



HEADLINES

EU/Data protection: Good news for SMEs and microbusinesses?

On 10 October, the European Union justice ministers agreed on part of the data protection regulation reform. This is great news for SMEs as the exemption for businesses with fewer than 250 employees is in the text agreed on. As a result, SMEs and microbusinesses will not have to appoint an independent data protection officer or undertake privacy impact assessments. On 13 October 2014, ESBA spoke to the assistant of Sean Kelly MEP, Kevin Keary, to follow up on these developments. He confirmed that they also received the update that the exemption will stay in the regulation. However, there is no update yet as to whether this exemption applies to all businesses or whether only to the non-data-driven ones. Further details on the specifics may come out during the course of the week or the latest when trilogue negotiations start again.

IN BRIEF

EU/Gender equality: Commission proud of unprecedented female percentage in company boardrooms

On 29 September, Commissioner Reicherts was pleased to report that, since October 2010, the share of women in boards of publicly listed companies had risen by 7.6 points, reaching the unprecedented percentage of 18.6%. The Commissioner stressed that such accomplishment was the result of a very efficient regulatory pressure. Procedural quotas have indeed allowed companies to attract female talents in boards of companies. Willing to take this positive development further, the Commission, on 14 November 2012, has drafted a directive aiming for a share of 40% of female members on the boards of the publicly listed companies. The Council of Ministers is currently discussing this proposal, which is strongly supported by the European Parliament.

To read more about gender balance in corporate boards, please click [here](#).

EU/Commission selection: UK's Jonathan Hill set to be approved after his second hearing

On 8 October, the European Parliament approved Jonathan Hill as the Commissioner in charge of Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union. The Commissioner-designate, following his first hearing, was threatened to be rejected by the Socialist and Green parties as a result of an unsatisfactory answer on financial regulation and Eurobonds. However, UK's nominee drafted a 9.000 word response to the questions of the ECON committee and succeeded to charm the Members of the Parliament. Indeed, during his second hearing, Mr. Hill overcame the suspicions that he would serve the financial services companies he worked for as a lobbyist.

To read the answers to the supplementary questions addressed by ECON to Jonathan Hill, please click [here](#).

To read the Q&A of Jonathan Hill's hearing, please click [here](#).

To watch Jonathan Hill's hearing, please click [here](#).

ESBA Bulletin of 14 October 2014 – Volume 16 – Issue 13

EU/TTIP: More should be done to ensure the benefits for SMEs in TTIP

From 29 September till 3 October, the seventh round of the negotiations on TTIP took place. This trade and investment agreement between the EU and the US should drastically decrease the obstacles to trade. Not only by eliminating tariffs, but also by harmonizing technical and lowering the administrative burden. These should be especially beneficial for SMEs, who suffer disproportionate from the obstacles. The agreement would also include a chapter dedicated to SMEs. However critics realize the need to remove obstacles, but do not find evidence that the negotiations have been about the removal of these barriers. Also, it seems that SMEs are not convinced about the benefits of TTIP for them. A survey done by UPS investigates the perception of European SMEs on TTIP. The perception is often that the agreement is by and for the multinationals. This is why on 3 October Cindy Miller, President of UPS Europe, said “it’s time to step up efforts to bring SMEs into the fold [in the TTIP negotiations]”.

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

EU/SMEs: Positive and negative signs for SMEs in 2013

On 3 October, the European Commission published the main conclusions of the annual SMEs Performance Review and country-specific SBA factsheets. On one hand, during the year of 2013, in most Member States, economic conditions for SMEs remained challenging. And on the other hand, there is an observation of a thin recovery for SMEs which is for the most part driven by medium enterprises and micro-firms. The Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship stated that the EU and the Member States should keep doing efforts to improve the business climate. The SMEs Performance Review analyses the progress made by European countries in implementing the SBA. The SBA aims to improve the administrative and legal environment in order to allow enterprises to reach their full potential to create jobs and growth.

To read more about the Annual Report on European SMES, please click [here](#).

EU/TTIP: TTIP negotiating mandate made public

On 9 October, the Council of the EU published the negotiation directives for TTIP. In the mandate is explained what the scope of TTIP should be, what the objectives and provisions are and what the institutional framework is. These negotiation directives were issued by the Council in June 2013 and have been the basis of the talks since.

The disclosure of the document comes after fierce criticism about the lack of transparency in the TTIP negotiations. Lately some MEPS, the EU Ombudsman and outgoing Trade Commissioner Karel de Gucht called for the publication of the mandate, because the secrecy of the document resulted in too much criticism. Commissioner de Gucht expressed his relief in a press release on the same day: “I’m delighted EU governments have chosen today to make the TTIP negotiating mandate public. It further underlines our commitment to transparency as we pursue the negotiations”

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

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

EU/Patent cost: Reexamining European patent costs

What is the right amount that will entice European entrepreneurs to grant a patent for their invention? Within the European Patent Office (EPO), examiners are currently rethinking the price of patents as part of a new strategy to support intellectual property. As a consequence of the issues associated with copyright in the digital economy, the EPO has been forced to envision and implement a new safety measures for intellectual property. Of course, high patent prices can deter SMEs owners from filing their ideas to the patent office, so business associations should advocate for low patent

ESBA Bulletin of 14 October 2014 – Volume 16 – Issue 13

costs. There are different views regarding patent prices, but EPO is expected to decide on the right course of action by early 2015.

To learn more about patents costs and regulation, please click [here](#).

