



### IN BRIEF

#### **EU/ Better Regulation: Commission Report on Better Regulation**

On 28 January 2009, the European Commission tabled its 'Third progress report on the strategy for the simplification of the regulatory environment' highlighting the importance of 'Better Regulation' in dealing with the current economic crisis. The reduction of administrative burdens forms an integral part of the Commission's European Commission Recovery Plan. The review stipulates that small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) already benefit from simplifications made, by way of administrative burden reduction measures amounting more than €30billion in savings.

To read more about Better Regulation Agenda, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/Growth & Jobs: Commission Report on Lisbon Strategy**

On 27 January 2008, the European Commission published a report on the Lisbon Strategy, showing little progress is made by the EU Member States on maintaining the European Union's position on economic competitiveness. Although the report shows an increase in both growth of GDP and employment, in light of the current economic crisis, the EU's aim of becoming "the world's most dynamic knowledge-based economy by 2010" is likely to prove too optimistic. According to Eurostat data, a large majority of Member States' investment in R&D and innovation remains the key challenge for the years to come.

To read more about the Lisbon Strategy, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/Innovation: European Innovation Scoreboard**

On 22 January 2009, the 2008 European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS) was published, showing considerable progress in the EU's innovation performance, prior to the economic crisis. Aided by the progress made by new Member States, the innovation discrepancy with Japan and the United States has been reduced. The EU continues to lag behind the US and Japan, however, in the field of innovative investments by businesses. The Commission report groups EU Member States in four categories: innovation leaders, innovation followers, moderate innovators, and catching up countries. The Commission will use the findings of the reports as an aid in assessing the accomplishments of present innovation policies.

To read more about the EU's progress in the field of Innovation, please click [here](#)

#### **EU/Finance: Roundtable on SME access to finance**

On 21 January 2009, after a high-level roundtable on "SMEs' access to finance", European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen in a statement acknowledged SMEs as playing a key role in maintaining the level of employment. SMEs are sufficiently resilient to survive the crisis, but access to finance is of vital importance. Working capital is needed for day to day business and investment in human resources as well as innovation is crucial to warrant full benefit for SMEs after the current financial downturn is resolved. The Commission's recovery efforts have prevented an

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overall credit reduction to the business sector. However, banks will need to fully cooperate in financing economic activity.

To read more about the high-level roundtable on SMEs' access to finance, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ VAT: Commission proposal for e-invoicing**

On 28 January, the European Commission adopted a proposal to simplify VAT Directive 2006/112EC in respect to regulation on invoicing. The proposal is a significant aspect of the Commission Action Programme on the reduction of administrative burdens by 2012. A shift to the use of the electronic invoicing system will reduce administrative burdens on SMEs and is expected, as claimed by experts, to generate savings amounting up to 18 billion Euros in the medium term. Furthermore, VAT fraud could be tackled by strengthening the rules applying to invoicing. The main element of the modernisation is the equalisation between electronic and paper invoices, resulting in an eradication of barriers to e-invoicing.

To read more about the Commission proposal on e-invoicing, please click [here](#)

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### **EU/ Growth & Jobs: Commission adopts 'country chapters'**

On 18 January, the European Commission adopted so-called 'country chapters' to assess the Member States' implementation progress of Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy. In light of the current financial and economic crisis, the new instrument will also serve as a tool to ensure an adequate implementation of the European Economic Recovery Plan.

Furthermore, proposals for formal recommendations are made, to be endorsed by the Spring European Council.

To read more about the Lisbon Growth and Jobs Strategy, please click [here](#)

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## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **European Commission : "Handbook on Community State Aid Rules for SMEs"**

The "Handbook on Community State Aid Rules for SMEs", published by the European Commission, provides a summary of State aid legislation in the European Union. The publication sheds light on the importance of SMEs for the European economy, provides information about the State aid concept, describes different forms of financial support for SMEs and offers an overview of aid measures to support growth and development for SMEs. In light of the current financial and economic crisis, the report highlights temporary State aid measures to support access to finance.

