



HEADLINES

ESBA Annual Event 5 May 2010: “Digital Agenda for Europe: an SME perspective”

The completion of the EU Single Market is intrinsically connected to the digitalization of the EU business environment, leading to economic growth and wealth creation. The Digital Agenda for Europe, a ‘flagship initiative’ under the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, aims at exploiting the potential of Information and Telecommunication Technologies (ICT) as a major enabling technology for moving to a low-carbon, knowledge-based and competitive economy.

Last month, the European Parliament adopted a report by MEP Pilar Del Castillo Vera, presenting recommendations towards the European Commission for defining a Digital Agenda for Europe. The report makes it abundantly clear that access, capacities, and e-skills for SMEs are an absolute necessity to make the Digital Agenda a success.

The 2010 ESBA Event will offer a platform for EU policy-makers and stakeholders to discuss key challenges and opportunities for SMEs in order to reap the full potential of the Digital Agenda for Europe. During the event, ESBA will present the institutions with the “SME Digital Agenda Manifesto - fundamental small business recommendations to the European Institutions on the Digital Agenda for Europe”.

To register for the ESBA Annual Event, please click [here](#).

IN BRIEF

EU/Commission: European Commission presents its Work Programme for 2010

On 31 March, the new European Commission adopted its first Work Programme, setting out its ambitions and commitments for 2010 and beyond. Under the title, “Time to act”, the Commission sets out a roadmap to lead Europe out of the crisis. In total, the Commission lists 34 strategic initiatives on which it aims to deliver in 2010, and also refers to 280 other major proposals which are under consideration. For this year, among other initiatives, the Commission is planning a revision of the Capital Requirements Directive, a series of initiatives to promote labour mobility and facilitate economic transitions, a relaunch of the Single Market, and a revision of the Working Time Directive.

To read the Commission’s Work Programme for 2010, please click [here](#).

EU/Better Regulation: European Parliament set to vote on e-invoicing

On 22 April, the European Parliament was due to vote on a Commission proposal to amend the current regulations on VAT invoicing. However, the vote has been postponed until the 5 or 6 May. The proposal focuses on removing legal obstacles to the use of e-invoicing by ensuring that paper and electronic invoices are treated identically around Europe. The Council has already signaled that it is likely to adopt the proposal, after the Parliament gives its opinion. According to Commission estimates, businesses in the EU could save up to 18 billion EUR if barriers to the use of e-invoicing are eliminated.

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To read the original Commission proposal, please click [here](#).

To read the draft report on this proposal from the Parliament's Committee on Economic and Monetary Affairs, please click [here](#).

ESBA: ESBA meets with U.S. Delegation

On 9 April, ESBA received a delegation of representatives from the United States International Trade Commission (USITC) to discuss the internationalization of European SMEs. ESBA pointed to the challenges many small businesses face when engaging in export activities. Legal fragmentation, lack of information provision, language differences and lack of internal resources form clear obstacles for SMEs engaging in cross-border trade. At the same time, the meeting allowed for an exchange of views on the motives for internationalization in the EU. The meeting's findings contribute to a USITC comparative study on the internationalization of European and US small businesses.

To learn more about the United States International Trade Commission, please click [here](#).

EU/Innovation Policy: The Commission presents a new vision

In its 2010 Legislative Work Programme, published on 31 March, the Commission bears reference to "a European plan for research and innovation", which is expected to be published in the third quarter of this year. Among other policies, this document will outline a plan for developing an indicator to track innovation. It will also set forth ideas for improving the institutional environment for research and innovation in Europe. In this context, it is notable that the European Council has already agreed to increase R&D spending from 1.9 to 3% of GDP, as one of five key EU headline targets under the 'Europe 2020' Strategy.

To read more about the development of the EU's innovation strategy, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: "Consumer Markets Scoreboard"

The European Commission Consumer Markets Scoreboard assesses the extent to which the internal market satisfies consumers. It also examines the availability of choice in goods and services and the competitiveness of prices. The scoreboard concludes that barriers to cross-border commerce are still prevalent.

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

European Commission: "Attitudes Towards Cross-Border Sales and Consumer Protection"

The European Commission has published a Flash Eurobarometer Report, presenting the findings of interviews conducted with a sample of 25,000 EU citizens. The report seeks to determine consumers' attitudes on topics such as distance shopping, cross-border purchases, consumer protection, product safety and financial products.

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

European Commission: "Towards Greater Cooperation and Coherence in Entrepreneurship Education"

The Commission DG for Enterprise and Industry has published a final report of the High Level Reflection Panel on Entrepreneurship Education. The report features an analysis of current

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developments in this field, presents a list of good practices in entrepreneurship education, and sets out a series of suggestions for action at EU level.

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

European Commission: “Removing Tax Obstacles to Venture Capital Investments”

On 26 April 2010, the European Commission will publish a report on eliminating tax barriers to cross-border venture capital investments. The report was prepared by the Venture Capital Tax Expert Group, which advises the Commission on this issue.

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

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Consultation on universal service principles in e-communication

Closes 7 May 2010

The European Commission DG for Information Society and Media has launched a consultation on universal service principles in digital communication. The consultation features a questionnaire to assess stakeholders' views on e-inclusion, broadband provision, and financing mechanisms for universal service.

