



HEADLINE

EU/Trade: ESBA Joins Common Declaration on TTIP

The European Small Business Alliance has signed a common declaration on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), alongside other major European business organisations. IN the declaration, the organisations call for greater regulatory cooperation between the EU and US as well as the removal of unnecessary barriers and tariffs. Furthermore, increased trans-atlantic investment and improved energy exports are advocated. Most importantly, the Common Declaration calls for a meaningful and trade supporting SME chapter. The co-signatories believe that a well-executed TTIP will lead to the creation of growth and jobs, as well as boosting investor confidence. A balanced and ambitious agreement will hasten the EU's economic recovery.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA has been a supporter of a well-established EU - US trade deal from the get go. A healthy and ambitious TTIP can bring many benefits and new opportunities to Europe's small businesses. The removal of barriers to trade as well as unnecessary tariffs will enhance trade flow. Most importantly however, ESBA urges the negotiators to ensure the SME Chapter will not just be a declaration of intents but to include actual commitments. The only way for the chapter to be effective is if it has teeth.

To see the common declaration, please click [here](#).

IN BRIEF

EU/Trade: TTIP - public consultation reveals general skepticism over ISDS clause

On 14 January 2015, the European Commission released the results of a public consultation on investment protection and investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) in TTIP. Speaking at a later press briefing, Trade Commissioner Malmström acknowledged the general criticism vowed by sectors of the civil society. In what has become the largest ever Commission's online consultation, she identified four main areas where improvement appears demanded by most of the participants. These revolved around the balance between protection of investors and safeguards of the governments' right to legislate, the supervision of ISDS tribunals, the relation between domestic judicial courts and ISDS and the recourse to an appellate body for reviewing the tribunals' decisions. On 13 January 2015, the Parliament's International Committee (INTA) Chairman, Mr Lange, already expressed the resistance of his committee against the investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS) mechanism. Mr Lange argues for a profound revision of the ISDS as currently conceived, further hinting at suggesting its exclusion from the deal's final provisions. Ms Malmström further expressed that, though it is difficult today to set a concrete timeline, the Commission will likely come up with a new formulation of the proposed ISDS clause in summer 2015.

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

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EU/Finance: Investment Plan for Europe - Commission presents legislative proposal for EFSI

On 13 January 2015, the European Commission adopted the legislative proposal for the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI). According to EC president Juncker, this plan will mean an important boost for the European Union's economy, as well as the creation of jobs. The European Commission counts on the political leadership of the European Parliament and the Council to get the proposal adopted. The goal is to have the Fund operational by June. The proposal consists of four main elements: EFSI, a European Investment Advisory Hub, a transparent European Project Pipeline and an EU Guarantee Fund and Effects on the EU Budget. In addition, the European Commission is working to remove further regulatory barriers to investment and strengthen the Single Market.

To read more about the 'Investment Plan for Europe', please click [here](#).

EU/Trade: Release of TTIP texts elicits support with reservations among MEPs

On 12 January 2015, the decision of the Commission to publish its textual proposals for the TTIP's talks resulted in a positive reaction of the European Parliament. Nevertheless, concerns were still present on the necessity to take further steps in the direction of transparency. MEPs' demands appeared compatible with those of the European Ombudsman, Ms O'Reilly, who listed ten measures that would largely remove opacity from the EU-US negotiations. MEPs hope that a successful quest for transparency would enable them to clear the fog from fears over TTIP's aspects, among which rules on geographical indicators and standards in GMOs.

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

EU/Finance: European Commission divides €117 million among 277 SMEs

On 12 January 2015, the European Commission divided €117 million and business coaching among selected SMEs as part of the Horizon 2020 EU Research and Innovation Programme. The 199 SMEs selected in Phase 1 will receive a grant of €50,000 to research their business ideas. The 78 SMEs selected in Phase 2 will receive a grant of up to €2,5 million, or €5 million for health projects, to develop their business plans and ideas. SMEs from Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands and France have been particularly successful in this call.

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

EU/Finance: Juncker's Investment Plan Priority for Latvian Presidency

On 9 January 2015, the European Commission met with Latvian Prime Minister Straujuma to kick off the Latvian presidency of the Council. Due to the importance of supporting business, Latvia will focus on introducing the €315bn investment plan of the European Commission during its mandate as president of the Council. The legislative text on the European Commission investment plan will be adopted in Strasbourg on 15 January 2015. Other important issues will be the digital agenda and the reconciliation of relations between different (European) regions. Mr Juncker and Ms Straujuma also discussed how to improve combating terrorism, in the light of the tragic happenings in Paris last week.

