



### HEADLINE

#### EU/Better Regulation: ESBA Meets First Vice-President Frans Timmermans

On 30 March 2015, an ESBA delegation met with the European Commission First Vice President, Mr Frans Timmermans at his office in the Berlaymont building. As President Juncker's number two, Mr Timmermans has been given the Better Regulation portfolio, a dossier which is of great importance to ESBA's members and SMEs in general. Mr Juncker and Mr Timmermans have already started to implement the principles of Better Regulation by tabling no more than 23 new initiatives, against 79 REFIT actions (the Commission's regulatory fitness check) and 80 withdrawals of obsolete existing proposals. Throughout his work, Mr Timmermans will base his decisions on the principles of proportionality and subsidiarity. Topics of discussions were better law-making, reducing administrative burdens for SMEs and more specific topics such as TTIP and the role of better regulation in this mammoth dossier.

### ESBA OPINION

The European Small Business Alliance is pleased with the fact that the Better Regulation agenda has been elevated to the level of the First Vice President. ESBA has long advocated the importance of this important dossier and has been a strong proponent of regulatory fitness checks, thorough and independent impact assessments and the inclusion of a structural SME test in these assessments. ESBA also supports the Commission's decision to drastically reduce new initiatives in the work programme. It is important that we get things right first, before churning our new legislation. The Institutions have long sought to solve problems by means of proposing new legislation. The Commission's new approach seems to break with this tradition, which is very much welcomed by ESBA and its members. ESBA supports Mr Timmermans' lines on better regulation and urges the European Parliament to take a similar approach. New legislation is not always the answer; let's first focus on improving what we already have and eliminating what we no longer need.

### IN BRIEF

#### EU/Trade: EU leaders press for highlighting TTIP's gains

On 20 March 2015, a call for better promotion of the advantages of the EU-US planned trade deal was endorsed by the EU Heads of State and Government. Gathered at the European Council summit of 19 and 20 March, Member States' 28 leaders addressed the TTIP's negotiations and reiterated the need to seal the deal by the end of the year. The conclusions of the meeting invite negotiators to take bigger efforts in raising awareness on the benefits of the agreement and intensifying engagement and transparency vis-à-vis civil society. The pledges were directed to national governments and the Commission.

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

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### **EU/Industry: European standards will support the single market and SMEs**

On 20 March 2015, a roundtable with standardisation stakeholders concluded that European standards play a crucial role in the single market and consumer protection. Additionally, standards enable SMEs to enter new markets across national borders and will allow them to share new technical knowledge and compete with larger companies. Standardisation thus poses potential to boost European industrial competitiveness, consumer trust and to reduce costs. The issue of standardisation has become very topical in the light of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), which has raised concerns about lowering European standards to match American standards.

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

### **EU/Finance: A new model to enable access to finance for farmers**

On 23 March 2015, the European Commission and the European Investment Bank (EIB) presented a new model for agriculture financing, namely the model guarantee instrument for agriculture. This model has the objective to help farmers and rural enterprises to get easy access to credit. The Member States and regions will have the possibility to shape and use this model in order to create new economic instruments, financed by their rural development programmes and under the supervision of the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), in order to provide more economic support to farmers. Additionally, this instrument is complemented with EIB assistance for Member States and regions in both the practice and comprehension of the economic instrument.

To read more about rural development programmes, please click [here](#).

### **EU/Trade: US academics hail side benefits of TTIP**

On 18 March 2015, Messrs. Hamilton and Quinlan, respectively Director and Senior Fellow at the Johns Hopkins University Center for Transatlantic Relations, published an article on the wider benefits of the EU-US agreement under negotiations. While reckoning the gains deriving from enhanced transatlantic trade, the two academics sketch out a series of further spill-over effects that would bring additional benefits to the two negotiating sides. Among these are the strengthening of political and human rights ties between the EU and the US and the reinforcement of their shared leadership in setting top labour and environmental standards in trade agreements. Moreover, they welcome TTIP as a tool to better relate to emerging markets.

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

### **EU/Trade: Persisting trade and investment barriers despite prospects of global recovery**

On 19 March 2015, the fifth edition of the Trade and Investment Barriers Report was published. The report established the indispensability to identify barriers to trade, as the report found that many of its strategic economic partners continue to maintain them. Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström expressed her disappointment with the persistence of barriers to trade and investment, for example requirements to use only locally-produced goods or the decision to base a company in a specific conditions to obtain a certain advantage. Malmström stated that it is time to get rid of these barriers and that the European Commission is ready to use a combination of different tools of advocacy and policy in the framework of access to European markets.

To read the EU's Trade and Investment Barriers Report, please click [here](#).

