



HEADLINE

EU/Work Programme: ESBA Welcomes Juncker Commission's Approach to Better Regulation

On 17 December, the newly formed European Commission, under Jean-Claude Juncker presented its work programme for 2015. The programme, which was approved by the college of Commissioners on Tuesday, drew negative attention of the European Parliament as it deviates strongly from the work programmes of the Barroso Commission. Whereas Barroso produced an average of 130 new initiatives per annum, Juncker only presented 23 new proposals. The opposite is true for the number of proposals up for withdrawal or modification. 80 proposals were flagged by Juncker and his First Vice-President, Frans Timmermans, whereas Barroso never exceeded 30 withdrawals. The withdrawal of certain environmental proposals in particular were met with scorn by many MEPs, arguing that the new Commission's approach is too radical and an attempt to appease right wing Eurosceptics. Frans Timmermans defended the approach by means of the principle of subsidiarity, arguing that "just because an issue is important, doesn't mean that the EU has to act on it".

ESBA Opinion

The European Small Business Alliance welcomes the new approach by the Juncker Commission, as it shows that the better regulation agenda is taken seriously. Rather than churning out endless lists of new regulations and directives, the Juncker Commission seems to focus more on getting things right first. The contrast between 23 new initiatives against 79 REFIT actions (the European Commission's Regulatory Fitness and Performance programme, aiming to make EU law simpler and to reduce regulatory costs) is a healthy one. It is the closest the EU has ever gotten to the UK's one-in-one out rule, whereby an obsolete piece of legislation must be removed before producing new legislation. ESBA supports the Commission's seemingly serious efforts towards better regulation and looks forward to contributing to this important agenda.

To download the 2015 Commission Work Programme, please click [here](#).

EU/Better Regulation: Stoiber Appointed Special Adviser on Better Regulation

On 18 December, Commission President Juncker appointed Dr Edmund Stoiber to be Special Adviser on Better Regulation. Whereas The Better Regulation agenda used to be under the Commission's Secretariat general, The Juncker Commission has raised the importance of the agenda above the levels of Barroso, by giving the portfolio to First Vice-President Frans Timmermans. Calling on the expertise of Dr. Stoiber, who has chaired the High Level Group on the Reduction of Administrative Burdens for 7 years, is a further step in strengthening this agenda. Mr. Timmermans also means to boost the competences of the Impact Assessment Board by giving it the right to review legislation retrospectively and by including external experts to the panel.

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ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the appointment of Dr. Edmund Stoiber as Special Adviser on Better Regulation. ESBA has been a strong supporter of the Stoiber Group on the Reduction of Administrative Burdens since day one, with one of ESBA's own members as an expert on the group. We are more than pleased to see the better regulation agenda being elevated to the level of Mr. Timmermans and believe that cooperation between Dr. Stoiber and Mr. Timmermans is a smart move on President Juncker's part. ESBA is also happy to see the Impact Assessment board's mandate extended to include retrospective analyses, although we advocate a fully independent Impact Assessment board, not just two external members.

To read more about the better regulation agenda, click [here](#).

EU/TRADE: UK Federation of Small Businesses in High Level TTIP discussion

Today, 18 December, ESBA's UK member, the UK Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) took part in a High Level discussion on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP). The talks, which were hosted by the UK Confederation of British Industry (CBI), were led by the British Prime Minister David Cameron as well as other European leaders and business organisations. Small firms are increasingly active in international markets so a dedicated Small Business Chapter in the final partnership agreement is of vital importance. Chief Negotiator Froman said: "whatever we do in TTIP should benefit SMEs".

A growing number of small businesses are exporting but many miss out on opportunities, as costs of tariffs and bureaucracy are often prohibitive. ESBA believes that by reducing these obstacles as well as speeding up customs procedures, the real potential of small businesses can be unleashed. An EU-US one-stop-shop will help small businesses with exporting across the Atlantic. TTIP can be a real game changer if we do this together and Think Small First.

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

IN BRIEF

EU/Maternity Leave: Possible withdrawals of the proposed maternity leave directive

On 17 December 2014, the European Commission, in its Work Programme for 2015, gave a warning for the proposed maternity leave directive. The proposal has been in a deadlock in Council since 2009 due to different points of view between the European Parliament and the Council on the duration of the maternity leave. At the Commission Work Programme' presentation, Frans Timmermans expressed the Commission' intention to withdraw and replace the current proposal with a new one if no agreement is reached within six months.

To view the list of proposed withdrawals, please click [here](#).

EU/Ombudsman: Re-election of Emily O'Reilly

On 16 December 2014, the European Parliament re-elected Emily O'Reilly as the European Ombudsman for the EP's 2014-2019 term, with 569 votes in favour out of 678 MEPs voting. Originally from Ireland, Emily O'Reilly was first elected on 3 July 2013, after her predecessor retired. The responsibilities of the European Ombudsman include investigating complaints about maladministration by EU institutions and bodies. The European Ombudsman will work to implement the new strategy "Towards 2019" with a threefold objective: to ensure relevance, to increase visibility and to achieve greater impact.

