



HEADLINES

EU/ Regulatory Burden: Commission closes consultation on Smart Regulation

From 27 June to 21 September 2012, the European Commission held a consultation on *Smart Regulation*. As a follow-up to a Communication from 2010 carrying the same name, the document shows that administrative burdens are still a very real problem in EU decision-making. The consultation sets out to involve stakeholders on how to reduce burdens on businesses resulting from legislation and on how to make legislation as effective as possible. Improving Impact Assessments and improved stakeholder involvement are highlighted as important to do's on the European Commission's checklist to better lawmaking.

ESBA Opinion

Although ESBA welcomes the fact that the European Commission is actively trying to improve the situation by issuing another stakeholder consultation, it also shows that very little has changed and that regulation is yet anything but smart. The *Think Small First* principle, which sets out to take the smallest businesses as a starting point when creating new legislation, is not yet fully implemented, which results in messy lawmaking and the need for lighter regimes and exemptions for micro businesses. ESBA advises a 'reversed burden of proof' for legislation affecting micro-businesses, where the Commission must demonstrate why additional legislation is necessary for small businesses before including them in a proposal. To do this, serious improvements are to be made to the quality of impact assessments, which should always include the 'SME-test'. Although the Commission claims to have reached and exceeded a goal to reduce administrative burden by regulation by 25% in 2012, new legislation is created parallel to this reduction, which means that in terms of net administrative burdens, there might actually be an increase.

To access ESBA's response to the consultation, please click [here](#)

EU/ Single Market: Commission launches EU late payment information campaign

From October 2012 to December 2013, the European Commission will organise an information campaign on the Late Payments Directive across the EU and Croatia. Late payments are a serious impediment to business competitiveness and particularly harmful to SMEs. Every year, many businesses go bankrupt as a result of late payments. The Directive will need to be implemented by 16 March 2013 and provides, *inter alia*, a 30-day deadline for payment by public authorities to businesses. If the deadline is exceeded, business will be able to demand a compensation for costs incurred.

ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes this Commission initiative. Late payments are indeed an important obstacle to small businesses. Operating often on a handful of large clients, late payment by one or two of

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these clients may cause serious cash flow problems and has in fact led to many bankruptcies. With this information campaign, the Commission could tackle the severe lack of awareness about EU initiatives amongst European business owners. ESBA would strongly encourage the Commission to report on the successes of this information campaign and to continue this line into other EU initiatives.

To know more about EU late payments campaign, please click [here](#)

To access the list of the events organised under the European late payment information campaign, please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/ Small Business: Euronews Business Awards

The Euronews Business Awards, in association with Google, were conceived with aim to recognize and motivate young, start-up companies and SME's to whom the internet was instrumental in launching or expanding their business. Winners will be selected by a high-profile expert jury, receive broad coverage by Euronews, training by Google and additional prizes. Euronews encourages entrepreneurship and highlights those innovative minds that perceive the current economic crisis as an opportunity to invent, invest and create.

Short video submissions will be accepted until 28 October 2012.

To know more about the Euronews Business Awards, please click [here](#)

EU/ Research and Innovation: Red tape still makes EU funds inaccessible to SMEs

On 19 September 2012, MEP Seán Kelly (EPP, IE) hosted an event where the findings of the GE Innovation Barometer 2012 were presented. Respondents to the survey overwhelmingly mention innovation as the way out of the EU's economic crisis. However, almost two thirds of respondents state that red tape leads to great difficulties for businesses in accessing EU funds. The Horizon 2020 proposal as it stands now will allocate €80 billion to initiatives reinforcing EU competitiveness and growth. As the negotiations on the next Multiannual Financial Framework are still on-going, Mr Kelly stated that the original budget of the future EU programme for Research and Innovation, Horizon 2020, should be maintained.

To read the GE Innovation Barometer 2012, please click [here](#)

To know more about Horizon 2020, please click [here](#)

EU/ Industrial Policy: Commission prepares to relaunch EU industrial policy

On 10 October 2012, Vice-President of the European Commission Antonio Tajani is expected to present the Commission's Communication 'Industrial Policy - a contribution to growth and economic recovery'. The Communication intends to kick-start the EU's industrial policy, focusing on 'green' construction and manufacturing, and on so-called 'Key Enabling Technologies'. It envisages a new industrial policy focused on four pillars: investment in innovation, better market conditions, access to capital, and skills. The Communication will integrate the results of the consultation on Industrial Competitiveness earlier this year.

