



HEADLINES

EU/Data protection: Parliamentary debate on privacy rules heats up

28 January 2013 marked the one-year anniversary of the European Commission's proposals for a comprehensive overhaul of the EU's data protection legislation. Last year, the Commission presented its proposal for a General Data Protection Regulation, with specific provisions for law enforcement agencies covered by a proposal for a Data Protection Directive. The Commission aims to improve trust in the Digital Single Market, thereby safeguarding citizens' right to privacy while boosting the EU economy at the same time. After Jan Philipp Albrecht MEP (Greens/EFA, DE) presented his draft report on 9 January 2013, debate in the European Parliament on the Commission's proposals is now heating up, with five different committees discussing the draft Regulation. On 23 January 2013, the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection was the first to adopt its opinion. Albrecht plans to have his draft report adopted by the lead Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs by the end of April 2013.

ESBA opinion

ESBA has long argued for a clear and simple set of rules on data protection, to spur innovation and help build consumers' confidence in the Digital Single Market. While a number of elements in the new General Data Protection Regulation may be a step in the right direction, having to hire or train a Data Protection Officer will result in significant administrative and financial burdens for small businesses. They will be forced to spend their resources on compliance and red tape instead of investing in innovation and growth. This is why ESBA wants to base the exemption on whether data processing is the company's core business; this would place the obligation to hire a DPO only where it belongs. Especially in the current economic climate, the Institutions should be concerned with cutting red tape for businesses, not adding to their burdens. ESBA urges the European Parliament to seriously consider the ramifications of the proposed rules.

To read ESBA's full Position Paper on the General Data Protection Regulation, please click [here](#).

To access the Commission's webpages on data protection, please click [here](#).

To read the draft report by Jan Philipp Albrecht MEP, please click [here](#).

To read the final opinion of the Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection, please click [here](#).

To read ESBA's reaction to the IMCO vote, please click [here](#).

EU/Environment: Ambitious CO2 standards could save SMEs millions in fuel costs

On 22 January 2013, the European Small Business Alliance, Athlon Car Lease and EuroCommerce sent a joint letter to Mr Holger Krahmer MEP, rapporteur for the review of the Regulation on CO2 standards for light commercial vehicles, urging him to strengthen the level of ambition of the targets in the current Commission proposal. The proposal, adopted on 11 July 2012, sets the CO2 emission target at 147 g/km, or ca. 5.6 l/100km by the year 2020. A recent study by the Dutch research

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institute TNO, conducted at the request of the European Commission, demonstrates however that the costs of reducing CO2 emissions from light commercial vehicles are much lower than expected (€500, as compared to the earlier claim of €2000 – €3000/van). Furthermore, the same study shows that the estimated average CO2 emissions from vans are much lower than those originally stated in the proposal for a Regulation.

ESBA opinion:

Fuel prices are becoming an ever-greater share of businesses' operational costs. Companies all over Europe are therefore making efforts to cut fuel costs, increase efficiency and improve delivery planning, and limit negative environmental impacts. In light of the recent evidence, ESBA calls on the European Parliament to set a more appropriate emission target of 118 g/km or 4,5 l/100km. The targets in the original proposal are not sufficient for the EU to achieve its climate objectives, nor are they ambitious enough to bring down operational costs for businesses. The European Parliament should carefully scrutinise the proposal of the European Commission and implement the principle of 'evidence-based policy making.'

To read the letter by ESBA, Athlon and EuroCommerce to Mr Holger Kraemer MEP, please click [here](#).

To access the study by TNO, commissioned by the European Commission, please click [here](#).

To access the European Commission webpages on reducing CO2 from vehicles, please click [here](#).

To access the European Commission's proposal for a Regulation setting CO2 emission standards for light commercial vehicles, please click [here](#).

IN BRIEF

EU/Access to finance: EIB promotes agreement to boost SME financing in Spain.

