



HEADLINES

EU/ ESBA event: Micro-employers in the spotlight

On 28 June 2012, ESBA held its annual event, entitled 'Micro-business: Your favorite employer'. The conference aimed to take micro-businesses out of their victim role and, instead, highlight the potential of these small businesses to become important employers, when given the right tools. Massimo Baldinato, addressing the audience on behalf of Vice-President of the European Commission Antonio Tajani, reiterated the Commission's determination to reduce regulatory obstacles for micro-companies. Bulgarian MEP and co-founder of SME Europe, Nadezhda Neynsky highlighted the importance of Europe's smallest companies for the growth of our economy. During the panel debate that followed, the imperative role of the Internet in micro-company growth became apparent. Proper use of the available online tools has caused a 'rise of the micro-multinational' to take place, as explained by Sylwia Stępién from the well-known think-tank 'The Lisbon Council'. McKinsey was represented by Steven Spittaels who was able to back up many of the statements made with hard data. Head of Unit for entrepreneurship in DG Enterprise, Marco Curavic spoke about the importance of entrepreneurial spirit in Europe. The relevance of interns to small companies in the current economy was highlighted by Rob Kriegsman, CEO of Europlacement.com. During the afternoon session, two (former) micro-businesses shared their success stories, explaining which tools are essential for micro-businesses, which obstacles must be eliminated and the role the European Institutions have in achieving this. It was made clear that the job creation potential of micro-businesses can be significantly improved by removing existing barriers and by stimulating the use of the many tools that are already available. The main obstacles identified as hampering micro business' growth included complex legislation, lack of harmonisation of EU law (e.g. regarding VAT) and a lack of access to finance.

IN BRIEF

EU/ Intellectual Property Rights: The European Parliament calls for strengthening of measures against illicit trade

On 5 July 2012, the European Parliament adopted in plenary session the report of Jürgen Creutzmann MEP (ALDE/DE) on customs enforcement of intellectual property rights. Amending a Commission's proposal for a Regulation, the report aims at strengthening the powers of customs authorities. The latter would now be allowed to stop and control goods which are only in transit through the EU; unless the importer can present proof that the goods are not destined to be sold on the Internal Market. The Council has to approve the amendments made by the European Parliament before the proposal can go forward.

To read the Commission's proposal for a Regulation, please click [here](#)

To read the text adopted by the European Parliament, please click [here](#)

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EU/ Patent: The European Parliament postpones the adoption of the EU unitary patent

On 3 July 2012, the European Parliament postponed the vote on the draft Regulations implementing the enhanced cooperation in the area of unitary patent protection. On 29 June the European Council had removed the last barrier to its adoption by reaching a long-awaited agreement on the seat of the future Unified Patent Court. However, the European Parliament refused to vote on the text of the European Council as it was not consulted on the deletion of three key articles enabling the Court of Justice to act as an appeal court regarding patent litigation. This last-minute move of the European Council was considered a breach of procedure by MEPs. Re-examination of the texts by the European Parliament Committee on Legal Affairs is scheduled for 10 July 2012. A unitary patent, negotiated for over thirty years, is designed to reduce the costs of companies to file a patent applicable in all Member States.

To read the European Council conclusions on the unitary patent, please click [here](#)

To read the proposal for a Regulation implementing enhanced cooperation in the area of unitary patent protection, please click [here](#)

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

EU/ Taxation: Towards enhanced cooperation on a Financial Transaction Tax

On 28 and 29 June 2012, on the occasion of the European Council, several Member States expressed their intention to formally start the procedure for enhanced cooperation on a Financial Transaction Tax (FTT), with a view to its adoption by December 2012. The proposal for a FTT, launched by the Commission last September, faces opposition in the Council on the basis of potentially relocating the financial sector beyond the EU's borders. Speaking at a press conference on 26 June, the Commissioner responsible for Taxation, Algirdas Šemeta, said that at least 11 Member States are willing to go ahead, among which are France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

To read the conclusions of the European Council, please click [here](#)

To learn more about the proposal for a Financial Transaction Tax, please click [here](#)

