



HEADLINE

EU/Better Regulation: Timmermans firm on benefits of EU better regulation policy

On 4 February 2015, the First Vice-President of the European Commission, Mr Frans Timmermans, stressed the ambitions of the better regulation agenda in a public hearing held by the European Parliament's Greens/EFA Group. Mr Timmermans remarked that the purpose of better regulation actions is to improve the quality of EU legislation, thus demystifying concerns over a deregulatory drive. MEPs at the event questioned the retraction of the proposal on circular economy, to which the First Vice-President answered that its withdrawal did not reflect the need for policy goals to be obtained, but rather the need to find more appropriate instruments to meet such goals. Earlier in the week, Mr Timmermans underlined the cultural shift in designing a more streamlined and conscious Commission Work Programme. He further set out the way ahead, envisaging means for EU contribution alternative to legislation as well as actions for more quality and transparency in triologue discussions and secondary legislation.

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 80 withdrawals and 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

IN BRIEF

EU/Trade: TTIP negotiating text on regulatory cooperation finds uneven support

On 10 February 2015, the text of the EU proposal to the US on the regulatory cooperation chapter was published by the European Commission. Subject of discussions in the Eighth Round of negotiations, the proposal gives prominence to the creation of a so-called Regulatory Cooperation Body. The latter will aim to steer regulatory compatibility in a range of sectors without exerting formal policy-making powers. While business representatives welcomed the potential of this body in tackling barriers to trade, NGOs criticized it amid fears over regulatory cooperation being a smokescreen for lower environmental and social standards. Answering to these concerns, the Commission affirmed that regulatory cooperation in TTIP will leave untouched the level of public protection across the EU.

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

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EU/Trade: EU and US determined to progress on TTIP

On 6 February 2015, the Eighth round of negotiation talks on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) has been concluded. In a final statement after the talks, both EU and US claimed to be working hard on the free trade deal despite growing public skepticism and reservations by the Member States. The negotiators acknowledged the difficulties in overcoming this skepticism, but are determined to intensify the trade talks and strive towards more concrete progress. Two more rounds of negotiations are planned for the first half of 2015, with the Ninth round scheduled for April.

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

EU/Budget: Commission's plan to increase EU's own resources remains problematic

On 5 February 2015, the High Level Group on the EU's own resources presented its preliminary conclusions on the reform of the budget's own resources to the European Parliament. The proposal was tabled in June 2011 to tackle the biggest weakness of the EU budget, namely the lack of autonomy. The majority of the budget comes from the Member States, which makes budget negotiations even more difficult. Among the suggestions to increase the EU's own resources are a tax on financial transactions and an EU wide VAT. However, the change requires a unanimous vote in the Council, which calls for a package of measures that each Member State can adopt.

To read more about the EU's own resources, please click [here](#).

EU/UK: UK business leaders support European Union membership

On 4 February 2015, research firm Ipsos-Mori published the results of a poll that surveyed more than one hundred British executive directors and chairmen. The results demonstrated that half of the respondents were content about EU membership, while the other half preferred reforms in the UK-EU relationship. Only one percent desired to end the UK's EU membership. The respondents answered that they benefited from free cross-border trade and free movement across borders (recruitment). The volume of and changes in regulations were mentioned as major obstacles.

To see all results of the poll, please click [here](#).

EU/TTIP: TTIP and SMEs, the Swedish community perspective

On 3 February 2015, CEO of the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise, Carola Lemne, disclosed the results of a survey amongst 700 SMEs showing that trade with the US is hampered most by the current legal uncertainty, unequal requirements, double bureaucracy and tariffs. Lemne is convinced that the ongoing negotiations on TTIP have the potential to reduce these obstacles, enhancing trade from both sides of the Atlantic without the need for subsidies.

To learn more about the benefits of TTIP, please click [here](#).

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EU/Investment Plan: EIB approves EUR 4.8 billion loans supporting investment by SMEs

In the first week of February 2015, the Board of the European Investment Bank (EIB) approved new loans, which aimed at supporting investment by European SMEs and mid-cap companies. These loans will amount to EUR 4.8 billion while the total of loans approved by the Board of Directors for investment in Europe equals EUR 5.8 billion. On 17 February 2015, the EIB's Board of Governors and Europe's finance ministers will discuss the EIB's role in managing the European Fund for Strategic Investments to be implemented under the Investment plan for Europe.

To learn more about the Investment Plan, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Friends of Europe: The competitiveness of Europe is the priority

On 10 February 2015, Friends of Europe published an article of the European Economic and Social Committee's member Mr De Buck on the prospects of the European economy. Amid concerns over the EU's economic role in the international stage, Mr Duck outlines a series of actions, among which the approval of TTIP and a truly European energy policy, crucial to re-launch the competitiveness of the EU industry.

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

Bruegel: The four unions “PIE” on the Monetary Union “CHERRY”

On 9 February, Bruegel published a paper illustrating the degree of European integration over the course of approximately the last fifty years. Drawing from a monthly dataset, the authors identify periods of stagnation and dynamism in the European project, underpinning the EMU's institutional uniqueness with different examples.

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

CEPS: Public Procurement in the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Negotiations

On 6 February, CEPS published a paper on the state-of-the-art of public procurement provisions between the EU and US. In the context of a chapter on government procurement currently discussed in the TTIP talks, the authors further propose ways forward to expand procurement commitments between the two negotiating sides.

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

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CONSULTATIONS

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](#).

REACH Authorisation - Consultation on applications for low volumes and on extension of transitional arrangements for uses in legacy spare parts

DEADLINE: 30/04/2015

Stakeholders are invited to provide comments and information about the use of substances in low volumes as well as the use of substances in legacy spare parts.

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

COMING-UP

EU Institutions: important dates

16 February 2015: Eurogroup Meeting

17 February 2015: Economic and Financial Affairs Council Meeting

23-24 February 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings

24 February 2015: EESC's External Relations Meeting

25 February 2015: EESC's Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship Meeting

25 February 2015: European Parliament Plenary Session

25 February 2015: European Commission presents Energy Union Strategy

26 February 2015: European Parliament Committee Meetings

Other SME-related events

Social Impact Investing and its Role in Future Social Public/Private Investments: Continuing Dialogue

16/02/2015

Brussels

The Social Platform hosts a conference on 16 February 2015 about social investment and impact investment. Two panels will discuss approaches and objectives to social and impact investment.

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

Digital for Europe Stakeholder Forum

24/02/2015

Brussels

The European Commission organises a stakeholder forum on 24 February 2015, consisting of four workshops on the Digital Single Market, consumer protection, digital technology and copyright and smart industry.

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

Monthly Forum: Corporate Social Responsibility and Trade Unions

24/02/2015

Brussels

The European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) will host a forum on 24 February 2015 on corporate social responsibility and trade unions. The forum will discuss the effects of corporate social responsibility on trade unions.

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

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Societas Unius Personae (SUP): what's in it for SMEs?

25/02/2015

Brussels

UEAPME, ACCA and BUSINESSEUROPE organise a conference on 25 February 2015 about the European Commission's proposal on single-member private limited liability companies. During the conference the possibilities of the directive for SMEs will be discussed.

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

SMEs in the Digital Single Market: Creating Growth in Europe

26/02/2015

Brussels

Google, Digital Europe and the Lisbon Council host an event on 26 February 2015 to demonstrate the importance of the Digital Single Market for SMEs. Small businesses across Europe will discuss their vision on completing the Digital Single Market.

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