



HEADLINES

EU / Competitiveness: Council prepares for the Spring European Summit

On 25 February, the Competitiveness Council met in Brussels to prepare recommendations on Competitiveness and Innovation, and the Single Market Review ahead of the forthcoming Spring Summit in Brussels. The Council also reached agreement on a fuel cells and hydrogen joint technology initiative and the Strategic Energy Technology Action Plan, as well as discussing other key SME issues, including the Eurostars programme aimed at supporting SMEs in the field of R&D, Better Regulation and Energy and Climate Change.

The Council held an exchange of views on the Lisbon Agenda for Growth and Jobs. In its key issues paper on Competitiveness and Innovation, the Council stressed the need for effective implementation of the second cycle of the renewed Strategy, which runs from 2008 to 2010, in order to address the challenges of globalisation. The ministers made a series of recommendations within two key areas: the need to invest more and more effectively in knowledge and innovation, and unlock business potential, especially of SMEs.

In addition, the Council discussed the Commission's Communication from November 2007 on 'A single market for 21st century Europe'. In its conclusions, the Council acknowledged its achievements to date and welcomed the initiatives outlined in the package to further empower consumers and small businesses. The ministers emphasised the external dimension of the Single Market, stressed the importance of Better Regulation, welcomed the development of a Consumer Market Scoreboard, as well as calling for enhanced implementation and follow-up.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA supports the Council's recommendations on the Single Market Review and the Lisbon Strategy, in particular its focus on implementation of the second cycle. In order to effectively unlock the business potential of SMEs, ESBA stresses the need to further integrate the 'think small first' principle into the policy-making process at national and Community level. In the context of last year's campaign on Rome I, ESBA recognises the need for the continued implementation of initiatives to enhance the Single Market. Rigorous application of impact assessments is fundamental to its completion.

To read more about the main results of the Council, please click [here](#)

IN BRIEF

EU / R&D: Vienna joins the bid for the EIT and formation of its structure begins

On 19 February, the Austrian government announced its interest in hosting the administrative headquarters of the future European Institute of Technology (EIT). Vienna is the latest city after Breslau, Budapest and several German and Spanish regions to bid for the HQ. A decision on the EIT's location could now take place in June 2008. The EIT will be composed of a Governing Board, a Secretariat and several Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). Constructed as partnerships between the private sector, the research community and universities, the objective of the KICs will

ESBA Bulletin of 7 March 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 2

be to link research, education and innovation in a so-called 'knowledge triangle'. Four high-level scientists have been appointed to select candidates for the Board, which will be comprised of 18 representatives from science, business and academia. Its role will be to provide strategic guidance, select the KICs and evaluate and coordinate the EIT's the work. Members are expected to be appointed before the summer. The EIT could then be established in 2008 and be fully operational in 2010.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the progress in the establishment of the EIT. Its objective, to contribute to the development on innovation capacity in the EU by linking research, education and innovation, should make a positive contribution towards reaching the Lisbon Strategy Goals of increasing growth and jobs. Whilst the initial budget and structure has now been agreed, ESBA reminds the Board's selection panel that close cooperation with the small business community will be central to the EIT's success.

To read more about the European Institute of Technology, please click [here](#)

EU / Internal Market: Parliament supports package on the internal market for goods

On 21 February 2008, the European Parliament adopted the 'goods package' – a set of measures to ease the sale of goods within the EU and to boost consumer choice and confidence. The new set of legislative measures has been introduced by the Commission within the framework of the revision of the New Approach Directives with the aim to tackle the outstanding obstacles to the free movement of goods in the EU. A strengthened market surveillance system as well as an improved system of accreditation will allow for products to circulate more freely within the Internal Market, while boosting the credibility of the CE-marking. The Package also puts forward recommendations to facilitate the trade of goods, which are not subject to EU harmonisation, as well proposing the establishment of Product Contact Points so that SMEs can obtain information about the law of the country in which they are seeking to sell their goods. It is expected that the Council will approve the package very soon – after approval by ministers, the legislation could enter into force next year.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA supports the Parliament's adoption of the 'goods package'. Removing barriers to enable small businesses, which represent 99% of all EU enterprises, to trade across the Union, is a key driver of European growth and jobs. Whilst accreditation is often necessary for the quality control of goods, ESBA stresses, however, that it must not be allowed to create more red tape. The establishment of Product Contact Points represents a positive step toward improving legal certainty for SMEs trading abroad.

To read more about the adoption of the proposed approach, please click [here](#)

EU / Better Regulation: Second HLG meeting takes place and new FTAs announced

On 26 February, the High Level Group (HLG) on Reducing Administrative Burdens held its second meeting in Brussels. Convened by President Barroso, Vice-President Verheugen and chaired by Edmund Stoiber, former Prime Minister of Bavaria, the participants of the 'flagship' Group discussed the list of 2008 Fast Track Actions (FTAs) proposed by the Commission to quickly reduce red tape. The new list of FTAs is part of the Commission's ambitious Action Programme to cut administrative burdens for EU businesses by 25% in 2012. It is estimated that businesses saved approximately €500 million as result of five FTAs adopted in 2007. The Commission expects €800 million savings to follow in the short term. The new list of FTAs includes: reducing the statistical reporting duties of SMEs, reducing the paperwork for micro enterprises, fewer translations when opening branches in other

ESBA Bulletin of 7 March 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 2

Member States and facilitating the introduction of new radio and telecommunication equipment. Following the opinion of the HLG, they will be presented by to the European Council in March 2008.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA backs the ambitious 25% reduction target and welcomes the proposal of new Fast Track Actions to quickly reduce red tape. The involvement of stakeholders is central to the success of the Action Programme. ESBA therefore urges small businesses to take part in the online consultation, which invites entrepreneurs to identify unnecessary red tape (see below). Gabriel Goucha, ESBA Secretary and Vice-President of member organisation PME Portugal attended the second HLG meeting. ESBA will be announcing, via the website, new activities for 2008 in this field shortly.

