



IN BRIEF

EU/start-ups: European Court of Auditors; business incubators performance mediocre

On 3 September, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published a special report on the development of business incubators. The main goal of this report was to assess whether the facilities co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) succeeded in benefitting start-up companies with a high potential. Although the ERDF funding having had a significant impact on incubators the report shows that the performance of the audited incubators was mediocre. Reasons for that include the absence of a link between the clients' business objective and the incubation service, a lack of usage of good practice and the absence of an evaluation for the expected regional economic benefits.

To read the special report by the European Court of Auditors, please click [here](#).

EU/SMEs: UPS survey shows that SMEs need to export more and have a lack of awareness

On 2 September, UPS published its results of the study 'European SME Exporting Insights', which examines the motivations for SMEs to export and acknowledging the key barriers. More than 8000 SME owners in seven key European markets (Poland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Germany and Italy) were questioned. Results show that Italian, German and French SMEs export the most. Concerning awareness of new trade agreements, such as TTIP, and new legislation, Germany has the highest score with 47%. The average percentage is 21%, which shows that awareness is in general very low.

To read more about the survey, please click [here](#).

EU/Trade: European Commission deals with problems caused by Russian embargo

On 14 August, Dacian Ciolos, European Commissioner responsible for Agriculture and Rural Development, announced that there will be several responses to deal with problems caused by the Russian embargoes on products coming from Europe. These measures are of exceptional nature and need to be implemented quickly as the harvesting season is ongoing and products are perishing. During the last two weeks Ciolos confirmed several measures for the milk sector and the fruit and vegetable market to help the farmers. These consist of private storage aid in the dairy sector and reducing the supply of fruits and vegetables. However, there are also critical voices of such trade barriers. The Slovakian and Hungarian Prime ministers Robert Fico and Viktor Orban, respectively, criticized the sanctions as being more harmful than beneficial.

To read more about EC's measures, please click [here](#).

EU/Customs: European Commission wants to improve the EU's custom risk management

On 21 August, the European Commission adopted an action plan and a new strategy to advance the European customs risk management. The Commission communication identified gaps in the risk management in 2011 and the current communication reacts to these by suggesting a strategy to improve supply chains' security and risk management. Security and safety of European residents and the economy and financial market are of the utmost importance for the EU as the world's largest

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trading block. The strategy comprises an action programme aiming for a high quality approach that is effective and efficient. The biggest challenge is the need for quality data on the supply chain in order to close the gaps in the existing custom risk management. If successful, this initiative will allow for smooth and safe trade enabling economic growth and improving competitiveness.

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

To read about the Strategy and Action Plan annexed to the Communication, please click [here](#).

EU/Economy: Slow recovery as manufacturing sector stagnates further

On 21 August, the private research group Markit published its Flash Eurozone Composite Output Index. This showed that the Eurozone economy continues to recover however at a very small pace that only predicts very limited growth for the near future. Despite the index having been above the neutral level of 50.0 (52.8 for the month of August) the GDP growth was only at 0.3%. The manufacturing sector in particular is experiencing a period of slow economic expansion. The services sector is doing marginally better but nevertheless growth reclined here as well. Overall this had a negative effect on unemployment with companies not feeling safe enough to engage in large scale hiring. In addition the geopolitical uncertainties are contributing further to this slow economic recovery.

To read about the Markit report, please click [here](#).

EU/Employment: European Commission presents ex-post evaluation on programme for Employment and Solidarity

On 27 August, the European Commission published an evaluation report on the PROGRESS programme for Employment and Solidarity. The report aimed at presenting the results achieved by the programme and lessons learnt for new initiatives. From 2014-2020 there is a programme on Employment and Social Innovation (EaSI) and another one on Rights, Equality and Citizenship (REC). Overall PROGRESS focused on awareness raising campaigns informing citizens of their rights as well as encouraging behavioural changes to achieve greater youth mobility and diversity. In general, the campaigns were successful according to the external report but there is no evidence whether the behavioural changes had been achieved. The new initiatives will support PROGRESS-like activities and continue to work in the same direction.

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

EU/Industry: Additional funding for EU industry, to meet climate targets by 2030

In October 2014, EU countries that heavily rely on coal are expected to receive billions in funding to cut greenhouse emissions. Specifically, EU leaders are expected to stimulate Eastern European countries to sign up for the new 2030 climate goal, which aims to cut emissions by 30%. This new target comes after a review of the Energy Efficiency Directive by the European Commission. Although some countries (like Germany) are expected to meet the goals ahead of time, other countries (like Bulgaria and Romania) face industrial challenges that require extra funding.