On 28 January 2013, an agreement was signed between the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Spanish *Bankinter* to provide a 200 million Euro platform for the financing of innovative investment projects in both the industrial and service sector. The agreement targets SMEs in particular, which should obtain at least 70% of the overall budget of the plan. The remaining amount is reserved for middle-capitalisation companies. Interbank has pledged to match the EIB investment, bringing the overall financial envelope of the agreement to 400 million Euros.

To learn more about the agreement between the EIB and Interbank, please click [here](#).

For more information about the activities of the European Investment Bank, please click [here](#).

EU/Climate: Carbon prices drop after negative vote on ETS in Parliament's Industry Committee

On 24 January 2013, the European Parliament Committee on Industry, Research and Energy voted against the European Commission's proposal to backload ETS action volumes. Under the Emissions Trading Scheme, heavy industry needs to buy allowances in order to emit greenhouse gases. The ambition was to increase energy prices across the EU so as to significantly reduce carbon emissions by 2020. The European Commission however stated that too many permits were issued, leading to a lack of demand, and a drop in prices. In the meantime, industry warned that overall energy prices in the EU already went up 28% in the years 2003-2011, thereby hampering growth and negatively affecting the EU's competitiveness. The European Commission intends to postpone the next round of auctions.

To read more about the Emissions Trading Scheme, please click [here](#).

EU/Labour Mobility: Commissioner Andor calls for agreement on Posting of Workers

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On 23 January 2013, in a speech at the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers, European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs László Andor called on the European Council and Parliament to quickly reach agreement on the Commission's proposal for the posting of workers. Every year, more than 1 million workers are posted across EU borders, amounting to 0.4% of the total EU workforce. The envisaged Directive outlines a set of measures to safeguard the rights of posted workers, and defines the responsibilities of the supervising authorities in the Member States.

To read more about the Commission's proposal, please click [here](#).

EU/Professional qualifications: IMCO Committee backs report on labour mobility

On 23 January 2013, the European Parliament Committee on the Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) adopted the draft report by Bernadette Vergnaud MEP (S&D, FR) on professional qualifications. The report serves as the basis of the Parliament's response to the European Commission's proposal to amend the current Directive governing the recognition of professional qualifications. The aim of this initiative is to streamline the recognition of qualifications throughout the EU, thereby making it easier for professionals to use their skills outside their home country. The new package also introduces a European Professional Card, which should further enhance professionals' mobility in the Single Market. A vote in plenary session is scheduled for May 2013.

To read more about MEPs' considerations with regards to professional qualifications, please click [here](#).

For background information about professional mobility within the EU, please click [here](#).

EU/Finance: Council gives go-ahead to start enhanced cooperation on FTT

On 22 January 2013, the Finance Ministers of the Member States gave their formal consent to start an enhanced cooperation procedure on Financial Transaction Tax. The eleven participating Member States will be able to establish a common tax intended to disincentive short-term financial speculation on the capital market. The European Commission will now draft a new proposal, tailored to enhanced cooperation. Algirdas Semeta, Commissioner responsible for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud, stated that the new proposal will be similar to the former version, putting a 0.1% levy on normal transactions and a 0.01% levy on traded derivatives.

To read more on the Financial Transaction Tax, please click [here](#).

To read the press release concerning the 3215th ECOFIN Council, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EU/Eurostat: Unemployment rate at 11.7% in the euro area and at 10.7% in the EU27

On 1 February 2013, Eurostat published the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rates for December 2012. The figures show that for the EU27, the unemployment rate was 10.7%. For the euro area, the unemployment rate was 11.7%.

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

EU/European Commission: Business Climate Indicator broadly unchanged in January

On 30 January 2013, the European Commission's DG Economic and Financial Affairs published the monthly numbers on the business climate in the EU. The Business Climate Indicator was calculated to be -1.09 in January 2013, almost the same number as in December 2012 (-1.11). Managers indicated more optimism about production expectations and past production, but also reported lower current order books.

