



HEADLINES

ESBA / Annual Event: Why should EU leaders think small first?

In the context of the 'Energy Package' recently announced by the European Commission and the European Council's Spring Summit, ESBA's Annual Event on 7th June in Brussels will take the form of a conference on the topic "SMEs and the Future EU Energy Regime: *Why should EU leaders think small first?*" attended by over 100 high-level delegates.

Whilst threats are apparent in the legislation arising from the proposals, ESBA has identified significant opportunities for SMEs to help confront climate change and to participate in the future EU Energy Regime. It is therefore crucial that EU leaders are aware of SMEs' concerns and needs. ESBA's Annual Event aims to achieve this by bringing together high-level policy makers, entrepreneurs and interested stakeholders for the first time.

The event will include participation by Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, Chair of the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); Jeremy Rifkin, President of the Foundation on Economic Trends (FOET); Christine Lins, Secretary General of the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC); Raymond van Ermen, Executive Director of European Partners for the Environment (EPE); Pedro Ballesteros, project manager on energy efficiency; and Guy Bigwood, Managing Director of MCI Barcelona.

For more information on how to register for the event, please go to:

COA9F/Coaching/ESBA_Annual_Event.aspx

EU / Telecoms: Boost to telecoms competition as Parliament votes on roaming

On Wednesday, 23 May, the European Parliament voted in plenary on the Commission's controversial regulation to reduce roaming charges levied on consumers using their mobile phones abroad. The adopted version will limit the fees for outgoing calls from abroad to € 0.49 and those for incoming calls to € 0.24. Fees will be progressively reduced over the next two years, with the cap set at € 0.46 for outgoing and € 0.22 for incoming calls in 2008. In 2009, charges will be restricted to € 0.43 and € 0.22 respectively. The Regulation will stipulate that service providers must reduce all roaming charges within three months of its entry into force.

The present version of the Regulation represents a compromise between the Commission, Parliament and Member States. A large number of MEPs, in particular those from the leftwing PSE group, were hoping for more stringent requirements for operators. At the same time, certain Member States, including the UK, were opposed to limiting fees. Despite the compromise reached between the opposing views, the deal has been fiercely opposed by mobile phone operators.

ESBA welcomes the development, as cheap and accessible communications are vital for the EU's economy. Business users often travel frequently with work and suffer significantly from the very high costs imposed by large network operators. These costs are particularly burdensome for SMEs with

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limited financial resources. Moreover, it is important that all uncompetitive behavior is restricted at every given opportunity.

To see the European Parliament press release, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/058-6990-141-05-21-909-20070522IPR06989-21-05-2007-2007-true/default_en.htm

To see the inter-institutional compromise amendment, please go to:

CobraManagedFiles/EP_roaming_compromise_amendment.pdf

To see the ITRE Committee's draft report, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sidesSearch/sipadeMapUrl.do?prog=REPORT&SORT_order=D&REF_a=A6-2007-0155&l=EN

To see the Commission proposal, please go to:

http://www.ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/roaming/index_en.htm

IN BRIEF

EU / E-commerce: SMEs concerns about Rome I discussed in the European Parliament

The European Commission's draft proposal for a Regulation on the law applicable to contractual obligations in civil and commercial matters (Rome I), received criticism last week from representatives of SMEs. At an SME Union breakfast meeting in the Parliament, participants expressed particular concerns about Article 5. In contrast to existing rules, it implies that the law of the State in which the consumer is resident should govern all contracts relating to online business. Speaking at the breakfast, Andrew Cave, Senior Advisor for EU and International Affairs at the UK FSB, an ESBA Member, warned that the potential costs of compliance with the consumer country principle will act as a deterrent to SMEs to engage in cross-border e-commerce, limiting growth, jobs and the development of the internal market. As part of its ongoing campaign, ESBA is urging MEPs to ask the Commission for a full impact assessment or support amendments, which retain the status quo and limit the proposal's scope.