EU/ Taxation: Creation of VAT expert group and publication of report on tax evasion measures

On 28 June 2012, the European Commission set up a group of VAT experts to provide input on how to modernize the current system of turnover taxation. The creation of the VAT expert group was foreseen in the Communication on the Future of VAT published in December 2011, laying down a series of actions to reform the VAT system. Furthermore, on 26 June the Commission published its report on the application of Article 263 (1) of the VAT Directive concerning the reduction of timeframes for exchanges of information on VAT fraud between Member States. These timeframes had been reduced to allow for quicker detection of tax evaders and were under re-examination; however, the report finds that there is no sufficient justification to amend the current provisions.

To access the call for applications for the selection of members of the expert group, please click [here](#)

To read the report from the Commission on the application of Article 263 (1) of Council Directive 2006/112/EC concerning the reduction of timeframes, please click [here](#)

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EU/ Access to finance: Innovative SMEs to benefit from new Regulation Venture Capital Funds

On 28 June 2012, the Danish Presidency succeeded in reaching agreement between the Council and European Parliament on a Regulation on European Venture Capital Funds. This Regulation intends to create a uniform system within the EU for the financing of venture capital funds. Constituting one of the 12 levers for growth of the Single Market Act and a key component of the Commission Action Plan 'Access to Finance for SMEs', the Regulation serves to support innovative SMEs who are in dire need of finance. Highly-innovative businesses seeking equity financing, especially in their growth and expansion stage, should benefit from the new Regulation as it simplifies the regulatory system for their investors.

To learn more about the EU's efforts to create a venture capital market, please click [here](#)

To read the European Commission Action Plan 'Access to Finance for SMEs', please click [here](#)

EU/ Smart Regulation: The European Commission seeks stakeholder input on better law-making

On 27 June 2012, the Commission launched a wide-ranging consultation to appraise the progress made since the release of its 2010 Communication 'Smart Regulation in the EU'. Committed to improve the quality of its policies so as to reduce red tape for business, the European Commission seeks contributions on how to enhance the relevance of proposed initiatives, the implementation of existing legislation and the participation of civil society in law making. The consultation will be running until 21 September 2012.

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

To read the 2010 Communication on 'Smart Regulation in the EU', please click [here](#)

EU/ Access to finance: Simplification of EU funding application procedures

On 26 June 2012, the European Parliament and the Council reached an agreement on the revision of the Financial Regulation laying down the rules of attaining EU funding. The revision aims at simplifying access to EU funds, cutting the administrative burden on beneficiaries and enhancing transparency of the process. One of the most tangible measures for citizens and businesses is the removal of the obligation to open a separate bank account to benefit from an EU grant. Furthermore, the new Financial Regulation, which will come into force on 1 January 2013, will make more use of flat rates and lump sums and grant money will be distributed quicker to the beneficiaries.

To read the Communication by the European Commission, "A simplification agenda for the 2014-2020 MFF", please click [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

EU/ EIB: Evaluation of the market, business and financial aspects for the development of broadband access for FEMIP countries

On 4 July 2012, the EIB published a study evaluating the market, business and financial aspects for the development of Telecom broadband access for the Mediterranean Partner Countries.

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

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EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on volume of retail trade

On 4 July 2012, Eurostat published a monthly comparison of the volume of retail trade. In May 2012 compared with April 2012, the volume of retail trade rose by 0.6% in both the euro area and the EU27. In April retail trade fell by 1.4% in both zones.

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

EU/ OECD: Annual inflation rate

On 3 July 2012, the OECD published the annual inflation rate estimates for May 2012 in the OECD area, revealing a decrease to 2.1%, compared with the 2.5% estimates for April 2012. It is the lowest rate since January 2011.

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

EU/ Commission: Macroeconomic imbalances in several EU Member States

On 3 July 2012, the Commission published in-depth reviews of the economic situations in the United Kingdom, Slovenia, Sweden, Italy, Hungary, France, Finland, Spain, Denmark, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Belgium.