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

EU/European Commission: Economic sentiment increases in both the EU and the euro area

On 30 January 2013, the European Commission's DG Economic and Financial Affairs published the monthly numbers on the economic sentiment in the EU and the euro area. The Economic Sentiment Indicator went up by 1.4 points in both the EU and the euro area. This is the third month in a row that the ESI rose in both regions.

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

EU/Eurostat: Business investment rate down in third quarter of 2012

On 29 January 2013, Eurostat published statistics on business investments during the third quarter of 2012. The investment rate is the share of total investment expenditure compared to total value added. In the euro area this rate decreased to 19.6%, while it decreased to 19.9% in the EU as a whole. The profit share remained virtually stable in both the euro area and the EU, at 38.0% and 37.6% respectively.

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

EU/Eurostat: Analysis of EU-27 household final consumption expenditure

On 28 January 2013, Eurostat published a report on consumption expenditure throughout the last decade. While the crisis showed a similar effect on all Member States, the report notes that trends in consumption patterns are rather divergent between both Member States and between categories of consumption. Another conclusion is that Greece and the Baltic countries are suffering most from the crisis.

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

EU/Eurostat: Current account balance up in third quarter of 2012

On 24 January 2013, Eurostat published its second estimate of the EU's external current account in the third quarter of 2012, calculating a surplus of 28.8 billion euros or 0.9% of EU GDP. For the euro area, the surplus was estimated at 41.0 billion euros or 1.7% of euro area GDP. The main difference compared to the third quarter of 2011 was a significant decrease in the goods account deficit.

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

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

On 23 January 2013, the European Commission's DG Economic and Financial Affairs published the monthly numbers on consumer confidence in the EU and the euro area. The Flash Consumer Confidence Indicator showed significant improvement in both the EU and the euro area, rising 2.0 points in the EU and 2.4 points in the euro area (compared to December 2012).

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation: Review of the internal market legislation for industrial products

Closes: 17 April 2013

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In the view of modernising the rules of the Internal Market to improve competitiveness, the European Commission launched a consultation so as to gather opinions and experience from various stakeholders on the biggest obstacles that hinder the effective circulation of industrial products at EU level. The initiative is intended to strengthen product legislation and to reduce administrative burdens for businesses.

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

Consultation: Green Paper on unfair trading practices in the business-to-business food and non-food supply chain in Europe

Closes: 30 April 2013

On 31 January 2013, the European Commission launched a consultation to assess the common trading practices in the food and non-food supply chain and their effects on companies. Indeed, this initiative seeks to address obstacles to development and innovation for SMEs resulting from unfair behaviour between companies, and looks at how to improve the enforcement of rules related to B2B relationships in the area of food and non-food supply chain activities.

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

ONGOING:

Consultation: Generation adequacy, capacity mechanisms and the internal market in electricity

Closes: 7 February 2013

The Commission invites all interested parties to submit their contributions in response to the questions raised in the consultation document 'Generation adequacy, capacity mechanisms and the internal market in electricity, with the goal of ensuring a more coordinated approach to assessing generation adequacy and security in the internal electricity market.

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

Consultation: An integrated delivery market to boost e-commerce in the EU

Closes: 22 February 2013

Three priority areas have been identified to address the problems and challenges faced by e-retailers and consumers in the EU: improving convenience of delivery services for consumers and SMEs across the EU; ensuring more cost effective delivery solutions and better prices for consumers and SMEs; promoting improved interoperability of delivery services between operators, and between operators and e-retailers, notably SMEs.

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

Consultation: Protection of business and research know-how

Closes: 8 March 2012

With a view to offering the optimal legal protection for European businesses' confidential information and boosting innovation, the European Commission is gathering and analysing detailed opinions and experience related to the misappropriation of corporate data in cross-border exchanges. Indeed, considering the differences in the laws of Member States and the fact that not all data can be patented, it appears that the legal framework on the protection of intellectual property could be improved.

