



HEADLINES

EU/ Access to finance: Loan applications without feedback are hurting SMEs and the EU economy

Small SMEs are more likely not to receive feedback on why their loan application failed than larger SMEs. This conclusion derives from a recent evaluation published by the Centre for Strategy and Evaluation Services. This is a large problem considering that SMEs need vital financing which they have even less chance of getting if they aren't told what they may have done wrong in their initial loan application. European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani said about this evaluation that it was vital to revive the dialogue between the Financial Sector and SMEs, as the former has had problems channelling funds to the real economy ever since the crisis and the latter is the engine that will allow Europe to exit the crisis.

To read the complete evaluation, please click [here](#).

ESBA Opinion

Obtaining bank loans, and access to finance in general, is still one of the major obstacles for small businesses. ESBA wholeheartedly agrees with Vice-President Tajani that it is vital for a business owner to receive thorough feedback when he or she is rejected for a bank loan. Not only will this help the small business in any future loan applications, it will also serve as a form of scrutiny towards banks' lending behaviour.

EU/ International trade: A successful agreement on T-TIP should include SMEs

On 10 April, Karel De Gucht (European Commissioner for Trade) held a speech on 'The Future of TTIP – The Benefits and How to Achieve Them' in Paris. He welcomed the solid progresses which have been made so far in the negotiations, though many stumbling blocks remain. He outlined that both sides are focusing on key areas impacting businesses and economic growth, being lowering tariffs, enhancing regulatory cooperation and compatibility, opening services and public procurement markets. He also stated that companies have a word to say in the negotiations. In particular, negotiations should focus on lowering tariffs and administrative burdens to allow SMEs to be more competitive and to access new markets.

Currently, the European Commission is carrying out a sustainability impact assessment, which will seek to understand the limitations faced by SMEs when doing business in the US.

ESBA Opinion

The transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will contain an 'SME Chapter' for the first time in history. This chapter must contain measures that would make it easier for small companies to do business in the Trans Atlantic market, as 99,8% of all EU businesses are in fact SMEs. ESBA urges the negotiators to ensure the chapter contains pledges to promote entrepreneurship, smart regulation and the *Think Small First* principle throughout the agreement.

To access the EU webpage dedicated to TTIP, please click [here](#).

To read more on the SMEs opportunities in the framework of TTIP, please click [here](#).

IN BRIEF

EU/Public procurement: New technologies in public tenders

On 14 April 2014, the Council approved a directive that aims to spread the use of new technologies in public tenders. The directive will contribute to improving the functioning of the internal market by reducing the obstacles to entering the market, especially for SMEs, and by solving the problem of the compatibility of different e-invoicing systems in various member states. The processes will become faster and less costly. It is expected that the wide use of e-invoicing in public tenders across the EU will generate savings of funds allocated for public procurement of up to €2.3 billion a year. The directive provides for the development of a common interoperable standard on electronic invoicing by the European standardisation organisations, within 36 months after its entry into force.

To read the directive, please click [here](#).

EU/ Transport: The EU road transport market needs more integration

On 14 April, Siim Kallas, the Vice President of the Commission in charge of Transport called for simpler rules concerning road Haulage in the European Union. This followed a report from the Commission, on the EU market for transport, criticising the fact that even though progress had been made, this market hadn't been integrated enough. Further criticism was especially directed towards the large amount of empty runs, or trucks not carrying any cargo on parts of their journey. In essence the report stated that more needed to be done both to foster competition which would lead to fewer of these empty runs and ensuring better social conditions for drivers to keep attracting newcomers and ensure demand for freight transport will be met in the future.

To read this report in more details please click [here](#).

EU/ Industry: Safer products targeted by the European Parliament

On 15 April 2014, European Parliament voted in favour of new rules to improve the safety of consumer products circulating in the EU's internal market - including those imported from outside the EU - and to step-up market surveillance concerning all non-food products. Their improved identification and traceability will enable their quick removal from circulation within the EU. If the proposal is approved by the Council, the rules will enter into force in 2015 and enforced by the national market surveillance authorities of the Member States.

To read the Report of the Commission on safe products, please click [here](#).

To see the text adopted by the Parliament, please click [here](#).

EU/Access to Finance: EIB approves new loans to SMEs and Mid-Caps

On 15 April 2014, the EIB's Board of Directors approved loans worth up to €2.3 billion for the benefit of SMEs and Mid-Caps. This brings total EIB support for SMEs and Mid-Cap companies so far in 2014 to €9.1 billion. An important step is the approval of a €600 million trade finance facility for Portugal. In order to ensure access to finance for SMEs in selected countries like Portugal, the EIB provides guarantees to a network of international banks covering their risks in national banks carrying out trade finance operations for SMEs and Mid-Caps. This scheme has already been implemented in Greece and has now been extended to Portugal and Cyprus. Furthermore, the Board of Directors of

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the European Investment Fund approved 17 new operations on 14 April through which the EIF will further reinforce its support for SMEs.