To download the Commission's handbook on Community State Aid Rules for SMEs, please click [here](#)

### **OECD: Information Technology Outlook 2008**

The "OECD Information Technology Outlook 2008" analyses recent developments in the IT goods and services industries. The publication discusses the negative effect of the current macroeconomic environment on the IT industry. It also describes recent developments in the IT sector and focuses on how ICT and broadband are being mainstreamed in trade, investment, household uptake, influencing digital content and policies.

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To access the "OECD Information Technology Outlook 2008", please click [here](#)

**Eurostat: "Sigma - The Bulletin of European Statistics - Cutting Red Tape"**  
Sigma, a magazine published by Eurostat, focuses on the reduction of administrative burdens caused by official statistics. The publication discusses ways of simplifying statistical procedures through the rationalisation of working processes and use of modern technologies in different European countries.

To download the Eurostat publication, please click here: [here](#)

### CONSULTATIONS

#### ONGOING:

##### **Online consultation on Administrative Burdens Reduction**

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 the online consultation, please click [here](#)

### COMING UP

#### **EU Institutions: Important dates**

10th February	Council of Ministers, Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN)
18th February	Plenary Session (Brussels)
24th February	European Forum on Research and Development Impact Assessment (Prague)
10th March	Economic and Financial Affairs Council (ECOFIN) (Brussels)

#### **SME related events :**

**11 February 2009** Environmental Research Workshop in Brussels. The workshop, coinciding with the EU Sustainable Energy Week, is focussed on helping SMEs in exploring issues involving sustainable energy production and consumption.

To read more about the workshop, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=1847](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1847)

**12 February 2009** Open Conference on Data Protection and Privacy. The conference, organised by the European CEN Workshop in Brussels, aims to engage in a public consultation, seeking feedback on present activities, as well as inform a larger target-group of CEN Data Protection activities.

For more information, please go to:

<http://www.cen.eu/cenorm/businessdomains/businessdomains/iss/activity/wsdpp.asp>

#### **European Small Business Alliance – Brussels Office**

rue d'Idalie 9-13, B - 1050 Bruxelles

Tel. : +32 (2) 639 62 30 – Fax. : +32 (2) 644 90 17 – email : [secretariat@esba-europe.org](mailto:secretariat@esba-europe.org)

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**17 March 2009** High-Level Conference on Industrial Competitiveness: “Challenges, opportunities, and the role of policy in difficult times. Businessmen, policy-makers and economists will be brought together to discuss the way forward in combating the financial crisis and to increase Industrial competitiveness. The conference will consist of high-level speakers, such as Nobel Price Laureate Professor Paul Krugman.

For more information about the conference, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/industry/industrial\\_competitiveness\\_conference.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/industry/industrial_competitiveness_conference.htm)

**10 February 2009** Multi-Stakeholder Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility in Brussels. The forum’s plenary meeting, hosted by the European Commission will focus on progress made on CSR on European as well as global scale, and possible future joint ventures will be examined.

For more information about the event, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/forum\\_2009\\_index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/csr/forum_2009_index.htm)

**13 March 2009** Environmental ‘Auction Floor’ Brussels. The Conference, presented by EuropeAid, will bring together civil society organizations and research centers and aims at building effective and inclusive partnerships for environmental projects in developing countries.

To find out more about this event, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/environment/auction-floor\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/worldwide/environment/auction-floor_en.htm)

**27 and 28 April** Annual Gathering of the European Associations for Early stage Investors in Madrid; awareness raising and networking event for business angel group leaders.

To find out more, please go to:

<http://www.congress2009.eban.org/>

**9 February 2009** Conference “Business Cooperation in the Energy Sector – how can SMEs best value”, organised by Enterprise Europe Network; taking place in Brussels.

For more information, please go to: <http://www.eusew.eu/>

**11 February 2009** To coincide with the EU’s Sustainable Energy Week, the European Commission organises a “Workshop on Sustainable Energy Research”; taking place in Brussels.

For more information, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=1847](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1847)

**16 February 2008** Conference “Regions for Economic Change”, organised by Commission, Regional Policy Directorate General & other Commission services in cooperation with the Committee of the Regions; taking place in Brussels.

For more information, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/index\\_en.cfm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperation/interregional/ecochange/index_en.cfm)