



HEADLINES

EU/Working Time: Parliament prepares to vote on working time for road transport

On 15 June, the European Parliament will have an important decision to make on whether or not to exclude self-employed truck drivers from a directive which regulates working hours in the transport sector. The issue has been heavily debated in the European Parliament as claims that the exclusion of self-employed would endanger EU road safety have caused a division amongst MEPs.

On the other hand, including independent self-employed drivers in the directive would set a precedent as it would be the first time for the EU to regulate self-employed in the organisation of their working hours.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA strongly urges MEPs to support the Commission proposal to exclude self-employed drivers from the directive. The directive, limiting working hours in the transport sector, is designed to guarantee social protection for employees against abuse by their employers. Self-employed drivers are not employees and neither want nor need this protection. On the contrary, it is essential for self-employed drivers to be able to organize their own working time in order to keep their businesses running, especially in the current economic situation. The argument that exclusion would lead to excessively long hours on the road is unjustified since a 2006 regulation sets clear rules and restrictions regarding driving and resting times, limiting weekly driving time to a maximum of 52 hours for all drivers.

It is vital for the economic recovery of the European Union to promote and stimulate entrepreneurship. Restricting the working hours of the self-employed cannot be justified and should be avoided. Therefore the European Small Business Alliance calls on MEPs to avoid setting a dangerous precedent and to vote for entrepreneurship by supporting the Commission's proposal.

To read ESBA's position paper, please click [here](#)

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

IN BRIEF

EU/Education: Commission aims to reform vocational education and training

On 9 June, the European Commission released a communication titled, "A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 Strategy." This document lays out a blueprint for reforming vocational education and training (VET) systems, so that they can better contribute to the functioning of the modern economy. The Commission's plans include promoting life-long access to VET, improving the quality of training, fostering creativity and entrepreneurship within VET systems, and ensuring that students have a chance to travel. This communication will be closely connected to the 'Youth on the Move' Europe2020 flagship initiative.

To read the full text of the Commission communication, please click [here](#).

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EU/Council: Economic & Financial Affairs Council addresses Europe2020 Strategy, VAT fraud

On 8 June, the Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) Council met to discuss a variety of major policy concerns. The Council reached an agreement on economic policy guidelines under the Europe2020 Strategy, on the basis of which Member States will develop their national economic reform programmes. Furthermore, it adopted general conclusions on the Europe2020 Strategy, dealing with issues such as the development of national targets to match EU-level targets, the relationship between budgetary concerns and the removal of barriers to economic progress, and the improvement of policy coordination between Member States. The Council also agreed to support a new draft regulation, which aims to deal with the issue of cross-border VAT fraud.

To read the draft Council Recommendation on employment policy guidelines, please click [here](#).

To read the Council's conclusions on the Europe2020 Strategy, please click [here](#).

To read more about the Council's agreement to tackle cross-border VAT fraud, please click [here](#).

EU/Council: Employment Council agrees on employment policy guidelines

On 7 June, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council reached an agreement on its general approach to employment policy guidelines for Member States. The development of these guidelines is required by the Europe2020 Strategy, and they include broad goals such as boosting labour market participation and job quality, fostering the acquisition of labour market relevant skills among the workforce, ensuring the effective performance of education and training systems, and developing a more inclusive society. Member States are expected to formulate their national employment policies on the basis of these guidelines, and the Council will officially adopt them once it has received the opinions of the European Parliament and the Committee of the Regions.

To read the Council's draft agreement on employment policy guidelines, please click [here](#).

To read more about the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council of 7-8 June, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: "Gaining Scale in Microcredit – can banks make it happen?"

The European Commission Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry has published a report summarizing the results of two workshops on the topic of microcredits for start-up companies. The report addresses issues such as the willingness of the banking and non-banking sectors to provide microcredits, the availability of these types of credits for new European businesses, and the impact of the economic crisis on the microcredits market.

To download the full report, please click [here](#).

European Commission: "Entrepreneurship in the EU and Beyond"

The European Commission Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry has published a Flash Eurobarometer report which analyzes the results of a telephone survey on European citizens' opinions about entrepreneurship. The survey sought the views of around 26,000 respondents on topics such as self-employment, the position of entrepreneurs in society, and the availability of finance for new businesses. It also compares Europeans' responses to the responses of people in the US, Japan, South Korea and China.

