



### HEADLINES

#### **EU/Elections: Test your candidate MEP! ESBA QUIZ for the 2009 European Elections**

In light of the upcoming European Elections, the European Small Business Alliance has launched its 2009 European Elections Campaign. The quiz offers voters a practical tool to test candidate MEPs' knowledge of the difficulties faced by the European business economy. The ESBA QUIZ "*Who Wants to be a Member of the European Parliament*" is available in all EU languages and allows voters to test the knowledge of potential Members of the European Parliament on a range of small business issues, ranging from how many firms there are in Europe, to some of the largest barriers faced by small firms throughout Europe.

There are more than 23 million small and medium-sized businesses in the EU and they represent 99.8 per cent of all enterprise in Europe, forming the backbone of the economy. ESBA's focus on raising awareness about the importance of small business and the key issues faced by the sector is a call to policy makers to 'Think Small First' in all EU legislation and programmes.

ESBA urges all small businesses and other voters to use the quiz to really test their MEP candidates. We want to make sure that the people we are voting for are knowledgeable about small businesses and will be fit to represent them. Only well-informed policy-makers will be equipped to take decisions in the name of small firms which will set the EU on track towards a prosperous European economy.

To download the ESBA Quiz in **all EU languages**, please go to: [www.esba-europe.org](http://www.esba-europe.org)

To read more about ESBA's 2009 European elections campaign, please go to: [www.esba-europe.org](http://www.esba-europe.org)

#### **EU/Employment: No agreement on Working Time Directive**

On 28 April, attempts by the European Commission, the Council, and the European Parliament to reach agreement on the topic of the Working Time Directive have come to an end as Council and European Parliament were not able to reconcile their differences with regards to the 48 hour working week.

The European Parliament had voted to remove the Member States' possibility to opt-out of the EU rules to limit a working week to 48 hours, whereas the Council - steered by a blocking minority of the U.K., Germany, Poland, and three Baltic states - has been in favour of keeping this option, particularly with regards to the healthcare sector which has proven unable to comply with the 48 hour week in many EU countries. 15 EU Member States, but most notably the U.K., have been using their right to opt out, mostly to facilitate professionals in the healthcare sector who work many hours 'on-call'. One of the main arguments put forward by the Council was that the current economic situation calls for flexibility with regards to working hours. Small businesses throughout the EU have welcomed the breakdown of the conciliation as it leaves them the freedom to work more than 48 hours a week.

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## ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the breakdown of the talks on the EU Working Time Directive as it leaves Member States, and herewith small businesses, with the freedom to choose the length of a working week. ESBA has been at the forefront of the campaign to ensure that Europe's small businesses and their staff can continue to work the hours that suit them. ESBA believes that removing the opt-outs from the working time directive would have constituted a serious blow to small businesses, which are at the forefront responding to the current economic crisis. The opt-out is a sensible way of allowing decisions about working patterns to be made nationally, and currently 15 countries use the opt-out allowing employees and employers to make the decision which is right for them on working hours and working culture.

To read more about the Working Time Directive, please click [here](#)

## IN BRIEF

### **EU/Internal Market: European Parliament adopts two cross-border payments proposals**

On 24 April, the European Parliament adopted two legislative proposals on payment terms. The new e-money Directive, whilst setting high standards of consumer protection, aims at simplifying and facilitating single market entry and its new rules will make it easier for electronic money institutions to develop innovative services into the payment market. The new cross-border payment Regulation aims at extending equal charges principle for national and cross-border payments to direct debits. Furthermore, it aims at easing existing reporting obligations, as well as enhancing the supervisory role of national authorities. Both proposals are now sent to the EU Council to obtain final approval. The Directive is set for transposition into national law by 2011, whereas the Regulation will apply as of November 2009.

To read more about both proposals, please click [here](#)

### **EU/ Consumer rights: “Be smart-click through your rights”**

On 5 May, Commissioners Viviane Reding and Meglena Kuneva launched the ‘eYou Guide for consumers’. The guide, which is a first answer to the European Parliaments’ 2007 call for a clarification of online consumer guides, enables consumers to click their way through existing consumer rights and obligations. Furthermore, the Commissioners took the launch as an opportunity to discuss additional areas where EU rules could be reinforced to further facilitate consumers’ use of the internet.