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

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EU/Entrepreneurship: Study on women entrepreneurs in Europe

On 15 December 2014, a study on women entrepreneurs in Europe, carried out at the request of the European Commission, was published. The study shows that in 2012, 29% of the entrepreneurs were women, whilst in 2008 that rate was 3% lower. Of all the female entrepreneurs in 2012, 22% were employers and 78% were solopreneurs. In the sector groups of human health and social work activities, other services, and education, there are more female than male entrepreneurs.

To read more about the encouraging women entrepreneurs, please click [here](#).

EU/TTIP: Malmström highlights advantages of trade deal for French economy

On 15 December 2014, the European Commissioner responsible for trade, Cecilia Malmström, gave a speech at the University of Paris-Dauphine on the benefits deriving from TTIP. Aiming to dissuade the scepticism of parts of the French civil society over the on-going negotiations, she remarked to shift the attention to the wide gains that the agreement would bring to the French economy. Focusing on job creation through trade, Ms Malmström emphasized how one out of ten workers in the country depended on exports, and how TTIP would unleash opportunities in France's top industries.

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

EU/Entrepreneurship: 'Entrepreneurship in education and training' conclusions adopted

On 12 December 2014, the European Council adopted its conclusions on entrepreneurship in education and training. The Council stressed that obtaining an entrepreneurial mind-set in education and training would be beneficial for citizens in their professional, as well as their private life. Entrepreneurial skills should be addressed during the whole course of the academic career. The Council also believes that businesses should closely cooperate with educational and training institutions in order to support the development of entrepreneurial skills.

To read more about education and training for entrepreneurship, please click [here](#).

EU/TTIP: Anti-TTIP campaigners meet in Brussels to outline next steps

On 10 December, opponents of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) came together in Brussels to set out a strategy for blocking the negotiations. With the momentum given by the one million signatures collected, calling for a halt to the talks, activists, Parliamentarians, trade unionists and representatives of civil society voiced their concerns in a conference hosted by MEPs. The lack of the European Parliament's authority over TTIP's negotiations, the risk of public services' privatisation and the potential lowering of labour standards featured among the most prominent worries emerging from the event.

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

PUBLICATIONS

European Policy Centre (EPC): "Juncker's Investment Plan: a New Deal for the EU?"

The European Policy Centre has formulated its considerations on the European Commission's investment plan to reignite growth in Europe. The think-tank expressed its opinion on the financial engineering of the programme and the feasibility of the leverage effect foreseen.

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

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CONSULTATIONS

Patents and Standards - A modern framework for standardisation involving intellectual property rights

DEADLINE: 31/01/2015

The objective of this consultation is, on the one hand, to gather information and views on the interplay between standardisation and intellectual property rights (IPR) such as patents. On the other hand, this consultation aims to allow stakeholders interested in standardisation involving patents, to bring to the Commission's attention their views on how the current framework governing standardisation involving patents performs and on how it should evolve to ensure that standardization remains efficient and adapted to the fast-changing economic and technological environment.

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

Public consultation on the review on the Working Time Directive (Directive 2003/88/EC)

DEADLINE: 15/03/2015

The main purpose of this consultation is to gather insights and contributions from the public in the context of the ongoing review and impact assessment process concerning the Working Time Directive and possible changes to the Directive.

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

COMING-UP

EU Institutions: important dates

- 1 January 2015: Lithuania becomes the 19th Member State to adopt the euro
- 5 January 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings
- 8 January 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings
- 9 January 2015: European Commission - Countdown to the European Year for Development-2015
- 12-15 January 2015:
 - European Parliament plenary session
 - European Parliament Committee Meetings

Other SME-related events

2015 international business conference

04-08/01/2015

Maui

At the beginning of January, the Clute Institute organises an international business conference. At this conference, research on all aspects of business will be presented.

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

ALDE New Year conference: « Relaunching the EU economy - How to overcome the investment gap? »

06/01/2015

Brussels

At the ALDE New Year conference, the revival of the European growth will be discussed. Different speakers at the ALDE conference will assess whether the current policies address the issue.

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

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Fast Track to Innovation Pilot (2015-2016) - a Free Interactive Information Event

09/01/2015

Brussels

This event will give its participants the opportunity to acquire insight into the new Fast Track to Innovation Call 2015-2016. This pilot, a bottom-up measure part of Horizon 2020, aims to promote innovative close-to-market ideas.

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

An investment plan for Europe

12/01/2015

Brussels

Jyrki Katainen, Vice President of the European Commission, will present the European Commission's new investment plan. The investment plan aims to revive the economic growth and create jobs.

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

Fostering creativity, entrepreneurship and mobility in education and training

14/01/2015

Brussels

Entrepreneurial skills need to be educated and trained. During this event, the various options of how to steer young people into business will be identified.

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