To learn more about the EC's 2030 policy framework for climate and energy, please click [here](#).

EU/Justice: EU data protection reform

On 18 August, deputy EU Justice Commissioner Martine Reichers gave a speech concerning the progress on the data protection reform directives. Just when progress is accelerating, opponents are trying to slow it down by using the recent ruling of the European Court of Justice regarding the right to be forgotten. However Reichers says she will not allow them to use this vital ruling to stop

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the opening of a single digital market for EU companies and better privacy protection for EU citizens. The ruling asks for a balance between the legitimate interests of Internet users and the fundamental rights of citizens. Negotiations concerning the data protection reform have been ongoing for more than two and a half years. Heads of State and Government want to adopt a strong EU General Data Protection framework by 2015.

To read more about data protection, please click [here](#).

EU/Trade: EU stops talks on TTIP for US reinsurance reform

On the 26th of August, EU negotiators have aborted talks concerning better market access for EU reinsurers over the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The abandoning of talks recognizes that it is unlikely to remove rules forcing the industry to post as much as 100% collateral against their American liabilities. Instead, the Commission wants a separate pact that eliminates state-level collateral requirements for EU reinsurers, which cover direct insurers against, for example, natural disasters. For this the Commission needs a separate negotiating mandate from the Council of Ministers.

To read about EU-US insurance project, click [here](#).

To read more about TTIP, click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

OECD Countries/OECD: Agricultural policy

On 4 September, the OECD published the 'Agricultural Policy Monitoring and Evaluation 2014'. This edition of Agricultural Policy Monitoring and Evaluation covers OECD member countries and is a unique source of up-to-date estimates of support to agriculture in the OECD area. It is complemented by country profiles on agricultural policy developments in OECD countries.

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

OECD countries /OECD: Employment

On 3 September, the OECD published the "OECD Employment Outlook 2014". This book marks the 20th Anniversary of the OECD Jobs Strategy and includes chapters on recent labour market developments with a special section on earnings/wages, job quality, youth employment, unemployment and unemployment rates, and forms of employment and employment protection. As in previous editions, the 2014 OECD Employment Outlook monitors recent labour market developments in OECD countries and Key Partner economies and identifies appropriate policy action to foster more and better jobs.

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

EU/Eurostat: Retail prices

On 2 September, Eurostat reported that In July 2014, compared with June 2014, industrial producer prices fell by 0.1% in the euro area (EA18) and by 0.2% in the EU28, according to estimates from Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In June prices rose by 0.2% in the euro area and by 0.1% in the EU28.

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

EU/Eurostat: Inflation

On 29 August, Eurostat stated that in the Euro area annual inflation is expected to be 0.3% in August 2014, down from 0.4% in July.

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

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EU/Eurostat: Employment

On 29 August, Eurostat published a report which stated that the euro area (EA18) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 11.5% in July 2014, stable compared with June 2014, but down from 11.9% in July 2013. The EU28 unemployment rate was 10.2% in July 2014, also stable compared with June 2014, but down from 10.9% in July 2013.

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

EU/Eurostat: Production in construction

On 20 August, Eurostat reported that in June 2014 compared with May 2014, seasonally adjusted production in the construction sector fell by 0.7% in the euro area (EA18) and by 0.3% in the EU28.

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

WORLD/OECD: Taxation

On 20 August, the OECD published the 'OECD Model Tax Convention on Income and on Capital: Condensed Version'. This publication provides the basis for the negotiation and interpretation of more than 3000 tax treaties that make up a network that co-ordinate the income and corporate tax systems of most countries with the objective of removing tax barriers to cross-border trade and investment.

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

EU/Eurostat: Trade balance

On 18 August, Eurostat published the first estimate for the euro area (EA18) trade in goods balance with the rest of the world in June 2014. This estimate gave a €16.8 billion surplus, compared with +€15.7 bn in June 2013. The May 2014 balance was +€15.4 bn, compared with +€14.6 bn in May 2013. In June 2014 compared with May 2014, seasonally adjusted exports fell by 0.5% while imports rose by 0.5%.

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

CONSULTATIONS

Consultation on the potential economic consequences of country-by-country reporting under Directive 2013/36/EU (Capital Requirements Directive or CRD)

DEADLINE: 12/09/2014

This consultation aims to inform the Commission's assessment and report required under Article 89(3) of CRD, by examining stakeholders opinion on its impact on competitiveness, investment and credit availability and the stability of the financial system.

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

Public consultation on Galileo Open Service Signal In Space Interface Control Document (OS SIS ICD)

DEADLINE: 22/09/2014

The European Commission has decided to launch this open public consultation process in order to improve and consolidate the current draft document and to ensure that any further development of the Galileo OS SIS ICD takes into account the views of GNSS key stakeholders.