EU/SMEs: Shaping European military defense with SME innovation

On 10 October, Ferdinando Nelli Feroci gave a speech about the different ways that Small and medium sized enterprises bolster and sustain the European Defence Technological and Industrial Base. From the transportation of armored fighting vehicles to the development of defense systems, SMEs play a crucial role in European defense technology. Feroci acknowledged some ways that would make it easier for SMEs to be more involved in defense technology. Because SMEs are well known for their flexibility and capacity to innovate, The European Defence Technological and Industrial Base (EDTIB) was created by The European Defence Agency (EDA) as strategy for SMEs to participate in defense services. To be sure, SMEs determine the European defense industrial landscape.

To learn more the different ways that SMEs develop and support military technology and defense, please click [here](#).

EU/New Commission: Juncker required to reshuffle his college of Commissioners

On 10 October, the Slovenian Prime Minister nominated Violeta Bulc as the new Commissioner designate for Slovenia, after Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) had rejected Alenka Bratušek earlier on Wednesday. Bulc is in Brussels today meeting with MEPs and the country's current Commissioner. She is expected to have her formal interview with President-elect Juncker on 14 October. Then he will have to decide whether to accept Bulc and if so which portfolio to give to her. Due to lack of experience in the political field, she is not expected to receive the Vice-president position of the energy union which means there will most likely be several shuffles in the Commission college. Several people have been mentioned that could take over the energy union position: Maroš Šefčovič, Günther Oettinger or Kristalina Georgieva. In any case, more parliamentary hearings will be necessary and the starting date of the new Commission will most likely be delayed.

PUBLICATIONS

EU/Eurostat: 'Eurostat regional yearbook 2014'

On 6 October, Eurostat published its 2014 regional yearbook. This yearbook gives statistical information about the impact of political decisions across the regions of the EU Member States, as well as the regions of EFTA and candidate countries. It also focuses on environment, land cover and land use, European cities, and regional competitiveness.

To download the yearbook, please click [here](#).

EU/Bruegel: 'So far and yet so close: should the ECB care about inflation differentials?'

On 22 of September, Bruegel issued a publication about the differences in inflation rates across regions of the EU monetary union. In this publication, it is argued that inflation differentials are possible without deflation in some parts of the euro area. The new macro prudential policy tools would however be unlikely to address deflation.

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

ESBA Bulletin of 14 October 2014 – Volume 16 – Issue 13

EU/Bruegel: ‘The G20 financial reform agenda’

On 20 September, Bruegel has issued a publication on the contribution of the G20 declaration, at the London and Pittsburgh summits five years ago, to make global finance more stable. According to this publication, the reforms adopted as a result of these summits were not effective.

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

EU/ECDPM: ‘Development: Setting up a One-Stop-Shop?’

On the 1st of October, the ECDPM published a brief note on the European Commission’s new Communication engaging the private sector for development. The publication questions the added-value of this EU approach, giving the growing range of existing Member States activities with the private sector.

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

EU/EPC: ‘Challenge Europe Issue 22 - Challenges and new beginnings: Priorities for the EU's new leadership’

On 30 September, the EPC has released a study on the priorities for the EU’s new leadership. The study is focused on the analysis of internal and external challenges related to social, political and economic challenges that Europe is facing.

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

EU/CEPS: ‘A Financial Markets Policy for the next 5 years’

On the 1st October, the CEPS has released a study on the financial markets policy. The CEPS also comments on the difficulty to access to finance, especially for SMEs.

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

CONSULTATIONS

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](#).

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](#).

ESBA Bulletin of 14 October 2014 – Volume 16 – Issue 13

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](#).

Public consultation on cross-border mergers and divisions

DEADLINE: 01/12/2014

The objective of the consultation is to collect information, which would allow the Commission to assess the functioning of the existing EU legal framework for cross-border operations of companies and any potential need for changes in the current rules.

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

Public consultation on a strong European policy to support Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs 2015-2020 - Public consultation on the Small Business Act (SBA)

DEADLINE: 15/12/2014

The aim of this public consultation is to gather feed-back and ideas on how the Small Business Act for Europe should be revised to continue a strong European policy to support Small and Medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and entrepreneurs in 2015-2020.

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

COMING-UP

EU Institutions: important dates

- 14 October: Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Brussels)
- 16 October: European Parliament Committee Meetings (Brussels)
- 20 October: European Parliament Committee Meetings (Strasbourg)
- 20 October: European Parliament Plenary Session (Strasbourg)
- 21 October: General Affairs Council (Luxembourg)
- 23 October: European Council, Political Meetings (Brussels)
- 28 October: Environment Council (Luxembourg)

Other SME-related events

NEW

Conference utilizing opportunities, crossing boundaries, developing markets- SMEs in international business

04/11/2014

Berlin

It is a half day conference with keynote, interviews and panel discussions showing good practices and support services for SMEs on their way to new markets.

To find out more about this event & register, please click [here](#).

New

EU2020 and Industrial competitiveness: SMEs in the Surface Engineering Sector

13/11/2014

Brussels

ESBA Bulletin of 14 October 2014 – Volume 16 – Issue 13

On the occasion of the European SME Week 2014 MEP Paul Rübiger and the Surface Engineering Association have the pleasure to invite you to a breakfast briefing on “EU 2020 and Industrial Competitiveness: SMEs in the Surface Engineering Sector”.

To find out more about this event & register, please click [here](#).

NEW

Business in Horizon 2020: the SME Instrument in detail

12/11/2014 - 13/11/2014

Brussels

This event is an opportunity for your SME to learn how to effectively prepare top quality proposals under Horizon 2020's SME Instrument, both for Phase 1 and Phase 2, and get ready to thrive through commercialization of your product/technology/process/service in Phase 3.

To find out more about this event & register, please click [here](#).