European Small Business Alliance – Brussels Office

Clos du Parnasse 3A, B - 1050 Bruxelles

Tel. : +32 (2) 274 25 04 – Fax. : +32 (2) 274 25 09 – email : secretariat@esba-europe.org

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To learn more about the EU's industrial policy, please click [here](#)

For more information about the consultation on industrial competitiveness, please click [here](#)

EU/ CSR: Companies and young volunteers partner up to discuss Corporate Social Responsibility

On 25 September 2012, the European Commission's DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion held a conference on youth, entrepreneurship, volunteering and corporate social responsibility (CSR). After publishing two Communications, the Commission now aims to spearhead these four themes, as youth unemployment rates in the EU remain high. The aim of the conference was to find ways in which enterprises could encourage volunteering and to scout new employers through their CSR initiatives. Furthermore, the conference addressed the issue of how to validate skills gained through volunteering and how this can help young people to start their own business or find a job.

To read the Commission's Communication on CSR, please click [here](#)

To read the Commission's Communication on volunteering, please click [here](#)

EU/ Access to Finance: Micro-businesses in Portugal to benefit from Progress Microfinance Facility

On 21 September 2012, a deal was concluded between the European Investment Fund (EIF) and Millennium BCP (Banco Comercial Português, S.A.), which will lead to support for micro-businesses in Portugal through the provision of micro-loans. The first agreement under the Progress Microfinance Facility, comprising in total of €3.5 million, will be made available over the next two years. The deal is particularly geared at entrepreneurs and self-employed who generally face more difficulties in getting access to finance such as women, young people, minorities and people with a disability. The project also aims at providing loans for higher-risk projects, which is something the traditional credit market is very reluctant to finance.

To learn more about the European Progress Microfinance Facility, please click [here](#)

EU/ Single Market: EU citizens do not make much use of the European Small Claims Procedure

On 21 September 2012, an evaluation report published by the Commission showed that the European Small Claims Procedure, intended to resolve consumer disputes, is not much used by European citizens and relatively unknown to judges. The procedure has not been transposed into national law by all Member States. The Small Claims Procedure aims at facilitating small cross-border disputes of €2,000 or less.

To learn more about the European Small Claims Procedure, please click [here](#)

EU/ Employment: EESC calls for legislation protecting both workers posted abroad and needs of businesses

On 19 September 2012, the European Economic and Social Committee published a favourable opinion to the Commission proposal on posted workers. Highlighting the importance of safeguarding the protection of posted workers, the EESC also stressed to consider the needs of businesses. Particularly administrative burdens on businesses should be avoided, while discouraging social dumping and unfair competition. MEP Danuta Jazłowiecka (EPP, PO), the rapporteur on behalf of the

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Clos du Parnasse 3A, B - 1050 Bruxelles

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European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL), stated earlier that there is a need to ensure that new regulations will increase the protection of workers temporarily posted abroad without limiting the free provision of services within the internal market. The report by Ms Jazłowiecka is expected to be presented in the EMPL Committee by November this year.

For more information on the posting of workers in the EU, please click [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

EU/Eurostat: Euro indicator on annual inflation

On 28 September 2012, Eurostat released a flash estimate on annual inflation in September 2012, expected to be 2.7%.

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

EU/Commission: Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI)

On 27 September 2012, DG Economic and Financial Affairs released the Economic Sentiment Indicator for September 2012, revealing it decreased by 0.9 points in EU27, to 86.1, and by 1.1 points in the euro area, to 85.0. In both areas, the decrease was due mainly to weaker confidence among services and retail trade managers, and consumers.

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

EU/Commission: Business Climate Indicator (BCI)

On 27 September 2012, DG Economic and Financial Affairs released the Business Climate Indicator (BCI) for the euro area, which decreased by 0.16 points to -1.34.

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

EU/ Commission: Quarterly report on price and cost competitiveness, September 2012

On 21 September 2012, DG Economic and Financial Affairs published its report on price and cost competitiveness for the second quarter of 2012.

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

EU/ Commission: Flash Consumer Confidence Indicator for EU27 and the euro area

On 20 September 2012, DG Economic and Financial Affairs released its monthly flash estimate on consumer confidence showing it decreased during August 2012 in both the EU and the euro area.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on production in construction

On 19 September 2012, Eurostat released its monthly indicator on production in construction in the EU showing that in July 2012 compared to June 2012 it went down by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.2% in EU 27.

