



HEADLINES

EU/COP15: ESBA urges decision-makers to 'think small' on a global scale

On 7-18 December 2009, the 15th United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) is bringing together the world's leading decision-makers to carve out a post-Kyoto agreement to combat climate change. At European level, EU Member States have agreed to reduce their collective carbon emissions by 20% or possibly even 30% by 2020. Now, it is of vital importance to strike a global, ambitious, comprehensive and legally binding agreement in Copenhagen, offering both the tools and the right incentives for businesses to reach their maximum green potential and enabling them to take all the actions needed to battle climate change.

The European Small Business Alliance (ESBA) fully recognizes the undeniable necessity to face the challenges related to climate change. The full involvement of the business community at global, national, regional and local level is key to achieving a smarter, greener economy, where prosperity will come from innovation and from more efficient use of resources.

ESBA Opinion

99% of all businesses in the EU are Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs). It is therefore of the utmost importance that decision-makers during COP15 fully acknowledge the important role SMEs play in reaching the set targets. SMEs have the potential to adapt quickly, and to efficiently implement measures necessary to fight climate change. Furthermore, the vast majority of all jobs in the EU are created by SMEs. Therefore, it is crucial that a cost-efficient framework is created, providing SMEs with the right tools and incentives to create green growth and jobs for Europe. ESBA therefore calls on the decision-makers of COP15 to 'think small' whilst shaping their policies.

For more information on COP15, please click: [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU/Commission: Ireland gets the first EU innovation portfolio

On 27 November, Máire Geoghegan Quinn, previously Ireland's representative in the European Court of Auditors, was appointed the first EU Commissioner for the newly-created Research and Innovation portfolio. The new portfolio is expected to be cross-departmental, with the aim of streamlining innovation policy across the European Union. It is not yet clear how the new portfolio will affect DG Enterprise and Industry, which is to become DG Industry and Entrepreneurship, since it is currently responsible for drafting the European Innovation Act. The new unit under Ms Quinn is to replace the present DG Research and Science and to obtain additional responsibilities in the area of European innovation.

To read more about the new Commission line-up, please click: [here](#)

EU/Council: New parental leave rules to appeal to fathers

On 30 November, the EU employment ministers reached a political agreement aiming at enhancement of provisions with regard to minimum parental leave and safeguards against discrimination. The new requirements, to enter into force in 2012, will enable each parent to take four months of leave per child, whereby one month cannot be transferred. The main objective of the proposal is to encourage fathers to make use of their parental leave rights and to diminish discrimination between men and women with regard to employment opportunities. The proposal

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renders an earlier agreement between European employers and trade unions legally binding.

To access the text of the Parental Leave proposal, please click: [here](#)

EU/Council: Green light for EU patent system

On 4 December, the Competitiveness Council reached a unanimous political agreement on the creation of a single EU patent system. The Council conclusions include the main elements of the future European patent and the establishment of a new European patent court. A solution for language difficulties has yet to be developed. A single EU patent system is expected to reduce costs for business innovations as well as simplify and clarify the litigation process. The idea of a community patent was first proposed in 2000, but faced difficulties in the Council. It was later revived by the Commission in its Communication of 2007.

To read the Competitiveness Council conclusions on a single EU patent system, please click: [here](#)

EU/Council: EU ministers urge to 'Think Small First'

On 3 - 4 December, the Competitiveness Council convened for its meeting in Brussels. The ambitious agenda included the EU's future strategy for sustainable growth and jobs, future priorities for European research and for the Single Market. The ministers emphasised the importance of placing the issue of Better Regulation at the heart of EU decision-making. Furthermore, an effective implementation of the Small Business Act for Europe and the application of the 'Think Small First' principle were stressed as key factors for a competitive European economy.

To read all of the Competitiveness conclusions, please click: [here](#)

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission: 'Explaining the Treaty of Lisbon'

This memo, compiled by the Commission, covers major innovations brought about by the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009. It aims to provide a comprehensive guide to journalists and analyses key changes to EU institutions, as well as internal and external policies.

To read the Commission memo, please click [here](#)

European Commission: European Competitiveness report 2009

This 3-volume report, published by the Commission DG Enterprise and Industry, analyses the level of competitiveness of European economy. At the heart of the 2009 edition lie recent economic developments with regard to EU's growth of productivity in the times of crisis.

To read the Commission report, please click [here](#)

European Commission: Report on e-Invoicing

The expert group, mandated by the Commission DG Enterprise and Industry to develop an e-Invoicing strategy for the EU, published its report. It focuses on the needs of European SMEs and encourages the deployment of electronic invoicing among these enterprises.

To read the expert group report, please click [here](#)

CONSULTATIONS

Public Consultation on the final report of the Expert Group on e-Invoicing

Closes on 26 February 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation in relation to a report by the Expert Group on e-Invoicing published earlier this month. The consultation particularly welcomes contributions from SMEs, with the aim of collecting and analysing stakeholders' opinions on the use of electronic invoicing.

To read more about the consultation and to access the questionnaire to be filled in by stakeholders, please click: [here](#)

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Public consultation on the EU 2020 Strategy

Closes on 15 January 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on its working document for the EU 2020 Strategy, which is to replace the current Lisbon Agenda due to expire next year. The document focuses on prosperous, green and socially inclusive growth. All interested parties are invited to send their suggestions to EU2020@ec.europa.eu.

To access the Commission working document and read more about the consultation, please click: [here](#)

Public consultation on the International Financial Reporting Standard for Small and Medium-sized Entities

Closes on 12 March 2010

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the International Financial Reporting Standard for SMEs, with the aim of analysing the views of EU Stakeholders. The consultation is part of the review of the 4th and 7th Company Law Directives by the Commission Directorate-General for Internal Market and Services.

To read more about the consultation and to access the questionnaire to be filled in by stakeholders, please click: [here](#)

Public consultation on the review of the Financial Regulation

Closes on 18 December 2009

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the review of the Financial Regulation with the aim of simplifying the financial rules and procedures as regards project funding by the EU budget. The Commission particularly welcomes contributions from EU funds recipients, NGOs and various public and private bodies.

To access the public consultation, please click: [here](#)

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

10-11 December: Council of the European Union convenes for its second meeting this year in Brussels, Belgium

14-17 December: European Parliament convenes for its plenary session in Strasbourg, France

14-15 December: Meeting of the Agriculture and Fisheries Council in Brussels, Belgium

17-18 December: Meeting of the Transport and Telecom Council in Brussels, Belgium

Other SME related events

14-15 December: the European Banking Centre is organising a conference on competition in

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banking markets, to take place in Antwerp, Belgium. The event will allow a debate and an analysis of all aspects with regard to banking markets.

To learn more about the event, please click: [here](#)

16-17 December: the closing conference of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation is organised by the European Commission and the Swedish Presidency. The event will take place in Stockholm, Sweden and look at the highlights of the year with regard to innovation and creativity in the EU.

To learn more about the event, please click: [here](#)

17 December: The University of Bergamo is organising the Entrepreneurship Today conference, to take place in Bergamo, Italy. The event will analyse the entrepreneurial culture in Italy, with a particular focus on innovation.

To learn more about the event, please click: [here](#)