



HEADLINES

EU/EC: Commission launches economic recovery plan – the time is to act now

On 26 November, the European Commission presented a comprehensive recovery plan as response to the current economic situation. In order to arrest the trend towards deeper recession, the Commission proposes a package of coordinated actions to support the real economy combining fiscal, structural and regulatory measures. The recovery plan foresees a fiscal stimulus at an amount of €200 billion to be pumped into the EU economy. The amount will consist of €170 billion in Member State contributions (1.5% of GDP) and €30 billion in EU funding. The 2005 revised budgetary rules will stay operational - Member States will be warned if they exceed the budget deficit ceiling of 3% of their GDP but they will get more time to bounce back, due to the current special circumstances.

The main goals of the package are to stimulate spending, increase consumer confidence and to preserve jobs. The Commission intends to provide access to funding earlier as planned. Furthermore, the plan calls on the Council to adopt the Directive on permanent reduced VAT for labour intensive services, before the 2009 Spring European Council. The emphasis of the plan lies on 'smart investments' which would help retaining jobs through training and re-training. Whilst building on the Small Business Act, the recovery plan will provide help for SMEs by means of easier access to public procurement and putting a one month limit to invoices to be paid by public authorities.

ESBA Opinion

ESBA welcomes the Commission's ambitious stimulus package for the European economy. In light of the economic turmoil Member States need to pull together to get the economy back on track. Coordinated and immediate action on European and national level is indispensable to prevent a vicious circle of reduced purchasing power of consumers, lower demand, reduced innovation and job losses across the EU. ESBA calls on all Member States to immediately implement a coordinated budgetary stimulus package, carry out necessary structural reforms which support demand, and support measures which aim at protecting employment and enhancing access to financing for businesses. The magnitude of the current crisis may lead to bankruptcy amongst thousands European SMEs. The time to act is now.

To read the full text of the Recovery Plan, please click [here](#)

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 28 November 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 10

IN BRIEF

EU/EIT: Stakeholders discuss partnerships for the EIT

On 24 November, a first stakeholder seminar took place in Bratislava (SK) concerning format and selection criteria for the Knowledge and Innovation Communities (KICs). Next to the governing board, which is responsible for the EIT's strategic management, the KICs will function as the working components of the European Institute for Innovation and Technology (EIT). Stakeholders from inside and outside Europe were invited to voice their opinions and share their visions. The outcome of the seminar will be included into the governing board's reflections. A call for proposals for the first KICs is scheduled for spring 2009, after which the first KICs are set to be selected in January 2009.

To read more about Knowledge and Innovation Communities, please click [here](#)

EU/Employment: Positive impact of labour migration on the EU economy

On 18 November, the European Commission published a report stating that labour mobility from 2004 and 2007 accession countries has had a rather favourable economic impact on the host states' economies. Contrary to fears of an immigration 'flood' from Eastern and Central Europe, there has been only a minimal increase in labour coming from the new Member States. The workers have had a positive impact on the economy by bringing labour where it was most needed. A possible decline in labour demand, as a result from the current economic recession, has already slowed down EU labour flows, which indicates the self-regulatory nature of labour migration. Member States have the possibility to restrict labour market access from the 'new' EU countries for seven years. Member states which are still maintaining these restrictions need to inform the Commission on whether they will keep the restrictions for another three years for Bulgaria and Romania and a period of two years for the 2004 accession countries. The dates for these notifications are respectively 31 December 2008 and 31 April 2009.

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

EU/Employment: EP backs revision of rules on equal pay between genders

On 18 November, a great majority of the MEPs voted in plenary in support of a request to the European Commission to revise the rules on equal pay between genders. A 2006 survey by the European Foundation for the improvement of Living and Working Conditions concluded that women are facing a significant wage gap, despite existing EU laws which aim at equal pay between men and women in the workforce. On average, females in the EU earn between 15% and 25% less than their male colleagues. The Parliament vote was based on a report by centre-right MEP Edit Bauer, which calls for regular pay audits for companies, as well as an examination by the Commission of the feasibility of introducing sanctions for companies in breach of equal pay regulation. Disparities in wages differ throughout the EU, ranging from 4% in Malta to 26% in Germany.