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

EU/ Eurostat: International trade in goods with China

On 18 September 2012, Eurostat published indicators on EU27 deficit in trade in goods with China revealing that it decreased by €67 billion in the first six months of 2012.

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

EU/ Commission: Labour market developments in Europe, 2012

On 17 September 2012, DG Economic and Financial Affairs published a study of the developments of the labour market in Europe in 2012 highlighting that unemployment has become increasingly structural.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on international trade

On 17 September 2012, Eurostat published the first estimate for the euro area and EU27 trade in goods balance with the rest of the world in July 2012 revealing a €15.6 billion surplus for the euro area and €3.1 billion surplus in the whole EU.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on hourly labour costs

On 17 September 2012, Eurostat released its indicator on the hourly labour costs in the euro area, which increased by 1.6% in the year up to the second quarter of 2012, and in EU27, which rose by 1.8% in the year up to the second quarter of 2012.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on Euro area annual inflation

On 14 September 2012, Eurostat published its monthly indicator on annual inflation. In August 2012, annual inflation was 2.6% in the euro area and 2.7% in EU27.

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

EU/ Eurostat: Euro indicator on employment rate for the second quarter of 2012

On 14 September 2012, Eurostat released a first estimate on employment rate for the second quarter of 2012. It remained stable in the second quarter of 2012 compared to the first one in the euro area but slightly increased by 0.1% in EU27.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation on the proposed EU Green Public Procurement (GPP) criteria for waste water infrastructure works

Closes: 14 December 2012

In order to facilitate the uptake of Green Public Procurement, the European Commission is developing EU GPP criteria to assist the contracting authorities throughout the European Union. The development process includes a consultation inviting comments by interested parties. The present consultation relates to waste water infrastructure works.

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

Consultation on ‘Bio-based industries, towards a public-private partnership under Horizon 2020?’

Closes: 14 December 2012

This public consultation is intended to provide opportunities for input on the state of play of the full bio-based industries value chain in Europe, in particular with regard to aspects related to research and innovation. A public-private partnership is being envisaged to implement research and innovation activities under Horizon 2020. This consultation is specifically seeking input in connection therewith.

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

ONGOING:

Consultation on Code for Effective Open Voluntarism: Good design principles for self and co-regulation and other multistakeholder 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 multistakeholder action.

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

Consultation on Entrepreneurship 2020 Action Plan

Closes: 1 October 2012

Europe lags behind its competitors in entrepreneurial attitudes and at the same time we know that SMEs are the biggest source of new jobs and related growth. A European Entrepreneurship Action Plan is therefore needed to address areas where entrepreneurial potential can be unleashed and where key bottlenecks can be overcome and obstacles to entrepreneurial activities removed. This

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consultation seeks reactions to a variety of possible measures which could be brought together under this Action Plan.

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

Consultation on the revision of the Guidelines on State aid to support SME access to risk capital

Closes: 5 October 2012

The purpose of the present consultation is to invite Member States and other stakeholders, such as investors, financial intermediaries and final recipients, to provide input for the revision of the Risk Capital Guidelines, notably information on market developments concerning the supply of equity and debt finance to viable SMEs, feedback on the application of the Risk Capital Guidelines and their effects in terms of facilitating SME access to risk capital.

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

Consultation on Improving Network and Information Security in the EU

Closes: 15 October 2012

Network and Information Security (NIS) incidents are on the rise and have serious consequences for society and the economy when affecting critical sectors such as finance, health, energy and transport, and erode public trust for activities online in general. This public consultation is addressed to all actors affected by NIS in the EU (governments, businesses, citizens) with a view to identifying strategic actions. It also contributes to the Commission's impact assessment regarding possible future risk management and security breach reporting requirements that would affect businesses in particular.

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

Consultation on State aid (de minimis Regulation 1998/2006)

Closes: 18 October 2012

The Commission adopted Regulation (EC) 1998/2006 on the application of Articles 87 and 88 of the Treaty (now Articles 107 and 108 TFEU) to *de minimis* aid, applicable since 1 January 2007. This Regulation set the *de minimis* ceiling at EUR 200 000 per undertaking granted over any period of three fiscal years, and thus considerably simplified the granting of small amounts of support. It will expire on 31 December 2013 and will therefore be reviewed.

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

Consultation on potential substances of very high concern

Closes: 18 October 2012

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) launched a public consultation on 54 potential substances of very high concern (SVHC) on Monday 3 September. The chemicals, nominated by the European Commission and member states, would face restrictions or a possible ban in the future. They are thought to be carcinogenic, mutagenic or toxic for reproduction, and one substance was nominated on the basis of having endocrine disrupting properties.