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

PUBLICATIONS

United Nations Environment Programme: “Yearbook 2008”

The ‘United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP) Yearbook 2008’ discusses the Green Economy, as growing numbers of companies embrace environmental policies and invest extensively in cleaner and renewable energies. The UNEP Yearbook, which is produced at the request of ministers, argues that, increasingly, climate change is being perceived as an opportunity rather than a burden and a path to a new kind of prosperity is beginning to emerge. The Green Economy is driving invention, innovation and the imagination on a scale perhaps not witnessed since the industrial revolution of more than two centuries ago.

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

European Commission: "Supporting the internationalisation of SMEs"

The Commission’s final report of the Expert Group reveals that many SMEs still remain focused on their internal markets: only 8% of EU27 SMEs export and only 12% of the inputs of an average SME are purchased abroad. The main reasons are a lack of financial resources but most of all lack of skills or skilled human capital to tackle internationalisation. The document proposes recommendations based on the situation, barriers and drivers for internationalization. A good practice brochure presents a collection of national and regional policies that tackle some of the main problems SME face when operating in foreign markets.

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

OECD: “Framework for the Evaluation of SME and Entrepreneurship Policies and Programmes”

The ‘Framework for the Evaluation of SME and Entrepreneurship Policies and Programmes’ provides a practical and accessible guide to best practice evaluation methods for SME and entrepreneurship policies and programmes. The publication uses case studies from a wide range of OECD countries to examine the benefits of evaluation and how best to address common issues that arise when commissioning and undertaking SME and entrepreneurship evaluations. The document sets out key evaluation principles, establishes the role of peer review in evaluation and discusses the review of the aggregate impact of public policies.

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

ESBA Bulletin of 7 March 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 2

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Public consultation on the Small Business Act for Europe

Closes 31 March 2008

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the Small Business Act for Europe. The aim of this consultation is to stimulate an open debate with SMEs and SMEs' stakeholders in order to ensure that all remaining obstacles to EU SMEs' prosperity, and solutions to tackle them, are identified. In addition to a public hearing, which took place on 6 February 2008 in Brussels, the results of the consultation will provide a major contribution to the Commission's reflections on the SBA, which is scheduled to be adopted in June 2008.

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

Online Consultation on Combating Late Payments

Closes 30 April 2008

Risk & Policy Analysts Ltd (RPA) – with the support of the European Commission – has launched an online consultation on combating late payments in commercial transactions. It seeks to examine the costs and benefits of 16 proposals to support the objectives of EU Directive 2000/35/EC. The questionnaire, which is now available in English, French and Spanish, aims to gather views from small businesses on the effectiveness of the different proposed options and highlight any other measures that might be beneficial.

To access the online consultation, please select:

ENGLISH VERSION - [here](#)

FRENCH VERSION - [here](#)

GERMAN VERSION – [here](#)

SPANISH VERSION – [here](#)

ONGOING:

Online consultation on Administrative Burdens Reduction

Closes 21 September 2008

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

13 - 14 March 2008 European Council

Other SME related events

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

ESBA Bulletin of 7 March 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 2

- 10 March 2008** Conference on “European Private Company”; organised by the European Commission; taking place in Brussels; for registration and more information, please go to:
<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fmi/scic/SPE08/Start.php#>
- 26 March 2008** Conference on "Family Businesses: Sustainability & Challenges in the EU"; organised by the SME UNION and ACCA; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please email: sme@sme-union.org
- 14-15 April 2008** 8th World Conference on “Business Angel Investing: Entrepreneurial Capital for the 21st century”; organised by The European Association of Business Angel Networks; taking place in Arnhem, the Netherlands; for more information, please go to:
<http://www.ebancongress2008.com/>
- 28-29 April 2008** Conference on “The Draft Common Frame of Reference. Structure and Contents – On the Way to a Final CFR”; organized by the Academy of European Law (ERA); taking place in Ljubljana; for more information, please go to:
http://www.era.int/web/en/html/nodes_main/4_2127_474/conferences_00_00_Date/5_1796_6297.htm
- 3-4 June 2008** Forum 2008 on “Climate Change, Growth, Stability. The price of reform and the cost of inaction”; organised by the OECD; taking place Paris; for more information, please go to:
http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_39644413_1_1_1_1_1,00.html
- 22-25 June 2008** 53rd World Conference; organised by the International Council for Small Business; taking place in Halifax, Nova Scotia; Canada; for more information, please go to:
<http://www.icsb2008.org/welcome.html>