



HEADLINES

EU/Data Protection: EU – US Data Protection Battle at the Expense of European SMEs

On 22 October the European Parliament's Civil Liberties Committee (LIBE) has adopted a report by rapporteur Jan Phillip Albrecht MEP. The report calls for a uniform Data Protection Regulation, replacing the 28 different regimes across Member States. The main aim of the proposal is to protect citizens and consumers against large (Internet based) corporations abusing and selling on their data. Consumers will have the 'right of erasure' - which was changed from the original 'right to be forgotten' - and the way data is shared with non-EU countries, such as the US, will be significantly restricted. The debate, which in recent months has been fuelled by alleged data breaches by US tech giants, as well as political matters such as the NSA affaire, has resulted in thousands of amendments to the original Commission proposal, making it a much more rigid deal. Any business for instance, regardless of its size, is expected to dedicate a data protection officer, once it holds a certain number of data subjects, which comes with an estimated cost of up to EUR 80.000

ESBA Opinion: "This proposal has long stopped being just about consumer protection and has grown into a European tour de force against US interference. The interests of our members seem to be of secondary to no importance in this debate. Micro and small businesses are carelessly accepted as collateral damage in this 'shock and awe' approach the LIBE committee is taking. Any business for instance, regardless of its size, is expected to have a dedicated data protection officer, once it holds a certain number of data subjects, which comes at an estimated cost of up to EUR 80.000. Obviously this will be detrimental to the smallest businesses and surely this is not what the European Commission had in mind when drafting the original proposal. We realise that times are changing and a revision of our data protection rules is of the essence, but not at the expense of our already struggling small businesses".

EU/External Relations: ESBA Visits Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Izmir Turkey

On 24 and 25 October, a delegation of ESBA representatives travelled to Izmir, Turkey to meet with the Izmir Chamber of Industry and the Izmir Chamber of Commerce, where the organisations exchanged best practices and discussed possibilities for cooperation. A number of the chambers' members attended the meetings to ask EU related questions and to table issues they are facing when dealing with the EU. The need for improved trade facilitations between Turkey and the EU were high on the agenda.

ESBA Opinion: "It was striking to see how similar the obstacles faced by Turkish entrepreneurs are to those faced by our own (EU) small businesses. Access to finance and administrative burdens for SMEs are heading the list of issues faced by business owners. On the other hand, Turkey seems to be doing a lot towards supporting entrepreneurship, by means of free trading areas, tax breaks for small businesses and other financial incentives. In those respects the EU could learn a thing or two from Turkey".

IN BRIEF

EU/Budgets: European Parliament votes on EU budget increase for 2013.

On 24 October 2013, after a positive vote within the Budgets Committee on 22 October 2013, the European Parliament voted in favour of amending the 2013 EU Budget No 6 which will increase the Union's 2013 budget by EURO 2.7 billion. This comes as a response to the European Commission's statements regarding negative effects due to unexpected lower import duties collected from EU borders. The Commission lacked cash flow and rejection of the amendment to EU budget no 6 would have resulted in the EU not being able to pay its legitimate invoices from mid-November 2013. This would have been problematic, as EU the Treaties do not allow budget deficit.

To read the Motion for a European Parliament resolution on the Council's position to amend the EU's budget 06/2013, please click [here](#).

EU/Consumers: Consumer rights a priority in the EU Programme 2014-2020.

On 23 October 2013, the Committee of Permanent Representatives (COREPER I) approved the Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on a consumer programme for the period 2014-2020, making consumer empowerment a top priority in EU policies. This regulation is intended to boost consumers' confidence in the Single Market, especially when going cross-border physically or on-line. It addresses issues such as product safety, lack of transparent and reliable information or differences in legislations regarding consumer rights across Member States. This programme is in line with the EU2020 objectives, taking into account new societal challenges, aiming to increase consumer welfare or encourage more sustainable consumption patterns.

To access the Regulation on Consumer Programme, please click [here](#).

EU/taxation: Making European tax administration more efficient through a standard VAT return.