For more details, please click [here](#).

EU/International Trade: New proposal for updating EU trade defence instruments should benefit to SMEs

On 16 April, MEPs adopted in plenary session a report calling for tougher measures against unfair imports. The text was adopted by 535 votes to 85, with 24 abstentions. The proposal aims at implementing anti-dumping tariffs against dumped or subsidized imports from third countries. It points out that SMEs are strongly disadvantaged in their access to EU trade defence tools. Thus, MEPs are in favour of creating an SME help desk the task of helping SMEs to file complaints and providing guidance in investigation proceedings. Another measure could consist in imposing higher duties on imports of dumped or subsidized goods for sectors largely made up of SMEs.

To read more on the adopted report, please click [here](#).

For more information on the proposal's status, please click [here](#).

EU/Antitrust: New proposal on damages for antitrust violations

On 17 April, the European Commission has proposed new rules for how citizens and companies can claim damages for infringements of the EU antitrust rules, in order to remove a number of practical difficulties which victims frequently face when they try to receive compensation. Important changes would include the power of National courts to order companies to disclose evidence when victims claim compensation and clarification of liability rules and limitation periods. The proposal for a directive will now be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council according to the ordinary legislative procedure. Once it has been adopted by these institutions, Member States will have two years to implement the provisions.

To read the directive and any other relevant documents, please click [here](#).

EU/Public procurement: New rules should help SMEs

On 17 April 2014, new public procurement rules adopted by the European Parliament in January came into force. Member States will have two years to implement them, with some like the UK, choosing to do so earlier. The rules will make it easier for SMEs to bid for public tenders because public authorities will be encouraged to break up large contracts and reserve some contracts for cooperatives or mutual, and the tendering process will move online (30 more months are afforded to implement this measure). Rules on public-private partnerships and concessions will also be clarified.

To read the directive, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

EU/Eurostat: Unemployment

On the 10th April, Eurostat published report stating that 9.9 million part-time workers are underemployed and 1.51 million as a potential additional labour force. The 9.9 million were working part time and willing and available to work more hours but not offered to do so. The 11.5 million people were either willing to work but not available or available but not willing to work. The largest share of underemployed labour force can be found in Greece (72%), Cyprus (59%) and Spain (57.4%). The largest share of potential labour force can be found in Italy (12.6%) and Croatia (12.1%).

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

EU/Eurostat: Industry

On the 14th April, Eurostat release a report concerning an increase in industrial production in the euro area. In February 2014 compared with January, seasonally adjusted industrial production rose by 0.2% in the euro area(EA18) and by 0.4% in the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In January³ industrial production remained stable in the euro area and increased by 0.2% in the EU28. In February 2014 compared with February 2013, industrial production grew by 1.7% in the euro area and by 2.1% in the EU28.

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

EU/Eurostat: International Trade

On the 15th April, Eurostat reported that the Euro area had seen a 13.6bn euro surplus in its international trade in goods. The first estimate for the euro area(EA18) trade in goods balance with the rest of the world in February 2014 gave a 13.6 billion euro surplus, compared with +9.8 bn in February 2013. The January 2014 balance was +0.8 bn, compared with -4.8 bn in January 2013. In February 2014 compared with January 2014, seasonally adjusted exports rose by 1.2% and imports by 0.6%.

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

EU/Eurostat: Inflation

On the 16th April, Eurostat reported a level of 0.5% inflation in the Eurozone and 0.6% in the EU28. Euro area annual inflation was 0.5% in March 2014, down from 0.7% in February. A year earlier the rate was 1.7%. Monthly inflation was 0.9% in March 2014. European Union annual inflation was 0.6% in March 2014, down from 0.8% in February. A year earlier the rate was 1.9%. Monthly inflation was 0.7% in March 2014.

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

EU/Eurostat: Production in Construction

On the 22nd April, Eurostat stated that Production in construction was up by 0.1% in both euro area and EU28. In February 2014 compared with January 2014, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector grew by 0.1% in both the euro area (EA18) and the EU28, according to first estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In January, production in construction rose by 1.6% and 1.4% respectively. In February 2014 compared with February 2013, production in construction increased by 6.7% in the euro area and by 5.5% in the EU28.