To read more about the new eYou Guide, please click [here](#)

### **EU/Environment: EP adopts eco-design Directive**

On 24 April, MEPs voted in favour of the European Commission proposal to extend environmental standards to “energy-related” products such as windows and insulation. So far, the Commission could only impose ecodesign-standards on “energy-using” products, such as boilers, water heaters, computers, televisions or industrial fans. With the adoption of the proposal by the European Parliament the legal framework will be extended to products which have a significant indirect impact on energy consumption during use, like water saving taps and shower heads.

National governments are expected to formally approve the extension which amends the EU's eco-design Directive within the coming weeks. According to a spokesman of Günter Verheugen, the Commission would seek voluntary agreements with industry before resorting to legislation. The ecodesign Directive will be reviewed in 2012, including the possible need of an extension.

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To read more about eco-design Directive, please click [here](#)

### PUBLICATIONS

#### **OECD: “OECD Factbook 2009: Economic, Environmental and Social Statistics”**

In this fifth edition of the OECD Factbook, a comprehensive and dynamic statistical report is made up, taking into account over 100 indicators and covering a wide range of areas, namely economy, agriculture, education, energy, environment, foreign aid, health and quality of life, industry, information and communications, population/labour force, trade and investment, taxation, public expenditure and R&D. This edition has a special focus on inequality.

To read more about this publication, please click [here](#)

#### **OECD: “Measuring government activity”**

This publication aims at providing a contribution to developing a coherent, reliable system for data collection and analysis, facilitating public access to figures regarding the significance of the public sector as major contributor to the economy and offering a better understanding of the workings of government and public revenues.

To read more about this publication, please click [here](#)

### CONSULTATIONS

#### **ONGOING:**

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

### COMING UP

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

04-07 Mai 2009	EP Plenary Session, Strasbourg
03-05 Mai 2009	Competitiveness Council (Informal), Prague
05 Mai 2009	ECOFIN Council, Brussels
09 Mai 2009	Europe Day, for more information, please go to: <a href="http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/9-may/index_en.htm">http://europa.eu/abc/symbols/9-may/index_en.htm</a>

#### **Other SME related events**

06 Mai 2009	“European Entrepreneurship Video Award”, organised by the European Commission; taking place in Brussels. For more information, please go to: <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/entrepreneurship/video-award/index_en.htm">http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/entrepreneurship/video-award/index_en.htm</a>
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- 6-7 Mai 2009 Conference on “Innovation and Creativity in the Lifelong Learning Programme”, organised by the European Commission and the Czech Presidency; taking place in Prague. For more information, please go to: <http://www.llp-conference.eu/programme>
- 6-14 May 2009 “First European SME Week” to promote entrepreneurship across Europe and to inform entrepreneurs about support available for them at European, national and local level. For more information, please go to: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/entrepreneurship/sme-week/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/entrepreneurship/sme-week/index_en.htm)
- 7 Mai 2009 Seminar on “European SMEs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century – A world of opportunity (Allowing SMEs to take advantage of the global market)”, organised by the European Economic and Social Committee; taking place in Brussels. For more information, please go to: [http://eesc.europa.eu/sections/ccmi/Hearingsandconferences/Thefuture/SME\\_week/index\\_en.asp](http://eesc.europa.eu/sections/ccmi/Hearingsandconferences/Thefuture/SME_week/index_en.asp)
- 07-08 Mai 2009 Conference on financial reporting, organised by the European Commission; taking place in Brussels. For more information, please go to: [http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/accounting/conference\\_052009\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/accounting/conference_052009_en.htm)
- 7-8 May 2009 “Research conference to forge links between science and industry”, organised by the European Commission; taking place in Prague. For more information, please go to: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=2918&tpa\\_id=201&lang=en](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=2918&tpa_id=201&lang=en)
- 13-14 Mai 2009 “European Competition Day”, organised by the Czech Presidency; taking place in Brno, Czech Republic. The event provides a platform to exchange views on competition policy and law for members of competition authorities, government bodies, national and Community courts, business community, lawyers and scientists. For more information, please go to: <http://www.competitionday.cz/>
- 14 May 2009 Conference on “The Small Business Act for Europe: Business Without Barriers” & “European Enterprise Awards Ceremony 2009”, organised by the European Commission and the Committee of the Regions; taking place in Prague; for more information, please go to: <http://www.sme-conference-prague.eu/>