On 23 October 2013 the European Commission proposed a standard VAT return as a part of its objective to cut-red tape for EU companies. The main objectives of the proposal rely on removing barriers to cross-border trade and reducing administrative burdens for businesses operating in the Single Market. According to Commission figures, 150 million VAT returns are submitted every year to national administrations. Differences in information requested and the reporting deadlines make the procedure very complex and costly for businesses operating cross-border. The proposed standard VAT return will address these issues and intends to contribute to fiscal consolidation across the EU.

For more information on standard VAT return, please click [here](#).

EU/access to finance: Access to Finance Days: bringing SMEs closer to financial markets.

In Europe, small and medium size companies (SMEs) are the main source of economic growth and job creation. Due to the recent financial crisis, many SMEs encountered significant obstacles in obtaining the needed financing to develop or even to carry daily activities. Using the new Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs programme (COSME), for the period 2014 to 2020, the European Commission seeks to improve access to finance, encouraging investments in the SME sector. In order to explain how COSME works and how both financial markets and SMEs can benefit

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from this new instrument, DG Enterprise and Industry is organizing a series of events in all Member States starting from autumn 2013 to the end of 2014. DG Enterprise and Industry held the latest event in Rome on 18 October 2013; the next one will be in Vilnius (Lithuania) on 5 November 2013.

To know more about EU Access to Finance Days, please click [here](#).

EU/Internal market: Reinforcement of consumer protection and market surveillance in the European Union.

On 17 October 2013, the European Parliament Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection (IMCO) adopted the consumer product safety regulation. Despite the difficulties in reaching compromises in the IMCO Committee, agreement was reached on new measures to tighten the traceability of products as well as safety requirements and market surveillance rules to increase consumers' confidence in products. The draft report on consumer product safety introduces the "EU Safety Tested" marking, a voluntary marking for economic operators. This marking attempts to show consumers that a good has been tested and approved by an accredited third party, declaring it in compliance with the EU regulation on product safety.

To read the European Commission Communication, please click [here](#).

EU/ Internal market: Improving mutual recognition.

On 15 October 2013, the Ministry of Economy of the Republic of Lithuania, BusinessEurope and the Lithuanian confederation of industrialists LPK organised a conference in Vilnius on "Mutual Recognition: Boosting the Single Market". European institution representatives, Lithuanian authorities, business representatives and scientist debated about a better implementation of the mutual recognition principle in the Single Market. Mutual recognition, according to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU), obliges Member States to accept products lawfully marketed in another EU country and which are not subject to Union harmonisation unless very specific conditions are met. The Lithuanian EU Council Presidency highlighted the potential benefits of mutual recognition as a tool to reduce costs and administrative burdens for SME's, public authorities and citizens. The European Commission announced the evaluation of the mutual recognition principle, pinpointing areas with a critical implementation.

To read more about mutual recognition, please click [here](#).

EU/ Access to Finance: SMEs on the agenda of the ECFIN Council.

An important point on the agenda during the EU finance ministers meeting on 15 October was the issue of access to finance for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and the European Commission - EIB SME initiative. This initiative is designed to complement national actions that support SMEs through already existing instruments such as the programme for the Competitiveness of Enterprises and SMEs (COSME) and Horizon 2020. According to the European Commission "the necessary preparations should be made to allow these instruments to begin operating in January 2014".

To read more about this initiative, please click [here](#).

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EU/Internal market: Further legislative steps toward e-signatures and e-identities across Europe.

On 14 October, the European Parliament committee on Industry, Research, and Energy (ITRE) adopted the draft EU regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market. After the Action Plan on e-signatures and e-identification, launched by the European Commission in the 2008, the proposed regulation aims at improving the mutual recognition of national electronic identification systems among Member States. The new regulation foresees the introduction of an electronic ID accepted across Europe, simplifying the procedures for studying and working abroad for European citizens. Ms Marita Ulvskog (S&D, SE), lead rapporteur on this procedure, is in charge of negotiating with the Council to find a first reading agreement.

For more information about the Action Plan on e-signatures and e-identification to facilitate the provision of cross border public services in the Single Market, please read [here](#).

To read more about the proposal for a regulation on electronic identification and trust services for electronic transactions in the internal market, please click [here](#).

