



HEADLINES

EU/Data Protection: Commission Vice-President Reding warns against winning 'Nobel Prize for Red Tape'.

On 8 March 2013, on the occasion of the Justice and Home Affairs Council, the justice ministers discussed the proposed General Data Protection Regulation. On the basis of a working document prepared by the Irish Presidency, the ministers exchanged views on incorporating a 'risk-based approach', on the designation of data protection officers, on codes of conduct and certification mechanisms, and on flexibility provisions for the public sector. Although the ministers acknowledged that the line between a high level of protection and stifling businesses is thin, opinions differed on the policy options. Further discussions will be held at working group level in the next few weeks. In her opening statement, Vice-President of the European Commission Vivianne Reding warned the Member States *"If you Ministers force the butcher on the corner to prove he is not a data protection risk, you Ministers will deserve the "Nobel Prize for Red Tape"*.

ESBA Opinion

ESBA has long been advocating a risk-based approach, rather than an arbitrary approach based on thresholds. Mandatory documentation requirements, costly Data Protection Impact Assessments and Data Protection Officers are heavy measures that should only apply to enterprises that process data as their core business. The EU needs its small business to create jobs and growth, not drown in unnecessary cost and paperwork. ESBA calls on the lead Committee in the European Parliament (Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs) to take Commissioner Reding's warning into consideration and approach the issue realistically, keeping in mind the potential negative effects on small businesses of the certain elements of the proposal.

To access the Presidency note on the Council's progress so far, please click [here](#).

To access the joint position paper of ESBA, the FSB, ACT and CEA-PME, please click [here](#).

EU/Smart Regulation: European Commission sets out to cut red tape for SMEs.

On 7 March 2013, the European Commission published its new Communication on Smart Regulation. The Communication takes stock of the Commission's work on reducing red tape for small businesses and provides a clear guide to future measures. Key elements of the Communication are the emphasis on exemptions for micro-businesses where possible and lighter regimes for small businesses when necessary. In cases where the Commission deems legislation necessary, it will aim to justify measures taken. Attached to the Communication, the European Commission published its newly established SME scoreboard and the results of the consultation on the *"Top 10 most burdensome legislative acts"*, a consolidated text that is the result of a stakeholder consultation ESBA took part in. The results of the consultation will feed into the on-going process of reviewing burdensome legislation under the Commission's Regulatory Fitness Initiative (REFIT).

ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the new Communication, which is a step in the right direction towards reducing administrative burdens for small businesses. Although exemption for micro-businesses should never be a goal in itself, ESBA welcomes exempting these small companies from heavy legislation as a last resort option. The continual churn of new legislation and constantly changing legislation

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create a regulatory environment where companies spend more time and resources on compliance than on adding value to their business. The publication of next year's SME scoreboard has the potential to be a good stock taking exercise.

To access the Communication Smart regulation - Responding to the needs of small and medium - sized enterprises, please click [here](#).

To access the Commission's SME Scoreboard and the results of the consultation on the "Top 10 most burdensome legislative acts", please click [here](#).

To learn more about the Regulatory Fitness Initiative, please click [here](#)

To access ESBA's response to the Commission consultation on Smart Regulation, please click [here](#).

To access ESBA's response to the Commission consultation on the "Top 10 most burdensome legislative act", please click [here](#).

To access ESBA's explanatory notes to the Commission consultation on the "Top 10 most burdensome legislative act", please click [here](#).

IN BRIEF

EU/Single Market: Van Rompuy laments Member States for inability to complete Single Market.

On 6 March 2013, in a letter ahead of the meeting of the European Council on 14/15 March 2013, President of the European Council Herman Van Rompuy voiced his discontent about the lack of progress on the completion of the Single Market. Referring to the – self-imposed and missed – deadline to complete all twelve levers of the Single Market Act I by the end of 2012, Mr Van Rompuy remarked that most of its measures had not been attained. He urged the Members of the European Council to "accelerate the pace of negotiations" in order to rebuild competitiveness and spur EU recovery. Furthermore, speedy adoption should prevent a clash with the work that needs to be done on the measures of the Single Market Act II.

To read the letter by Herman Van Rompuy to the Members of the European Council, please click [here](#).

To learn more about the Single Market Act I & II, please click [here](#).

EU/Gender equality: MEPs call for fair and realistic female representation in corporate boards.