To access these publications, please click [here](#)

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on industrial producer prices

On 3 July 2012, Eurostat published its monthly comparison of industrial producer prices. In May 2012, compared with April 2012, the industrial producer price index fell by 0.5% in the euro area and by 0.7% in the EU27. In April prices rose by 0.1% in the euro area and remained stable in the EU27.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on unemployment rate

On 2 July 2012, Eurostat published its monthly comparison of the unemployment rate. The euro area seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.1% in May 2012, compared with 11% in April. The EU27 unemployment rate was 10.3% in May 2012, compared with 10.2% in April.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on inflation

On 29 June 2012, Eurostat published its estimate of annual inflation for June 2012, revealing an estimated euro area annual inflation of 2.4%.

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

EU/ Commission: 2012 Pre-accession Economic Programmes of Croatia, Iceland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey - EU Commission's overview and assessments

On 28 June 2012, the Commission published its assessments of the 2012 Pre-Accession Economic Programmes (PEP) of the current 6 candidate countries.

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

EU/ Commission: 2012 Economic and Fiscal Programmes of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina - EU Commission's overview and country assessments

On 28 June 2012, the Commission published its overview and assessments of the 2012 Economic and Fiscal Programmes (EFP) of the potential candidate countries (Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

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

EU/ Eurostat: Price levels in 2011

On 22 June 2012, Eurostat revealed that in 2011 price levels for consumer goods and services differed widely across Member States. While Denmark had the highest price level with 142% of the EU27 average, the lowest was found in Bulgaria (51%).

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation on Ocean Energy

Closes: 14 September 2012

Ocean energy (mostly generated from tides and waves at the present time) is a potential source of jobs and growth in Europe. However, its development has faced challenges. This consultation aims at gathering opinions and ideas from individuals and stakeholders on whether and how to help the sector make its contribution to security of energy supply in Europe and meeting targets for a 'green' future.

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

Consultation on Smart Regulation

Closes: 21 September 2012

In its 2010 Communication on 'Smart Regulation in the EU', the Commission set out a strategy to improve the way it designs, enforces, evaluates and revises European policies and regulations to ensure they benefit citizens and businesses. Nearly two years later, the Commission is taking stock of the progress made and drawing lessons from its experience. This stakeholder consultation aims to collect your views and proposals to inform a Commission Communication reporting on Smart Regulation implementation.

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

Consultation on the Implementation Report of the Environmental Noise Directive (END) and on the EU Noise Policy

Closes: 25 September 2012

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The objective of the consultation is to gather views and additional information on the effectiveness, strengths and weaknesses of EU environmental noise legislation, in particular as regards Directive 2002/49/EC (END) relating to the assessment and management of environmental noise. This consultation is part of a follow up process to the first Implementation Report on the END published in June 2011. It serves to gather views also on the data and information published in the Report focusing on the issues for further consideration.

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

Consultation on the future of EU-US trade and economic relations

Closes: 27 September 2012

This public consultation is intended to enable the gathering of detailed views relating to the future trade and economic relationship between the European Union and the United States. Taking into account the more general initial public consultation published February 2012, it aims at detailing and structuring the feedback of all relevant stakeholders. The results of both consultations will feed into the Impact Assessment DG TRADE is currently preparing. The Impact Assessment will help shaping the position of the Commission with regards to a potential bilateral initiative with the United States in the field of trade policy.

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

ONGOING:

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](#)

Consultation on 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](#)

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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 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](#)

Consultation on the future rules on the entry and residence of non-EU national researchers, students, school pupils, unremunerated trainees and volunteers in the EU

Closes: 23 August 2012

The aim of the consultation is to collect opinions on future rules on the entry and residence of non-EU national researchers, students, school pupils, unremunerated trainees and volunteers in the EU, with a view to the revision of the students and researchers Directives as foreseen in the 2012 Commission Work Programme.

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

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 of growth.

