the Strategic Management of Universities, will focus on cross-sectorial partnerships between academic, businesses and public agencies to support regional innovation.

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

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