On 4 March 2013, ahead of International Women's Day on 8 March 2013, Evelyn Regner, MEP (S&D, AT) and Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropo (EPP, GR) voiced their concerns regarding the unbalanced female representation at the top level of enterprises. The MEPs are the two co-rapporteurs on a proposal by the European Commission to install a 40% quota for women in corporate boards. This proposal has received heavy criticism. Not because of its objectives. Multiple studies have shown that a higher number of women board rooms improves a company's performance. Opinions diverge however widely on whether quotas are the right policy measure.

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

To know more about the EU initiatives on gender equality, please click [here](#).

EU/Energy: Guidelines on financial measures to stimulate energy efficient car industry.

On 28 February 2013, the European Commission released new guidelines on how Member States can use financial incentives to stimulate the uptake of energy efficient vehicles. The European Commission recognises that financial measures can be highly effective in greening the automotive industry. At the same time, financial incentives have the potential to distort the market. The guidelines contain principles that Member States will need to take into account. This should guarantee a fair and non-discriminative framework.

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To access the Guidelines issued by the European Commission, please click [here](#).

To read more about the Commission's initiatives on environmental policy in the automotive industry, please click [here](#).

EU/Health: Protecting workers against dangerous chemicals .

On 26 February 2013, the European Commission published a proposal to revise five Directives, together laying out the framework on the protection of workers from chemical products. These Directives will be brought in line with Regulation 1272/2008/EC on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures regulation. Harmonised information should enable employers to identify more easily the risks associated with the use of certain chemicals. This in turn should lead to better protection of workers from dangerous substances, as well as lower compliance costs for manufacturers and distributors.

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

EU/Taxation: Commission plans new action to fight tax fraud and tax evasion.

On 25 February 2013, the European Commission presented two public consultations on how to facilitate taxation in the European Union. The first consultation concerns the launch of a 'European taxpayer's code'. The second consultation foresees the introduction of a new system of tax payer identification, the so-called 'European Tax Identification Number (EU TIN)'. The establishment of common principles in Member State national taxation systems should lead to lower compliance costs for businesses. The EU TIN should result in fewer cases of double non-taxation and less fraud. The two public consultations will run until 17 May 2013.

To access the consultation on a European Tax Payers Code, please click [here](#).

To access the consultation on a EU Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN), please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EU/Eurostat: EU27 current account surplus 34.1 bn euro.

On 8 March 2013, Eurostat published the latest figures regarding trade balance in the EU.

In the fourth quarter of 2012, compared with the fourth quarter of 2011, the deficit of the goods account turned into a surplus (+5.1 bn euro compared with -15.6 bn), while the surplus of the services account slightly increased (+36.9 bn compared with +35.7 bn) and the deficit of the current transfers account dropped (-19.1 bn compared with -22.8 bn).

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

EU/Eurostat: EU GDP down 0.5% in final quarter of 2012.

On 6 March 2013, Eurostat published its second estimate of GDP development in the euro area and the EU as a whole during the fourth quarter of 2012. The EU's GDP shrunk by 0.5% compared to the previous quarter (down 0.6% compared to the fourth quarter of 2011), while the euro area contracted by 0.6% (or 0.9% compared to 2011). This puts the 2012 GDP development at -0.6% for the euro area and -0.3% for the EU27.

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

EU/Eurostat: Volume of retail trade up in both euro and EU27 areas.

On 5 March 2013, Eurostat published the figures on the volume of retail trade in the euro area and EU27. At +1.2% and +0.9% respectively, these figures show a clear rise compared to December 2012

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(respectively -0.8% and -0.7%. Compared to January last year, the volume of retail trade fell by 1.3% in the euro area (EA17) and by 0.9% in the EU27.

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

EU/Eurostat: Increased recycling/composting of municipal waste over a decade.

On 4 March 2013, Eurostat published the figures of municipal waste disposal. While 10% and 17% of municipal waste were respectively composted and recycled in 2001, new figures show a concrete growth over a decade, to respectively 15% and 25% of municipal waste being composted and recycled in 2011.

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

EU/Eurostat: Producer price index increase by 0.6%.

On 4 March 2013, Eurostat published the industrial producer prices in the euro area and EU27. In January 2013, compared with December 2012, the industrial producer price index rose by 0.6% in both euro and EU27 areas. The figures are up compared to the same period last year, when the index fell by 0.2% for the two areas.

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

EU/Eurostat: Euro area annual inflation slowing at 1.8%.

On 1 March 2013, Eurostat published the euro area inflation flash estimate for February 2013. The annual inflation of the Euro area is expected to fall at 1.8% in February 2013, compared to 2.0% in January.

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

EU/Eurostat: Unemployment rate at 11.9% in the euro area and at 10.8% in the EU27 .