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

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

Closes: 25 October 2012

The objective of the consultation is to gather views and additional information on the effectiveness, strength 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 consultation, please click [here](#)

Consultation on regulatory regimes for trans-Atlantic trade

Closes: 31 October 2012

EU and US senior officials are asking for concrete suggestions on how to make regulatory regimes more compatible across the Atlantic. Most businesses want to limit regulatory costs and red tape. Reducing non-tariff and behind the border barriers is therefore a key issue in trans-Atlantic trade and two public consultations have previously been conducted on this subject. The High Level Working Group on Jobs and Growth is looking into these issues and would welcome more detailed input.

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

Consultation on charging the use of road infrastructure

Closes: 4 November 2012

This public consultation is part of the preparatory work of the European Commission's services to explore the scope for possible new European Commission initiatives on road charging along the lines outlined in the 2011 White Paper on Transport.

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

Consultation on tax problems linked to cross-border venture capital investment

Closes: 5 November 2012

The European Commission has launched this public consultation in order to collect factual evidence of the direct tax problems that arise when venture capital is invested across borders. In this respect the Commission needs not only to collect factual evidence of the problems, but also to find out why the problems arose, the Member States involved, the amount of money involved and the costs to investors, Member States and the EU's SMEs.

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

Consultation on "Opening up Education - a proposal for a European Initiative to enhance education and skills development through new technologies"

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Closes: 13 November 2012

The objective of the consultation is to explore the perceived need - mainly but not exclusively among education and training stakeholders - for EU action to promote the use of Open Educational Resources (OER) and of ICT in education.

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

Consultation on the future of transnational company agreements

Closes: 31 December 2012

With its new staff working document "Transnational company agreements: realising the potential of social dialogue", the Commission takes stock of the TCA expert group's work and outlines options for further steps. The Commission now invites all interested parties to share their views on the challenges and opportunities faced by TCAs and on the specific options put forward.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

- 3 October 2012 - Meeting of COREPER I
- 3 October 2012 - Committee meetings of the European Parliament
- 6 October 2012 - Committee meetings of the European Parliament
- 4-5 October 2012 - Informal Meeting of Education Ministers
- 4 October 2012 - Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
- 5 October 2012 - Meeting of COREPER I
- 7 October 2012 - Informal Ministerial Meeting on EU Integrated Maritime Policy
- 7 October 2012 - Eurogroup
- 9 October 2012 - Economic and Financial Affairs Council
- 10 October 2012 - Meeting of COREPER I
- 10-11 October 2012 - Competitiveness Council
- 10-13 October 2012 - Committee meetings of the European Parliament
- 11 October 2012 - Meeting of COREPER II
- 12 October 2012 - Meeting of COREPER I
- 12 October 2012 - Foreign Affairs Council
- 16 October 2012 - General Affairs Council
- 17 October 2012 - Meeting of COREPER I
- 17-20 October 2012 - Committee meetings of the European Parliament
- 18-19 October 2012 - European Council

Other SME-related events

The 2012 Innovation Summit - StartUp Europe: Unleashing the Power of Youth, Technology and Innovation

2 October 2012

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Brussels, Belgium

The Lisbon Council will convene The 2012 Innovation Summit. The Summit will feature high-level discussion and debate with a host of imminent thought leaders from EU member states, and will include the launch of StartUp Europe, a multi-year programme and centre of excellence intended to explore the nexus of empowering youth, technology and innovation to solve Europe's economic crisis.

European Competition Day

2 October 2012

Nicosia, Cyprus

The theme of the conference will be Effective Enforcement of the Competition Rules in the EU. The programme will focus on three main issues: Commission proposal for a Directive on actions for damages and recent experiences with Private Enforcement, Effective Competition in Food and Retail Markets and the Enforcement of competition rules in Member States.

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

Startups by recent university graduates and their faculty: Implications for university entrepreneurship policy

3 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

This event organised by Bruegel will focus on how universities can stimulate science and engineering students and recent graduates to create new firms of high quality.

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

Social enterprises and the Europe 2020 strategy: innovative solutions for a sustainable Europe

3 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The objective of this conference organised by the Various Interests Group at the European Economic and Social Committee is to actively support social enterprises as significant actors in the implementation of the Europe 2020 Strategy and of the Single Market.