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

CONSULTATIONS

Consultation on Review of existing VAT legislation on public bodies and tax exemptions in the public interest

DEADLINE: 25/04/2014

One of the priority areas in this regard is the review and possible revision of the VAT rules on the public sector including the special rules for public bodies and the tax exemptions in the public interest.

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

NEW

Consultation on Establishment of the annual priority lists for the development of network codes and guidelines for 2015 and beyond

DEADLINE: 09/05/2014

The European Commission is consulting stakeholders on the priorities for the development of network codes and guidelines for 2015 and beyond in order to establish an annual priority list identifying the areas to be included in the development of network codes.

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

NEW

Consultation on introducing the European Professional Card (EPC) for nurses, doctors, pharmacists, physiotherapists, engineers, mountain guides & real estate agents

DEADLINE: 02/06/2014

The objective is to seek further views and collect data on issues including the mobility of professionals, application procedures & fees from the professional associations & the authorities responsible for recognition of professional qualifications in the EU countries.

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

Consultation on investment protection and investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Agreement (TTIP)

DEADLINE: 21/06/2014

The proposed approach contains a series of innovative elements that the EU proposes using as the basis for the TTIP negotiations. The key issue is whether the EU's proposed approach for TTIP achieves the right balance between protecting investors and safeguarding the EU's right and ability to regulate in the public interest.

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

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COMING-UP

EU Institutions: important dates

29 April 2014 – Conference “Stimulating Digital Entrepreneurship in Europe”
30 April 2014 – COREPER I
30 April 2014 – COREPER II
5 May 2014 – Eurogroup Meeting
6 May 2014 – Economic and Financial Affairs Council
7 May 2014 – COREPER II
7 May 2014 – COREPER I
8 May 2014 – Foreign Affairs Council
12 May 2014 – Foreign Affairs Council
13 May 2014 – General Affairs Council
14 May 2014 – COREPER I
15-16 May 2014 – European Council
19-20 May 2014 – Agriculture and Fisheries Council
21 May 2014 – COREPER II

Other SME-related events

In order to help SMEs better understand EU decision-making and procedures., EDF is hosting a debate in which 3 young companies with exciting energy projects will tell their stories, challenging EU representatives to respond with advice, comments and questions.

ALDE Party Council

2 May 2014
Vienna

On Friday 2 May, the first ALDE Party Council meeting of 2014 will take place in Vienna – this will be followed by the ALDE Party Electoral Rally 2014.

Recovery at risk? Central and Eastern Europe remains vulnerable to external funding threats

5 May 2014
Brussels
Bruegel

At this event representatives from the IMF will present their report: Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe: External Funding Patterns and Risks. This report addresses three questions: (1) What countries/sectors are most reliant on external funding, especially less stable forms of funding or relatively few sources of funding? (2) What makes countries more vulnerable to external financial shocks? (3) How would tighter external financial conditions affect growth and debt dynamics in CESEE countries? The report also outlines related policy implications.

Employment and Social Inclusion in Europe: Developing Skills and Supporting Disadvantaged Groups

15 May 2014
Brussels
Public Policy Exchange

This event provides a valuable opportunity to discuss the challenges behind current unemployment trends in the EU. Delegates will have the opportunity to examine initiatives and innovative projects

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that have been implemented to tackle unemployment and social exclusion at national and EU levels. This Symposium will also allow delegates to exchange best practices and discuss solutions to boost employment in the EU.

ACR+ and 20th Anniversary, EWWR Awards and General Assembly

22-23 May 2014

Rome

ACR+

This event consists of three parts, the EWWR Conference on European waste projects and the role of communication in the EWWR, the European Awards Ceremony where the most outstanding actions carried out in the EWWR 2013 will be rewarded, and the 20th anniversary conference & ACR+ General Assembly 2014.

Horizon 2020 Proposal Development – From idea to proposal

27 May 2014

Webinar

This new webinar provides practical tips on developing a project proposal in response to H2020 calls. It will explain how to analyse the call and the work programme topic, what to pay attention to in the new templates, and what the evaluators will look for in proposals. Differences between FP7 and H2020 will be covered.

Addressing cybersecurity: the corporate perspective

5 June 2014

Brussels

Bruegel

As we become more reliant on modern technology, we also become more vulnerable to cyber-attacks such as corporate security breaches, spear phishing, and social media fraud. The challenge to understand cyber risk and deliver effective and accessible security becomes harder as technology continues to rapidly evolve and our systems become ever more complex. The panel will discuss these issues and address the following questions: what can companies and individuals do to address these threats and what role can and should policy makers play?