EU/Professional Qualifications: Virtual Professional Qualifications Card approved by MEPs

On 9 October 2013, the European Parliament voted on the Directive on the Recognition of the Professional Qualifications. The system adopted will be based on the existing electronic information exchange system completed by a new virtual professional qualifications card. An alert system has been created to prevent health professionals (doctors, nurses, veterinary surgeons and childcare specialists) who have been convicted of a relevant crime or face disciplinary action, from transferring their activity to another EU Member state. Within the 800 regulated professions in the EU, 7 have been directly recognised by the new Directive: doctors, dentists, pharmacists, nurses, midwives, veterinary surgeons and architects. The new Directive clarifies that the Directive should not apply to notaries appointed by an official act of government. A Public EU database for regulated professions will be created by the Commission out of the compiled information received from Member states. The Draft Directive was approved by 596 votes to 37 with 31 abstentions.

To view the report, please click [here](#).

EU/Regions: Vouchers for SMEs to use digital services.

On 7 October 2013, the European Commission encouraged European regions to provide vouchers worth up to €10,000 for SMEs that decide to utilise digital services. During the European Week of Regions and Cities - OPEN DAYS 2013, the Commission issued a working document on *SMEs Going Digital - A Blueprint for ICT Innovation Vouchers*. The next step will be the actual publication of the Blueprint for ICT innovation vouchers by the Commission. Two regions in Spain, Murcia and Extremadura, have been selected for the Pilot project.

To read the Working document on SMEs Going Digital – A Blueprint for Innovation Vouchers, please click [here](#).

To read more about the ICT Innovation Vouchers, please click [here](#).

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To read more about the Pilot project please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EU/Eurostat: Euro area house prices down by 2.2%

On 10 October 2013, Eurostat published a data indicating that house prices, as measured by the House Price Index (HPI), fell by 2.2% in the euro area and by 1.3% in the EU in the second quarter of 2013 compared with the same quarter of the previous year

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

EU/Eurostat: Underemployment and potential additional labour force statistics

On 11 October 2013, Eurostat analysed the three forms of [unemployment](#) in the [European Union \(EU\)](#) which are not covered by the [ILO](#) definition of unemployment. However, while being not captured through the [unemployment rate](#), these groups still represent some form of unmet demand for employment. For this reason they constitute 'halos' around unemployment.

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

EU/Eurostat: G20 annual inflations lows to 3.0% in August 2013

On 14 October 2013, Eurostat revealed that annual inflation in the G20 was 3.0% in the year to August 2013, down from 3.2% in the year to July 2013. The G20 aggregate reflected diverging patterns among the world's largest economies. India, Argentina, Indonesia and Turkey experienced the highest annual inflation rates (equal to or above 8.0%) in August 2013, while Japan, France, Canada and Italy had the lowest annual inflation rates (between 0.9% and 1.2%).

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

EU/Eurostat: Nearly 60% of EU internet users shop online

On 15 October 2013, Eurostat published a data indicating that internet access in the EU28 is widespread and today people use the internet for a wide range of activities, among others to order goods and services online. In the EU28 in 2012, 75% of individuals aged 16 to 74 had used the internet in the previous 12 months, and nearly 60% of these internet users reported that they had shopped online.

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

EU/Eurostat: Euro area annual inflation down to 1.1%

On 16 October 2013, Eurostat revealed that Euro area annual inflation was 1.1% in September 2013, down from 1.3% in August. A year earlier the rate was 2.6%. Monthly inflation was 0.5% in September 2013. European Union annual inflation was 1.3% in September 2013, down from 1.5% in August. A year earlier the rate was 2.7%. Monthly inflation was 0.4% in September 2013.

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

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EU/Eurostat: Euro area international trade in goods surplus 7.1bn euro

On 16 October 2013, Eurostat revealed that the first estimate for the euro area trade in goods balance with the rest of the world in August 2013 gave a 7.1 billion euro surplus, compared with +4.6bn in August 2012.

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

EU/Eurostat: Euro area production in construction up by 0.5%

On 17 October 2013, Eurostat pointed out that in August 2013 compared with July 2013, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector rose by 0.5% in the euro area and by 0.4% in the EU28, production in construction rose by 0.7% and 1.3% respectively.