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

ONGOING:

Consultation: Review of the European Standardization System

Closes: 21 May 2010

The European Commission has issued a public consultation to assess stakeholders' opinions on a review of the European Standardization System (ESS). While standardization in Europe is voluntary and overseen by independent organizations, the Commission is considering additional reforms to bolster the role of the ESS in this process. The consultation is open to citizens, organizations and public authorities.

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

Consultation on the European Company Statute (SE)

Closes: 23 May 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the European Company Statute, also known as the 'Societas Europaea' (SE). The SE allows businesses to register as a single company and operate under a unified set of Community rules when working cross-border within the EU. It frees them from the costs of setting up subsidiaries and constantly adjusting to national legal frameworks. The consultation asks stakeholders to comment on the results of a recent external study on the functioning of the SE.

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

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Online consultation on administrative burdens reduction

Ongoing

The European Commission has launched an online consultation on the reduction of administrative burdens. Inspired by examples of Best Practice in Belgium and the Netherlands, the consultation invites entrepreneurs to identify unnecessary red tape in order to help the EU improve the quality of its legislation. The consultation is part of the Action Programme to reduce admin burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% in 2012.

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

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important dates

19-22 April 2010 – European Parliament Committee Meetings

19-22 April 2010 – European Parliament Plenary Session

20 April 2010 – Meeting of the College of Commissioners

26-29 April 2010 – European Parliament Committee Meetings

27 April 2010 – Meeting of the College of Commissioners

27 April 2010 – Presentation of the European Commission Draft Budget for 2011

Other SME related events

20 April 2010 – Press Conference: Competition Rules in the Distribution Sector

The European Commissioner for Competition, Joaquin Almunia will deliver a press conference on a revision of the 10-year old Vertical Restraints Block Exemption Regulation (VRBER), which was aimed at reducing regulatory burdens in agreements between manufacturers and distributors. The revised rules will deal address recent developments in e-commerce.

<http://europa.eu/eucalendar/eventpopup.shtml?eventId=1257122>

20-21 April 2010 – Making Eco-Innovation Happen in Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, Bilbao, Spain

The EU's Environmental Technologies Action Plan (ETAP) is holding its 8th Eco-Innovation Forum, with a focus on exploring how SMEs can contribute to this policy area. Entrepreneurs will have a chance to discuss barriers to their development in eco-innovation, in addition to examining the role of government policy in stimulating eco-innovation among SMEs.

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoinnovation2010/1st_forum/index_en.htm

22 April 2010 – EU Finance Day for SMEs, Bucharest, Romania

Organized by the European Commission, the EU Finance Day for SMEs is part of a Europe-wide series of events, which aims to disseminate information about the financial resources that the EU can provide for SMEs. The overarching goal is to increase awareness about the different ways that SMEs can access finance.

<http://europa.eu/eucalendar/eventpopup.shtml?eventId=1252134>

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23 April 2010 – Second Annual Conference on Competition Enforcement in the Recently Acceded Member States, Brno, Czech Republic

The Competition Law Research Center in Hungary is organizing a conference on the implementation of competition law in new EU Member States. The common problems faced by these countries will be discussed, particularly regarding issues such as merger control and vertical agreements.

<http://www.eccompetitionlaw.eu/>

26 April 2010 - 2nd High Level Conference on Industrial Competitiveness, Brussels, Belgium

This conference, organized by the European Commission DG for Enterprise and Industry, will discuss the development of a post-crisis strategy for EU Industry, which should aim to maintain Europe's competitiveness in the face of global challenges. Featuring speakers such as Commission President Barroso, the conference will also be an occasion for EU policymakers to present, and receive feedback on, the Europe 2020 strategy.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/industrial-competitiveness/economic-crisis/2nd_high_level_conference_en.htm

26 April 2010 – Public hearing on further possible changes to the Capital Requirements Directive (“CRD IV”), Brussels, Belgium

The European Commission is organizing a public hearing to discuss potential amendments to the Capital Requirements Directive. The hearing will address topics such as liquidity standards, credit risk, and the definition of “capital.” All parties who participated in the consultation on the Commission working document on changes to “CRD IV” are eligible to attend this event.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/bank/regcapital/index_en.htm#2010hearingCRD4

6 May 2010 – SME Finance Forum, Brussels, Belgium

This high-level conference, organized by the European Commission, will address the difficulties SMEs face in accessing finance in the midst of the global financial crisis. Its aim is to present and discuss new ways in which SMEs could be able to acquire funds. Representatives of small and medium-sized businesses, banks, and other financial institutions will be present at the conference.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=4183&lang=en

6-7 May 2010 – “European Conference on the social economy: Doing business differently, challenges and opportunities in a global world,” Toledo, Spain

This conference, organized by the Spanish EU Presidency, aims to discuss how the Social Economy works in an EU context. In particular, the role of the Social Economy in fostering a recovery from the financial crisis and contributing to the work of the ‘Europe 2020’ Strategy will be discussed.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/entrepreneurship/sme-week/events/espana/125_1_en.htm

27-29 September 2010 – ICT 2010: Digitally Driven, Brussels, Belgium

Organized by the European Commission, and hosted by the Belgian EU Presidency, this event will bring together information technology stakeholders in Europe for three days of presentations, exhibitions and networking. Topics to be addressed include the Digital Agenda and the EU’s plans for financing ICT research. Businesses and individuals involved in ICT will also have a chance to present their work.

http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/events/ict/2010/index_en.htm