To read the original Bauer Report please click [here](#)

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 28 November 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 10

To see the 2006 Survey, please click [here](#)

EU/Employment: MEPs vote for ‘Blue Cards’

On 20 November, in ‘consultative vote’, MEPs backed the idea of a European ‘Blue Card’, which is loosely modelled after the U.S. Green Card. The idea is to make access to employment more accessible to highly skilled workers from outside the EU. Thanks to collaboration between PES and EPP, the report by centre-right MEP Ewa Klamt was heavily supported in Parliament. The Scheme is aimed at addressing the lack of high skilled workers, as well as the demographic challenges. The Liberals and the Greens are criticising the report for being a watered-down version of an already limited Commission proposal. The scheme is expected to enter into force after April 2011.

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

PUBLICATIONS

OECD: ‘Labour law statistics’

OECD published its yearly edition of Labour Force Statistics, in which detailed statistics are offered on labour force, employment, population, and unemployment, categorised by sex, status of employment, duration of unemployment, employment by activity sector and part-time employment. Furthermore, participation and unemployment figures, categorised by sex and detailed age groups are given, alongside comparative tables for the labour force’s key components. The time series presented cover 20 years for most countries and the countries covered are the OECD member countries, OECD-total, Euro area and EU 15. Sources and definitions used to compile the member countries’ statistics are also given.

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

European Commission: ‘Employment in Europe report’

The Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities published its yearly Employment in Europe report for the 20th time. The report has come to function as one of the DG’s main means to support Member States in their analysis, formulation, and implementation of their employment policies. It deals with issues that are high on the EU’s employment policy agenda. A thorough outline is given of the employment situation in the EU. Furthermore, analysis is made of key labour market issues, such as immigration, post-enlargement intra-EU labour mobility, quality of work and the link between education and employment.

To read more about the Employment in Europe report, please click [here](#)

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 28 November 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 10

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

December 2008 - Ministerial: Eurogroup Meeting, chaired by Jean-Claude Juncker, will bring together the 15 finance ministers of the Eurozone, the President of the European Central Bank and representatives from the European Commission. It will be followed by the informal meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs (ECOFIN) Council.

1-2 December 2008 - Competitiveness Council

2 December 2008 - ECOFIN Council

3-4 December 2008 - Additional Plenary Session European Parliament (Brussels)

11-12 December 2008 - European Council (Heads of State & Government)

15-16 December 2008 - Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

15-18 December 2008 - Plenary Session European Parliament (Strasbourg)

Other SME related events

1-2 December European Parliament's Lisbon Forum. The new platform, focused on driving policy dialogue to enhance growth and innovation in Europe, will be launched by the European Council and the business community in collaboration with MEPs and Commission representatives.

For more information, please go to:

<http://www.knowledge4innovation.eu/k4i/default.aspx>

27 November & The European Commission is organising the European Finance Day for SMEs. It is

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 28 November 2008 – Volume 10 – Number 10

4 December series of events, in collaboration with local financial intermediaries, aimed at informing SMEs about the possibilities of EU financial instruments. Furthermore, it serves as a forum for sharing good practices to help innovative SMEs to get better access to (EU) financing. The two upcoming finance days will be in Rome and Budapest, respectively.

For more information and registration please go to:

Rome: <http://www.sme-finance-day.eu/index.php?id=21>

Budapest: <http://www.sme-finance-day.eu/index.php?id=24>

10 December The SME UNION of the EPP in co-operation with the Computing Technology Industry Association (CompTIA) is organizing a working lunch on 'A New European Software Strategy: Opportunities for SMEs'. MEP Malcolm Harbour of the Industry committee will be moderating the event.

Where: European Parliament, Salon des Membres Rue Wiertz 60, 1047 Brussels

When : 12.30 – 14.00

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