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

EU/Eurostat: EU27 current account surplus 39.4 bn euro

On 17 October 2013, Eurostat stressed that the EU27 external current account recorded a surplus of 39.4 billion euro (1.2% of GDP) in the second quarter of 2013, compared with a surplus of 2.6 bn (0.1% of GDP) in the second quarter of 2012.

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

EU/Eurostat: Euro Area and EU28 Government deficit decreases

On 21 October, Eurostat announced that in 2012, the government deficit of both the euro area (EA17) and the EU28 decreased in absolute terms compared with 2011. In the euro area the government deficit to GDP ratio decreased from 4.2% in 2011 to 3.7% in 2012 and in the EU28 from 4.4% to 3.9%

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

EU/Eurostat: EU area and EU28 Government debt increases

As released on 23 October 2013 by Eurostat, at the end of the second quarter of 2013, the government debt to GDP ratio in the euro area (EA17) stood at 93.4%, compared with 92.3% at the end of the first quarter of 2013. In the EU28 the ratio increased from 85.9% to 86.8%. Compared with the second quarter of 2012, the government debt to GDP ratio rose in both the euro area (from 89.9% to 93.4%) and the EU28 (from 84.7% to 86.8%).

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

EU/Eurostat: Business investment rate

On 29 October 2013, Eurostat published that in the second quarter of 2013, the business investment rate was 19.2% in the euro area, compared with 18.8% in the first quarter of 2013. This rise was the result of a higher increase in investment (+3.2%) than in gross value added (+0.9%) while total stocks fell. The business profit share went up to 37.9% and 37.1% respectively.

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

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EU/Eurostat: Europe 2020 Strategy

On 29 October 2013, Eurostat published a new flagship publication on “Smarter, greener, more inclusive? - Indicators to support the Europe 2020 strategy”. This is the first of a new series of annual publications providing statistical analyses related to important European Commission policy frameworks or other phenomena in society. Its purpose is to provide statistics to support the Europe 2020 strategy and to back up the monitoring towards its headline targets.

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

EIB/Ex-post evaluation of lending to SMEs

On 25 October 2013, the European Investment Bank published a report on its ex-post evaluation of EIB intermediated lending to SMEs in the EU, from 2005 to 2011.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW

Consultation on the review of the Consumer Protection Cooperation Regulation

Closes: 31 January 2014

This consultation is open to stakeholders and all those with an interest in enforcement of consumer rights across national borders within the Single Market. Its objective is to seek stakeholders' views on the best options to improve the functioning and effectiveness of the CPC Regulation for the enforcement of consumers' economic interests in the EU.

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

ONGOING

Consultation on the Green Action Plan for SMEs

Closes: 12 December 2013

The aim of this consultation is to collect stakeholders' points of view on valid support measures for SMEs to become more resource efficient and sell green products and services. The results of this consultation and the results of the Flash Eurobarometer³⁴² “SMEs, resource efficiency and green markets”, will be taken into consideration whilst developing actions to be included in the forthcoming Green Action Plan for SMEs.

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

Consultation on Crowdfunding in the EU – Exploring the added value of potential EU action

Closes: 31 December 2013

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The consultation offers different stakeholders the opportunity to express their views on crowd funding. It will attempt to highlight the benefits and the risks of this new form of financing, and find suggestions for the Commission regarding potential further actions.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

4 November 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
5 November 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
6 November 2013 – Coreper I
6 November 2013 – European Parliament plenary session
7 November 2013 – European Parliament committee meetings
7 November 2013 – Governing Council meeting of the ECB
7 November 2013 – European Parliament plenary session
8 November 2013 – Coreper I
11 November 2013 – Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Budget)
14 November 2013 – EUROGRUPE meeting
15 November 2013 – Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Budget)

Other SME-related events:

Enterprise Data & BI Conference Europe 2013.

Westminster, United Kingdom

4-6 November 2013

These are Europe's most authoritative and independent conferences on Enterprise Data and Business Intelligence. Now in its 15th year, these co-located conferences offer unrivalled opportunity to learn from the industry's leading figures and network.

To access more information about the event, please click [here](#).

International Supply Management Congress.

Amsterdam, Netherlands

5 November 2013

The conference is endorsed by eight private sector partners whom are committed to present a forum for debate and inspiration regarding the future of procurement and sustainable supply chains.