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

Consultation: State aid instruments in the agricultural sector

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Closes: 20 March 2013

Three state aid instruments in the agricultural sector will expire at the end of the year 2013. As a result, the European Commission is launching a consultation to determine what new rules on state aid should be implemented for the development of this sector. These new rules should lead to reduced procedural burdens and allow for faster decisions, while at the same time ensuring that competition within the Internal Market is not hampered.

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

Consultation: Civil enforcement of intellectual property rights: the efficiency of proceedings and accessibility of measures

Closes: 30 March 2013

This technical survey aims at gathering specific information on the efficiency of proceedings and accessibility of measures used in the context of civil enforcement of intellectual property rights. These data should enable the European Commission to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the functionality of civil enforcement systems put in place in the Member States in order to improve the situation of all the actors active in the innovative sectors of European economy.

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

Consultation: Revision of Directive 97/68/EC on emissions from non-road mobile machinery engines

Closes: 8 April 2013

The non-road mobile machinery (NRMM) sector covers a large variety of equipment types which are used in many different economic activities such as construction, agriculture, rail or inland waterway transport. Despite the limits set by Directive 97/68/EC and its subsequent amendments, the NRMM sector has become an increasingly important source of air pollution, in particular of NO_x and particulate matter. In order to reverse this trend, the European Commission has been exploring different options for revising the Directive. The overall objective of the revision is to further contribute to the improvement of the air quality in Europe while at the same time ensuring the correct functioning of the internal market. In this context, the European Commission is launching a public consultation to gather views from relevant stakeholders.

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

Consultation: Cross-border transfers of registered offices of companies

Closes: 16 April 2013

The purpose of the consultation is to get more in-depth information on the costs currently faced by companies transferring their registered offices abroad and on the range of benefits that could be brought by the EU action on the cross-border transfer of them. The responses will be taken into account in assessing the need for and impact of a possible new instrument.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

31 Jan-1 Feb 2013 – Committee of the Regions plenary session

1 February 2013 – Meeting COREPER I

4 February 2013 – Meeting of General Affairs Council

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4-7 February 2013 – European Parliament plenary session
4-7 February 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
5 February 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners
5 February 2013 – Meetings COREPER I and II
6 February 2013 – Meeting COREPER I
7 February 2013 – Meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank
7-8 February 2013 – European Council
7-8 February 2013 – Informal meeting of Ministers for Employment and Social Affairs
11 February 2013 – Eurogroup
11-12 February 2013 – Informal Meeting of Ministers for Development Cooperation
12 February 2013 – Meeting of Economic and Financial Affairs Council
12-13 February 2013 – Informal Meeting of Ministers for Defence
13 February 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners
13 February 2013 – Meetings COREPER I and II
13-14 February 2013 – European Economic and Social Committee plenary session
14 February 2013 – Meeting COREPER II
15 February 2013 – Meeting of Education, Youth, Culture & Sport Council
18 February 2013 – Meeting of Foreign Affairs Council
18-19 February 2013 – Meeting of Competitiveness Council
18-21 February 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
20 February 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners
20 February 2013 – Meetings COREPER I and II
21 February 2013 – Meeting COREPER II
21 February 2013 – Meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank
22 February 2013 – Meeting of Transport, Telecommunications & Energy Council
25-26 February 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
25-26 February 2013 – Meeting of Agriculture and Fisheries Council
26 February 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners
27 February 2013 – Meetings COREPER I and II
27-28 February 2013 – European Parliament plenary session
28 February 2013 – Meetings COREPER I and II
28 February 2013 – Meeting of Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
28 February 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
1 March 2013 – Meeting COREPER I
4 March 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
4 March 2013 – Eurogroup
4-5 March 2013 – Informal Meeting of Ministers for Health
5 March 2013 – Meeting of Economic and Financial Affairs Council
6 March 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners
6 March 2013 – Meeting COREPER II
7 March 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
7 March 2013 – Meeting of the Governing Council of the European Central Bank
7-8 March 2013 – Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Council

Other SME-related events

Joint conference: 'Action plan on corporate governance and company law: what's in it and why?'