On 1 March 2013, Eurostat published the seasonally-adjusted unemployment rates for January 2013. The figures show that for the EU27, the unemployment rate was 10.8%. For the euro area, the unemployment rate was 11.9%, compared to 10.7% and 11.8% respectively for December 2012.

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

EU/Commission: Business Climate Indicator up in February.

On 27 February 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 to increase by 0.36 points for the month, to reach 0.73 points.

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

EU/Commission: Economic sentiment continues to increase in both euro and EU27 areas.

On 27 February 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 1.6 points in the euro area and 1.2 in the EU27, respectively reaching 91.1 and 92.0 points. This is the fourth month in a row that the ESI rose in both regions.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation on a European Taxpayer's Code.

Closes: 17 May 2013

The question first aims at assessing the knowledge about and the concrete experience with national taxpayer's codes (when they exist). Stakeholders are then invited to give their views on the general and procedural principles to be considered in the context of the development of a European Taxpayer's Code. The views expressed by the contributors will be used by Commission services to identify the appropriate content of a European Taxpayer's Code and develop the appropriate policy response. The contributions may also be used in the preparation of possible impact assessments in relation to the Action Plan and more generally the policy area concerned.

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

Consultation on Use of an EU Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN).

Closes: 17 May 2013

The Commission is seeking to collect information on the possible scope of an EU Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN) (both in terms of operations and taxpayers covered), its practical aspects (including possible simplification and a step-by-step approach), its design and functioning, as well as various legal considerations (a.o. data protection). The views expressed by the contributors will be used by the Commission services to identify the appropriate approach to the creation of an EU TIN and to develop the appropriate policy response. The contributions may also be used in the possible preparation of the relating impact assessment.

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

Consultation on the Green Paper on plastic waste.

Closes: 6 June 2013

The purpose of this Green Paper is to launch a broad reflection on possible responses to the public policy challenges posed by plastic waste which are at present not specifically addressed in EU waste legislation. The follow-up to the Green Paper will be an integral part of the wider review of the waste legislation that will be completed in 2014. This review will look at the existing targets for waste recovery and landfill as well as an ex-post evaluation of five directives covering various waste streams.

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

ONGOING:

Consultation on the State aid instruments in the agricultural sector.

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](#).

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Consultation on 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 on the 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 on the 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](#).

Consultation: Review of the internal market legislation for industrial products.

Closes: 17 April 2013

In the view of modernizing 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. Indeed, as it was put forward by Director-Generate Daniel Calleja Crespo recently, it is essential that 2013 be the year when the safety of European products is strengthened and administrative burdens for businesses are significantly reduced.

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

Consultation on the 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 decide to launch a consultation so as to assess the common trading practices in the food and non-food supply chain and their effects on companies. Indeed, unfair behaviours between companies are a definite obstacle to development and innovation

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for SMEs, and significant improvement in the enforcement of the rules related to B2B relationships in the area of food and non-food supply chain activities is needed.

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

Consultation on the draft proposal for a revised block exemption for technology transfer agreements and for revised guidelines.

Closes: 17 May 2013

The rules on how to assess technology transfer agreements are set out in two instruments, the technology transfer block exemption regulation ("TTBER") and accompanying Guidelines. These instruments will expire on 30 April 2014. The Commission has now drafted a proposal for a revised TTBER and Guidelines. The current consultation is seeking stakeholders' views on this proposal.

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

Consultation: Revision of the EU legal framework on environmental inspections.

Closes: 26 May 2013

The purpose of this consultation is to collect the views of all relevant stakeholders, at national and EU level, and the public at large on the possible main concepts for the revision of the current EU framework on environmental inspections. It builds on previous consultations and seeks to complement them with stakeholder views on ideas for the design of a new horizontal binding instrument on environmental inspections which the Commission, subject to the conduct of a full impact assessment, intends to propose later in 2013.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

14-15 March 2013 – European Council

18-19 March 2013 – Meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council

18-21 March 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings

20 March 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners

20 March 2013 – COREPER I meeting

20-21 March 2013 – COREPER II meeting

20-21 March 2013 – European Economic and Social Committee plenary session

20-22 March 2013 - European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) Management Board and REACH Conference

21 March 2013 – Meeting of the Environment Council

21 March 2013 – Meeting of the Governing Council of the ECB

22 March 2013 – COREPER I meeting

25-26 March 2013 - European Parliament committee meetings

26 March 2013 - Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners

27 March 2013 – COREPER I meeting

27 March 2013 – COREPER II meeting

3 April 2013 - Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners

4 April 2013 - Meeting of the Governing Council of the ECB

8 April 2013 - European Parliament committee meetings

10 April 2013 – Weekly meeting of College of Commissioners

10 April 2013 – COREPER I meeting

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10-11 April 2013 – COREPER II meeting
11 April 2013 - European Parliament committee meetings
12-13 April 2013 – Informal meeting of ECOFIN Ministers
12-13 April 2013 – Eurogroup meeting
15-18 April 2013 - European Parliament Plenary session

Other SME-related events

Fighting money laundering and terrorist financing: new framework, future challenges.