To access more information about the event, please click [here](#).

8th Annual SME Banking Conference.

Vienna, Austria

6-7 November 2013

The SME Banking Forum will host delegates, holding such the positions as Chief Officers, VPs, Directors and Heads of SME Banking, Small Business Banking, Business Clients, Commercial Banking,

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Mid-corps, Corporate Banking, Retail Banking, Risk, Product Development, Business Development, Credits, Loans, Marketing, CRM, Sales, Distribution Channels.

To access more information about the event, please click [here](#).

Working Breakfast on smart regulation for SMEs.

Brussels, Belgium

7 November 2013

The European Economic and Social Committee has personally invited ESBA to a working breakfast on 7 November to discuss and debate the final conclusions of the recent EESC report on “Smart regulation for SMEs”.

2013 Trade Associations Afternoon.

Brussels, Belgium

7 November 2013

McDermott, Will & Emery will hold a seminar on trade related concerns and fair play in the EU market.

To access more information about the event, please click [here](#).

Modernisation of the EU’s Trade Defence Instruments (TDI).

Brussels, Belgium

7 November 2013

The European Parliament’s committee on International Trade is hosting a joint workshop and hearing to modernize and discuss the EU’s trade defence instruments.

To access more information on the event, please click [here](#).

Europe's energy outlook: Heading in the right direction?

Brussels, Belgium

07 November 2013

Friends of Europe organises its 10th annual Energy Policy Summit on Europe’s energy outlook. The debate will take place in Brussels on 7 November 2013.

To learn more about the 10th Energy Policy Summit, please click [here](#).

Experience Sharing on Public Procurement – FAPPE.

London, United Kingdom

8 November 2013

Economic operators, SMEs’ organizations and public organisations are welcomed to join this event to share experiences and identify potential partners for joint training and coaching projects in EU countries.

Mastering Business Analysis.

Westminster, United Kingdom

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11-12 November 2013

This two-day seminar and workshop in business analysis look to give skills and tools to discover client's real business, and to determine and demonstrate the best ways of improving it.

To access more information on the event, please click [here](#).

From Reform to Growth.

Brussels, Belgium

12 November 2013

The discussion will concentrate on developments and challenges in conducting reforms, such as creating flexible labour markets and improving administrative structures.

To access more information on the event, please click [here](#).

Broadening the benefit of EU R&I programmes: New partners, new member states, new international alliances.

Brussels, Belgium

13 November 2013

On 13 November 2013, Science | Business will hold a debate on the EU R&I programmes, focusing on new partners and new alliances.

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

The Brussels Tax Forum 2013.

Brussels, Belgium

18 November 2013

On 18 November 2013, Directorate General Taxation and Custom Union of the European Commission will host a forum on tax issues, aimed at policymakers, taxation experts and other stakeholders.

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

Policy and Business Challenges in Realising Internet Services of the Future.

Brussels, Belgium

21 November 2013

The main goal of the workshop is to bring together the relevant stakeholders from industry, policy, intermediary organisations and research to identify policy and business conditions for achieving societal and business success of the Future Internet PPP program.

To access more information on the event, please click [here](#).

"SMES IN HORIZON 2020": European Commission Information days.

Brussels, Belgium

25 November 2013

The European Commission will host an Information Day on SME participation to Horizon 2020, specifically directed towards SME support organisations (governmental and non-governmental).

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The event can be web-streamed live.

To access more information on the event please click [here](#).

Encouraging a Europe of Enterprise, SME Assembly in Lithuania.

25 - 26 November 2013

Vilnius, Lithuania

Under the auspices of the Lithuanian Presidency, this year's SME Assembly will take place in Vilnius. Policy makers, business and consumer organisations and a large amount of entrepreneurs will discuss the most pressing issues pertaining to SMEs.

For more information about the SME Assembly, please click [here](#).

Social Entrepreneurs: Have Your Say!

16-17 January 2014

Strasbourg, France

The DG MARKT will host a two days conference on Social Entrepreneurship. The conference aims at discussing the latest developments on Social Business Initiative as well sharing opinions with stakeholders.

To learn more about the conference, please click [here](#).