To read more about the 'Investment Plan for Europe', please click [here](#).

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EU/Trade: TTIP - European Commission provides first tangible results of transparency initiative

On 7 January 2015, in line with the commitments undertaken one month ago, the European Commission published legal texts in the frame of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) under discussion with the US. The measure marked the first time ever that the EU decides to make public official texts of such nature, amid calls for greater transparency in the bilateral agreement's negotiations. The decision involved eight textual proposals tabled to the US side, encompassing regulatory convergence and international rules issues. It also introduced three new position papers, outlining the EU's approach in specific industries and sectors. A reader's guide and a set of factsheets will help adding clarity to the textual proposals described.

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

EU/Data protection: EP Rapporteur warns for General Data Protection Regulation delay till 2016

On 7 January 2015, Mr Jan Phillip Albrecht, Vice-chairman of the European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, warned for a delay of the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) till 2016 instead of the scheduled mid-2015. The proposed GDPR includes measures to protect citizens' data and to restrict the use of these data. However, the Parliament and the EU Member States, specifically France, Germany and the United Kingdom, do not agree on the GDPR. While the Parliament and the European Commission propose a strict regulation and sanctions, the EU Member States prefer more leeway.

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

PUBLICATIONS

CEPS: Britain's future in Europe

On 15 March 2015, CEPS will publish a book on Britain's future in Europe. In 2015, general elections will be held in the United Kingdom and if the Conservative party wins, David Cameron promised to have a referendum about Britain's future in the EU before 2017.

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

CEPS: New voting system in the Council

On 19 December 2014, CEPS published a text on the double majority voting system on qualified majority voting. This system entered into force on 1 November 2014. However, no new balance of power will be established since member states still have the possibility to invoke the Nice rules until April 2014.

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

CEPS: agriculture and food in TTIP talks

On 19 December 2014, CEPS wrote a paper on the possible outcome for the agriculture and food sector of the TTIP talks. CEPS argued that it is worthwhile to make the extra effort to secure a constructive and imaginative agreement on agriculture and food regulations.

To access 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

19 January 2015: Foreign Affairs Council
19-22 January 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings
26 January 2015: Agriculture and Fisheries Council
26-27 January 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings
27 January 2015: Economic and Financial Affairs Council
28 January 2015: European Parliament plenary session
29 January 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings

Other SME-related events

Financial instruments 2014-2020 under European Structural Investment Funds (ESIF)

19-20/01/2015

Brussels

The aim of this conference is to give a better understanding of how financial instruments can help in their efforts to deliver ESIF 2014-2020 objectives and on how implement these financial instruments.

To have more information about this event, please click [here](#).

Media diversity in the Digital Age

20/01/2015

Brussels

The 2015 Annual Conference of the Future Media Lab. will be held in Brussels on 20 January 2015. The subject of the conference relates to media diversity and how it is impacted by changing media consumption patterns, technological disruptions and business innovation.

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

Conference on Points of Single Contact: working towards a single digital gateway for Europe

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20/01/2015

Brussels

The subject of this conference, organised by the European Commission, is to debate on the state of play and possible future for the Points of Single Contact. One of the principle asset of the PSC is that they simplify the setting up and expansion of businesses in the Single Market. During the conference, the main focus will be on SMEs.

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

Latvia's EU Presidency: a common EU agenda?

21/01/2015

Brussels

The aim of this conference, which will be hosted by European Voice, consists of discussing the programme, priorities and preoccupations of Latvia's presidency of the Council of the EU.

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

Payments: Cornerstone of the digital economy

28/01/15

Brussels

The EuropeanVoice will host a conference on digital economy. The purpose of the debate is to assess the state of the electronic payments sector, the degree of innovation in the sector and the pace of development of new services and products.

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

5th edition of the Ethics in Finance - Robin Cosgrove Prize

28/01/2015

Brussels

On 28 January 2015, MEP Othmar Karas and MEP Kay Swinburne, in collaboration with ACCA will welcome the Brussels launch of 5th edition of the Robin Cosgrove Prize, at the European Parliament. The Robin Cosgrove Prize' philosophy consists of implementing ideas on how to promote trust and ethical behaviour in all aspects of the finance sector. On this occasion, the Prize of the best Innovative Ideas for Ethics in Finance will be awarded.

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

Intellectual Property Infrastructure for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises: the business' perspective

29/01/2015

Milan

The purpose of this conference is to ensure that EU institutions are supporting policies that improve access for SMEs to the intellectual property rights (IPRs) system. A debate will be held among stakeholders and experts on current issues, in order to raise awareness of IPRs and to better understand the concerns of SMEs.

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