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

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Consultation on Intelligent Energy – Europe III in Horizon 2020

Closes: 5 September 2012

Intelligent Energy – Europe II (IEE II) is one of the three pillars of the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) and the main EU instrument for non-technological support in the field of energy. Its objective is to contribute to removal of market barriers that hamper the efficient use of energy and increased use of renewable energy sources. This public consultation will provide an important contribution for shaping IEE III in Horizon 2020.

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

Consultation on demand-side policies to spur European industrial innovations in a global market

Closes: 6 September 2012

The Commission is calling for ideas for potential new policy measures and focus areas for future targeted demand-side innovation actions at EU level, to enable faster uptake of innovations and to create a better environment for creating innovations in order to maintain the value and business investments in Europe.

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

Consultation for the review of the EU fruit and vegetable regime

Closes: 9 September 2012

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](#)

Consultation on the General Block Exemption Regulation (GBER)

Closes: 12 September 2012

The GBER will expire on 31 December 2013. In this context, the present public consultation offers stakeholders the opportunity to provide input to the Commission at an early stage of policy making. Member States, other Institutions and stakeholders are invited to express their views on the GBER provisions currently applicable and to suggest possible amendments to these provisions.

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

Consultation on List of projects submitted to be considered as potential Projects of Common Interest (PCI) in energy infrastructure

Closes: 20 September 2012

The objective of this consultation is to seek views on the list of all the projects that have been submitted to be considered by the ad hoc working groups as potential PCIs. Stakeholders may also

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suggest projects to be added to, or removed from, the list. The input from this consultation will feed into the PCI evaluation process.

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

Consultation on Code for Effective Open Voluntarism: Good design principles for self- and co-regulation and other multi stakeholder actions

Closes: 30 September 2012

In the CSR Communication COM (2011) 681, about "A renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility," under the fifth action of the action plan, the Commission has undertaken to seek to codify good practice in various voluntary, self- and co-regulation processes in order to improve the framework for achieving EU policy objectives. The prime goal of action 5 is to encapsulate, in a very short text, the core propositions that frame effective voluntary multi stakeholder action.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

- 07-08 July 2012 – Informal Environment Council Meeting
- 09 July 2012 – Eurogroup Meeting
- 09 July 2012 – Coreper II Meeting
- 10 July 2012 – Economic and Financial affairs Council
- 10 July 2012 – Informal Meeting of Ministers of Health
- 11 July 2012 – Coreper I and II Meetings
- 11-12 July 2012 – European Economic and Social Committee Plenary Session
- 12 July 2012 – Informal Meeting of Ministers of Employment and Social Policy
- 12 July 2012 – Coreper II Meeting
- 16-17 July 2012 – Agriculture and Fisheries Council
- 16-17 July 2012 – Informal Meeting of Ministers for Transport and Telecoms
- 18 July 2012 – Coreper I Meeting
- 18-19 July 2012 – Informal Competitiveness Council (Industry)
- 18-19 July 2012 – Plenary Session of the Committee of the Regions
- 19 July 2012 – Coreper II Meeting
- 19 July 2012 – Governing council meeting of the European Central Bank
- 20 July 2012 – Coreper I Meeting
- 23 July 2012 – Foreign Affairs Council
- 23-24 July 2012 – Informal meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs
- 24 July 2012 – General Affairs Council
- 25 July 2012 – Coreper I and Coreper II Meetings
- 26 July 2012 – Economic and Financial affairs Council

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Other SME-related events

Modernising European insolvency law: a second chance for businesses towards stabilising the real economy and ensuring better financial stability?

10 July 2012

Brussels, Belgium

ACCA and UEAPME jointly organise a roundtable discussion around the EU Insolvency framework. A panel of experts will look at ways to foster a business rescue culture in Europe and to make cross-borders insolvency rules more effective for businesses operating at an international level.

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

Lunch Discussion on Female Entrepreneurship

12 July 2012

Brussels, Belgium

Organised by Seldia, the European Direct Selling Organisation, and hosted by MEP Barbara Matera (EPP, IT) this event will provide an opportunity to discuss the necessary measures to be taken to support female entrepreneurship in Europe.

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.

To see the programme of this event, please click [here](#)

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 the world of business.

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

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.

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

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