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### **EU/Investment: European Court of Auditors requests auditing of EFSI**

On 12 March 2015, the European Court of Auditors (ECA) published its position on the Investment Plan. The main issue raised by the ECA is the lack of control and auditing of the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI). The ECA argues that EFSI lacks concrete information on how investment projects will be selected, monitored and assessed and who will audit these issues. Furthermore, the ECA feels limited in its audit rights because it can only audit EU guarantees and payments taken out of the budget. The ECA therefore requests a clear mandate to control EFSI and its operations.

To read the European Court of Auditor's opinion, please click [here](#).

### **PUBLICATIONS**

#### **Bruegel: The long road towards the European single market**

On 16 March 2016, Bruegel published a report on the European single market. The report concludes that the expected impact of the single market, i.e. increased welfare, growth and competitiveness, are not fully realised and examines the underlying causes.

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

#### **CEPS: Country adjustment to a 'sudden stop': Does the euro make a difference?**

On 16 March 2015, the Centre for European Policy Studies published an article on the sudden stop in economic growth after the outbreak of the global financial crisis. The main finding of the article is that countries outside EMU were quicker to adjust to the crisis than countries inside EMU.

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

#### **ECA: EU Youth Guarantee: first steps taken but implementation risks ahead**

On 24 March 2015, the European Court of Auditors published its report on the Youth Guarantee. The Youth Guarantee aims to give all young Europeans under 25 a good quality job within four months of becoming unemployed. The conclusion of the report is that it is unclear whether the initiative has provide any young persons with a job.

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

### **CONSULTATIONS**

#### **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](#).

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### **Public consultation on Building a Capital Markets Union**

DEADLINE: 13/05/2015

The purpose of the Green Paper is to consult all interested parties on the Commission's overall approach to putting in place the building blocks for CMU by 2019, the underlying economic rationale of CMU, and on possible measures which could be taken to achieve this objective.

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

### **Public consultation on the Review of the Prospectus Directive**

DEADLINE: 13/05/2015

The purpose of the consultation is to gather views on the functioning of the Prospectus Directive and the implementing legislation. The consultation covers a very broad range of issues, including the possibility to make the regime more appropriate for small and medium-sized enterprises and companies with reduced market capitalisation.

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

### **Public consultation on Securitisation**

DEADLINE: 13/05/2015

This consultation aims to gather information and views from stakeholders on the current functioning of European securitisation markets and how the EU legal framework can be improved to create a sustainable market for high-quality securitisation.

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

### **Consultation on the ex-post evaluation of the 7th Framework Programme**

DEADLINE: 22/05/2015

This consultation has been set-up in order to provide the High Level Expert Group on the ex-post evaluation of 7th Framework Programme (FP7) with a range of opinion and views about the functioning, achievements, and impacts of FP7. It thus allows for contributions both from those with direct experience with the FP7 as well as groups or individuals who wish to give their views. Its results will be made publicly available and be taken into account in the Commission Communication reacting to the Evaluation Report of the High Level Expert Group.

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

### **Public consultation on a Review of customs legislation on controls of cash entering or leaving the EU**

DEADLINE: 01/06/2015

The objective of this consultation is to gain stakeholder and public input regarding a review of Regulation 1889/2005 “on controls of cash entering or leaving the Community”. In order to judge the desirability of potential actions and policy options and to obtain new insights, the Commission Services would like to receive the views of stakeholders on the possible action to be taken to address the identified gaps.

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

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### COMING-UP

#### EU Institutions: important dates

1 April	Council Working Parties Meetings
1 April	European Parliament Committee Meetings
1 April	Coreper I and II Meeting
7 April	Council Working Parties Meetings
8 April	Council Working Parties Meetings
9 April	Council Working Parties Meetings

#### Other SME-related events

##### **Rural Development Programmes - Process and Aspirations**

**13/04/2015**

Brussels

The European Economic and Social Committee organises a public hearing on the European rural development programmes. During the hearing, experts and civil society representatives will review the strategic direction of the programmes and evaluate their contribution to revitalising rural areas.

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

##### **Setting the agenda for a sustainable future - the road to the UN summit on the Post-2015 agenda**

**14/04/2015**

Brussels

The European Economic and Social Committee hosts a public event on the post-2015 agenda for sustainable development. A panel of political decision-makers and civil society representatives will discuss the agenda that will be adopted in September of this year.

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

##### **The Only Way is App**

**22/04/2015**

Brussels

The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group (ALDE) organises a conference on the digital economy. A panel of stakeholders and policy makers will discuss how growth and job creation can be boosted in the new 'app economy'. Furthermore, they will discuss how to increase attractiveness of innovative companies in the European Union.

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