15 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The Conference will be the opportunity to discuss the issues surrounding the new FATF standards (published in February 2012) and the adoption of a proposal for a revised anti-money laundering Directive and a Fund Transfer Regulation (published by the European Commission in February 2013), as well as to discuss future challenges.

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

ECIPE Lunch Seminar: The Globalisation of Supply Chains: What are the Consequences for Trade-policy Strategies?

15 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

This seminar, organised by the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE), will focus on the analysis of the globalisation and fragmentation of supply chains and the effect of this evolution on the trade policy strategy. The keynote speaker of the seminar will be Professor Reinhard Quick, head of the Brussels office of the German chemical industry association.

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

Public Hearing: The proposal for a Common European Sales Law: work in progress.

19 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

This public hearing will analyse the latest news and the possible future developments regarding the on-going Parliamentary discussion on the Commission proposal concerning the Common European Sales Law (CESL). The speakers list features representatives from stakeholders' organisations and the two co-rapporteurs in the Legal Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, Klaus-Heiner Lehne (EPP, DE) and Luigi Berlinguer (S&D, IT)

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

Is securitisation dead? Opportunities in closing the funding gap for project finance and SMEs.

19 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS) is organising a seminar on the risks and opportunities of securitisation, both to finance big projects and to improve SMEs' access to credit. Panellists include Miguel de la Mano, Head of Unit for the analysis of financial markets issues at the European Commission; Ian Bell, Head of the Prime Collateralised Securities (PCS) Secretariat; and Janet Mitchell, Senior Advisor in the Department of Financial Stability of the National Bank of Belgium.

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

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Banks for Growth.

20 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The European Banking Federation (EBF) is organising its first Annual Conference, focused on the role banks play in supporting economic recovery. Another aim of the conference is to engage stakeholders for cooperation.

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

Delivering business resource efficiency: the EU LIFE+ funded European Pathway to Zero Waste project in the UK.

20 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

In the context of the Roadmap to a resource efficient Europe, the European Pathway to Zero Waste (EPOW) project has been demonstrating ways of delivering economic value from business waste in the South East of England.

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

Cross-Border business seminar.

21 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The Brussels seminar on Cross Border Business is the first of a series of national events whose purpose is to help SMEs to understand what options are available to them for successfully managing cross border credit and for recovering cross-border payments. This will also help increasing their overall business efficiency and competitiveness.

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

European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) Conference on "Scientific Support to EU Growth and Jobs.

26 March 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission's Joint Research Centre is launching an initiative on scientific support to growth and jobs, starting with a conference dedicated to "Scientific support to EU growth and jobs: Efficient buildings, vehicles and equipment". European efficient buildings, vehicles and equipment are three key sectors that present a real opportunity to boost Europe's competitiveness and contribute to economic development while promoting long-term sustainability at the same time.

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](#).

Restarting the SME credit market in Europe: what role for securitisation and capital markets?

9 April 2013

Brussels, Belgium

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Othmar Karas, MEP (EPP, AT), Vice-President of the European Parliament, will host an informed experts' roundtable jointly organised by UEAPME, AFME (Association for Financial Markets in Europe) and ACCA (the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants), in order to discuss how to ensure a careful revival of SME loan securitisation, building on the recent promising developments in this market.

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

Europe as a Location for Industry and Innovation.

23 April 2013

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](#).

Fostering Corporate Responsibility through Self- and Co-regulation: The Case of Sector-specific Initiatives.

23 April 2013

Brussels, Belgium

The conference on 'Fostering Corporate Responsibility through Self- and Co-regulation: The Case of Sector-specific Initiatives', organised by Bertelsmann-Stiftung, will focus on the new developments on EU policy on Corporate Social Responsibility, also in light of the 'Renewed Strategy for CSR', launched by the Commission in 2011, and the newly emphasised role of CSR within EU Europe 2020 flagship initiatives.

To access the webpages of the Bertelsmann-Stiftung, please click [here](#)