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

Public consultation on the revision of the Commission's Impact Assessment guidelines

DEADLINE: 30/09/2014

The Commission has committed to revise its Impact Assessment guidelines in 2014. These guidelines are intended for internal use in the Commission, but the objective of this consultation is to seek stakeholders' views on the draft revised guidelines.

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

Public consultation on effective EU merger control

DEADLINE: 03/10/2014

The Commission is seeking views on possible improvements of the EU Merger Regulation contained in the White Paper "towards more effective merger control".

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

Consultation on the implementation of the Framework Regulation Integrating Business Statistics (FRIBS)

DEADLINE: 07/10/2014

The objective of this consultation is first to collect the views of businesses on issues regarding the supply of data for compiling business statistics. Additionally, they are seeking inputs from the users of business statistics on how better to match the statistics produced with user needs.

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

Public consultation on Horizon 2020 "Science with and for Society" Work Programme 2016-2017

DEADLINE: 12/10/2014

The objective of the Part V of Horizon 2020 "Science with and for Society" is: "to build effective cooperation between science and society, to recruit new talent for science, and to pair scientific excellence with social awareness and responsibility".

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

Public consultation on a possible extension of geographical indication protection of the European Union to non-agricultural products

DEADLINE: 28/10/2014

This consultation aims to identify the current means of protection provided at national and EU level and the potential economic, social and cultural benefits that could be brought by improved Geographical Indication protection in the EU.

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

Public consultation on a possible extension of geographical indication protection of the European Union to non-agricultural products

DEADLINE: 28/10/2014

The European Commission is launching a consultation on possibly granting EU-wide protection to traditional non-agricultural products rooted in the cultural and historical heritage of particular geographical locations by extending to such products the benefits of geographical indications.

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

Consultation on the Europe 2020 strategy

DEADLINE: 31/10/2014

The objective is to inform on the review of the Europe 2020 strategy and to seek stakeholders' views on its further development.

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

Public consultation on the Evaluation of the Commercial Agents Directive (86/653/EEC)

DEADLINE: 31/10/2014

The objective of this consultation is to evaluate the functioning of the Commercial Agents Directive. As the first general evaluation it will assess whether the Directive remains fit-for-purpose in terms of effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, consistency and EU added value.

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

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COMING-UP

EU Institutions: important dates

10-11 September: 501st plenary session of the EESC
11th September: European Parliament Committee Meetings
12th September: Eurogroup meeting
15-18 September: European Parliament Committee Meetings
15-18 September: European Parliament Plenary Session
22-25 September: European Parliament Committee Meetings
25-26 September: Competitiveness council
29th September: General Affairs Council Meeting
29th September-1st October: European Parliament Committee Meetings
6-7 October: European Parliament Committee Meetings
8-9 October: European Parliament Plenary Session

Other SME-related events

Workshop on the safe use of chemicals by SMEs

16 September 2014

Brussels

To this workshop are invited all organisations that need to know about CLP regulation (Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Hazardous Chemicals). The challenges faced by SMEs in complying with the new CLP regulation, will be discussed and addressed.

For more information on this workshop, please click [here](#).

18th Annual Competition Conference

18-19 September

Brussels

The IBA Antitrust Committee will once again bring together some of the world's leading practitioners from around the globe to discuss the latest developments and hot topics in competition law today at, what is now, one of the most well established events on the antitrust calendar.

For more information on this conference, please click [here](#).

Workshop - Moving forward the EU policy agenda on cluster excellence

23 September

Brussels

The objective of this workshop will be to debate on the next EU agenda on cluster excellence and in particular which additional activities might be worth to explore and implement under COSME both at policy and operational level.

For more information on this workshop, please click [here](#).

EU Access to Finance Days

23 September 2014

Brussels

The EU Access to Finance Days provide the opportunity to discuss the design of future instruments for the new programming period 2014-20 between the key SME finance stakeholders as well as financial intermediaries under the current EU programmes. These include Horizon 2020, European Structural and Investment Funds and the new COSME Programme.

For more information on this event, please click [here](#).

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Business and VET - Partners for Growth and Competitiveness

23 - 24 September 2014

Brussels

In this Forum, the spotlight will be put on how we can spur growth and competitiveness in Europe by developing closer cooperation between vocational education and training (VET) providers and companies. Panel discussions with important stakeholders will be hosted. Workshops will focus on how to develop more entrepreneurial VET and how to strengthen the provision of high quality apprenticeships.

For more information about this forum, please click [here](#).