4 February 2013

Brussels, Belgium

Several key EU stakeholders will convene and debate on the recent evolutions surrounding Company Law and Corporate Governance.

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

How energy policy can boost sustainable growth and jobs in Europe

8 February 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The European Policy Centre will host a policy dialogue on the relation among energy policies, sustainable growth and the creation of jobs. Speakers from the European Commission, Greenpeace and private companies will contribute to this debate.

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

SME Envoys Network meeting

8 February 2013

Bologna, Italy

National SME Envoys and representatives of EU business organisations will meet in Bologna to discuss general EU SME policy developments and specific topics such as smart regulation, access to finance and the action plan on entrepreneurship. Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Commission responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship, and Patrizio Bianchi, Head of the Department of Education, Research and Employment of the Emilia-Romagna region, will deliver keynote addresses.

To learn more about the Network of SME Envoys, please click [here](#).

E-customs: undervalued building block of the Digital Single Market?

18 February 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The European Policy Centre is organising a policy dialogue on e-customs and its relation to the Digital Single Market. Speakers include Algirdas Šemeta, European Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud, and Josephine Feehily, Chair of the Revenue Commissioners, Irish Tax and Customs.

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

The Future of European labour markets: fact-checking the vision

18 February 2013

Brussels, Belgium

In the light of the NEUJOBS, a research project financed by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme, several contributors will intervene on the evolution of the European labour market and the current transitions that it is facing.

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

Women Entrepreneurs – 5 Pillars for Growth

19, 20, 21 February 2013

Brussels, Belgium

This exhibition looks at how to successfully encourage and develop female entrepreneurship in Europe. During three days, the exhibition will address five issues deemed crucial to unleash the entrepreneurial potential of women in the EU: government policies, education, innovation, networks and access to finance.

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

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Unleashing access to finance for long-term growth of European companies

21 February 2013

Brussels, Belgium

Michel Barnier along with other key European stakeholders will address the complex issue of financial support for SMEs.

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

Buy your own company

21 February 2013

Affligem, Belgium

The Platform for Entrepreneurial Buy-outs (PEBO) is organising a conference on business takeovers. Speakers will present both academic frameworks and practical experiences regarding company buy-ins and buy-outs. The keynote address will be delivered by Timothy Bovard, Adjunct Professor of Entrepreneurship at INSEAD and buyer of over 20 companies.

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

Basel III and the CRD IV and CRR proposals: reshaping European banking

28 February – 1 March

Trier, Germany

The Academy of European Law (ERA) is organising a two-day conference on the overhaul of capital requirements for European banks. The state of play will be discussed and panellists will debate the Commission's proposals for a new Capital Requirements Directive (CRD IV) a Capital Requirements Regulation (CRR), flowing from the Basel III reforms.

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

5th European Forum Co-operative Banks and SMEs: "Facing SMEs' Financing Challenges in Turbulent Times"

8 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

For the 4th European Forum of co-operative banks and SMEs, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC), the International Confederation of Popular Banks (CIBP), the European Association of Co-operative Banks (EACB) and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (UEAPME) are organising a conference on access to finance for SMEs. The main topic of discussions will be the EESC opinion on the European Commission's action plan on access to finance for SMEs. High-level panellists will be available for stakeholders to exchange views.

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

ECHA's Stakeholders' Day on SMEs

26 March 2013

Helsinki, Finland

The Stakeholders' Day conference organised by the European Chemicals Agency, will concentrate on the European Community Regulation on chemicals and, specifically, analyse its impact on SMEs.

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

Europe as a Location for Industry and Innovation

23 April 2013

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Bruges, Belgium

The Bruges European Business Conference, organised by the College of Europe and Deloitte, will focus on how innovation and competitiveness programmes can make Europe a more appealing place of production for industry. Speakers will include Mr Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Regional Policy and Mr Kris Peeters, Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Economy, Foreign Policy, Agriculture and Rural Policy.

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