To download the full report, please click [here](#).

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OECD: “Factbook 2010”

The OECD has published its annual factbook, containing statistical information on a variety of social, economic and environmental issues, as well as a dedicated chapter on the economic crisis. This year’s factbook is available in both print and electronic formats.

To download the OECD’s Factbook 2010, please click [here](#).

CONSULTATIONS

ONGOING:

Consultation: Review of rules for assessment of horizontal co-operation agreements

Closes: 25 June 2010

The European Commission has issued a public consultation on new draft Regulations and Guidelines, which will provide a basis for evaluating agreements between competitors, or so-called “horizontal agreements.” The Commission aims to update existing rules in this area by the end of 2010, after consultation with stakeholders.

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

Consultation: Double Taxation in the EU

Closes: 30 June 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the phenomenon of double taxation in the EU. The consultation asks respondents to describe real-life examples of cases where more than one Member State has taxed the same income or asset. Respondents are also encouraged to recommend methods of reducing double taxation in the EU. This consultation is open to all taxpayers, but contains separate questionnaires for experts, corporate officials, and individuals.

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

Consultation: European Commission Initiative on Public Concession Contracts

Closes: 9 July 2010

The European Commission has issued a consultation on public concessions, or contracts between governments and private organizations for the provision of infrastructure or services to the public. The Commission is considering new initiatives in this area and it would like to gather the opinions of citizens, companies, NGOs and other stakeholders on the current EU rules for public concessions.

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

Consultation: Revision of the General Product Safety Directive

Closes: 30 July 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on its General Product Safety Directive (2001/95/EC), which offers a framework for ensuring the safety of consumer goods in the EU. Nevertheless, product safety problems continue to arise, and the Commission is seeking the opinions of citizens, businesses and public authorities on how the EU’s initiatives on product safety could be improved.

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

13-14 June 2010 – Ministerial Meeting on Information Society policies

15 June 2010 – Weekly Meeting of the College of Commissioners

14-17 June 2010 – European Parliament Plenary Sessions

17-18 June 2010 – European Council

21 June 2010 – Environment Council

23 June 2010 – Weekly Meeting of the College of Commissioners

21-24 June 2010 – European Parliament Committee Meetings

24 June 2010 – Transport, Telecoms, and Energy Council

Other SME-related events

14-16 June, Summer Course on European Company Law, Trier, Germany

The Academy of European Law is hosting a three-day course, providing a general introduction to the topic of European company law. Specific issues that will be addressed include capital requirements, mobility, and different options for management structures.

http://www.era.int/cgi-bin/cms?_SID=43f8068a83581b71592b0646f9ca1e556891006400055876649556&_sprache=a_z&_bereich=artikel&_aktion=detail&idartikel=120956

17-18 June, 2nd International Workshop on Entrepreneurship, Culture, Finance and Economic Development, Cartagena, Spain

This event, organized by the Catedra Bancaja Young Entrepreneurs, brings together academics, businesspeople and policymakers to discuss papers and reports on the topic of entrepreneurship. Special workshops will also be organized on the economic crisis, education, innovation, finance and human resources.

<http://www.iientrepreneurshipworkshop.upct.es/>

22 June, Re-invent and Re-vitalize, Brussels, Belgium

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The Central Denmark EU Office and the European Policy Center are organizing a seminar on how businesses can use the unique experiences their products offer as marketing tools. This seminar is part of European SME Week.

<http://www.centraldenmark.eu/4833/Events>

23 June, MEP Focus Group on Consumer Rights, Brussels, Belgium

The British Chamber of Commerce in Belgium is organizing an MEP focus group on the topic of the Consumer Rights Directive. The event will include statements from Amway Europe, eBay, and the British Retail Consortium, as well as a contribution from MEP Diana Wallis (ALDE, UK).

<http://lapaz.dnn-box.eu/iframes/registration.asp?EventID=1197>

23-25 June, “2010 - A Changing Europe: Combating Poverty, Supporting Enterprise,” London, United Kingdom

The European Microfinance Network (EMN) and the Community Development Financial Association (CDFA) are hosting a joint conference to discuss how microfinance and community finance can help microbusinesses, the unemployed, and the socially excluded to overcome the financial crisis. This conference is part of the European Commission’s “European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion – 2010.”

http://www.european-microfinance.org/conference/conference2010_en.php