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

Europe and the Single Market

3 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

This event is organised by DLA Piper and MLex and will give an insight on a single market survey that was carried out in July 2012 across 300 companies in 20 Member States. The following topics will be discussed: Did the single market play an important role in the investment and job markets? Has it made Europe more competitive? Where do barriers occur?

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

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Retail Forum 2012 Event

9 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The Retail Forum's 2012 Event will spell out how retailers can spearhead the greening of the European economy by reducing their environmental footprint, offer more sustainable products and help change consumer behaviour. This high level conference will bring together decision makers from businesses, civil society and EU institutions.

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

EURES Meeting

9-11 October 2012

Limassol, Cyprus

The main aim of the meeting is to discuss strategies and initiatives for the EURES Network and get informed about the Commission's plans and initiatives in the field of workers mobility.

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

EuroCommerce SME Day

10 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

This SME day is an opportunity for the commerce sector to exchange views with the European Commission, Parliament and stakeholders on three major challenges that our SMEs face in their daily business life: bureaucracy, access to appropriate markets and partners, and the promotion of entrepreneurship spirit.

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

SMEST Workshop

11 October

Luxembourg, Luxembourg

The objective of the event is to discuss the benefits of standardization for SMEs and how to use standards. This event is part of the European project 'SME Standardization Toolkit' (SMEST 2) aiming at strengthening the involvement of SMEs in European standardization.

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

Single Market Week

15-20 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

A pan-European event will open the week on 15 October in Brussels. The 27 Member States, in collaboration with the EU representations, will organize national events and forums.

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

European SME Week

15-21 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The European SME Week aims to- provide information on what the EU and national, regional and local authorities are offering as support to micro, small and medium-sized businesses and to promote entrepreneurship so that more people, and in particular younger ones, seriously consider becoming an entrepreneur as a career option. Furthermore, the weeks seeks to give recognition to entrepreneurs for their contribution to Europe's welfare, jobs, innovation and competitiveness.

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

European SME Week 2012 Summit: Conference of Women's Entrepreneurship

17 October 2012

Brussels, Belgium

The purpose of the Conference is networking among women entrepreneurs who have joined the two European networks of Ambassadors and Mentors, and exchange of views, experiences and expertise.

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

'Working together for the Future of Occupational Safety and Health in Europe'

18 October 2012

Nicosia, Cyprus

The expected outcome of the conference organised by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work is to provide information and promote exchange of views on contemporary issues concerning management leadership and worker participation in the field of safety and health at work.

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

Conference for the 20th Anniversary of the Single Market

20 October 2012

Nicosia, Cyprus

On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the Single Market, the Cyprus Presidency shall organise a national Conference in Nicosia on 20 October 2012 for the civil society. The Conference will focus on general Internal Market issues as well as on specific actions of the Single Market Act. The Conference will effectively mark the end of the Single Market Week (15-20 October 2012).

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

Presidency Conference on Employment Priorities

22-23 October 2012

Nicosia, Cyprus

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The priority on Youth Employment which is the theme of the Conference could include issues related to training opportunities like apprenticeships traineeships, working conditions as well as the matching of the qualifications and expectations of young persons with the needs of the economy and the needs of enterprises.

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

Enterprise Europe Network

22-24 October 2012

Pafos, Cyprus

The Enterprise Europe Network Annual Conference is the major annual event of the network bringing together more than 800 network participants. It is expected to provide a global forum for network partners, EU Officials, SME managers and other stakeholders to exchange and share knowledge about emerging policies, changing dynamics, new methods and network activities.

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

STRESS TEST of Innovation Policy in Europe

23-24 October 2012

Copenhagen, Denmark

This conference organised by Europe INNOVA will focus on the programmes having supported the two hundred thousand projects that have obtained support in Europe for the last decade and what have been the patterns for success of these projects. The panellists will include representatives from enterprises and innovation projects, programme owners from SME programmes, R&D-collaboration programmes and cluster programmes, policy makers and evaluators.

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

Conference on the Exchange of Best Practices on the Gender Pay Gap

29-30 October 2012

Limassol, Cyprus

One of the aims of the conference is to highlight practices and measures which enterprises may implement in order to eliminate the gender pay gap and promote the principle of equal pay between men and women.

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

SME Assembly

15-16 November 2012

Nicosia, Cyprus

The Assembly will bring together business organisations, European, national and regional government, academia and the media to discuss how to help SMEs go for growth. The hope is that all participants will leave with new ideas, new targets or new partners; something tangible that they can immediately act on to facilitate or reinforce the key role SMEs can play in restoring growth in Europe.

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