To see the Commission's proposal, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oel/file.jsp?id=5301232>

EU / services: Parliament rejects introduction of health services into Services Directive

On 23 May, Parliament's plenary adopted an own-initiative report examining the ramifications of excluding health services from the Services Directive. The vote rejected an amendment passed by the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee which invited the Commission to submit a proposal reintroducing health services into the Directive. The possibility of introducing separate legislation covering health services was also rejected. However, MEPs called on the Commission to put forward a plan to codify laws regarding citizens' rights for accessing healthcare in other Member States, with costs covered by their own health system.

To see the final text of the Services Directive, please go to:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_376/l_37620061227en00360068.pdf

To see the draft report on the impact of the exclusion of health services, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/pr/656/656490/656490en.pdf

To see the amendments, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/am/660/660113/660113en.pdf

World Cities / Environment: Cities commit to Clinton energy saving scheme

On 14 May 2007, representatives from over 30 world cities met at the second C40 Large Cities Climate Summit in New York. The occasion saw 16 major cities, including London, New York, Berlin,

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Rome and Bangkok, agree to improving the efficiency of the heating, cooling and lighting systems of their buildings. The programme has been established by the Clinton Foundation and provides a total of \$ 5 billion in loans from 5 global banks – ABN Amro, Citigroup, Deutsche Bank, JPMorganChase and UBS. The loans will be paid back by the cities with the money they save through increased energy efficiency.

For more information on the C40 Large Cities Climate Summit, please go to:

<http://www.nycclimatesummit.com/>

For more information on the Clinton Foundation project, please go to:

<http://www.clintonfoundation.org/051607-nr-cf-pr-cci-president-clinton-announces-landmark-program-to-reduce-energy-use-in-buildings-worldwide.htm>

EU / Business: European business highlights importance of European Company Statute

At a conference on 15 May 2007, representatives from several business organizations called for the creation of a European Private Company (EPC) statute. Under the present system, companies wishing to operate across the EU must either set up subsidiary companies within different member states or else make use of the European Company Statute. This statute involves the merger of companies from at least two member states with capital of € 120,000. This system is inappropriate for individual SMEs with limited financial resources to trade across the EU. The business sector is calling for a voluntary 'European Private Company Statute', open to all companies. This would be in line with a European Parliament own-initiative resolution produced in February, to which the Commission has hitherto not reacted.

ESBA fully supports the notion of a European Private Company Statute and calls on the Commission to progress swiftly on this vital issue.

To see the Parliament's resolution, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sidesSearch/sipadeMapUrl.do?prog=TA&l=EN&REF_p=P6_TA-2007-0023#

EU / R & D: Commission tables proposals for Joint Technology Initiatives

On 15 May, 2007, the Commission adopted the first two proposals for Joint Technology Initiatives (JTIs), funding programmes for research and development designed to pool the resources of industry, Member States and the Commission. These JTIs will seek to direct funding towards broader strategic targets, rather than focusing on individual projects. The first two initiatives are for Embedded Computing Systems (ARTEMIS) and the Innovative Medicines Initiative (IMI). The proposals were presented to the Competitiveness Council of 21-22 May. Adoption is expected during the Portuguese Presidency.

To see the Commission memo on JTIs, please go to.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/191&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

For the ARTEMIS proposal, please go to:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0243en01.doc

For the IMI proposal, please go to:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2007/com2007_0241en01.pdf

EU / Energy: Commission calls for energy-savings at global level

On 14-15 May, Ministers of the International Energy Agency met to discuss the establishment of a coordinated approach to energy savings. The Commission hopes that the OECD countries, together with certain developing nations, including China and India, would agree on common approaches to energy savings. This would then be followed by a multi-lateral partnership, which would enhance

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regulatory cooperation, information exchange on energy-saving strategies, measurement methods, and research and cooperation on energy efficient technologies.

To see the IEA's final communiqué, please go to:

http://www.iea.org/Textbase/press/pressdetail.asp?PRESS_REL_id=225

PUBLICATIONS

European Commission – Spring economic forecasts 2007 - 2008

On 7 May 2007, the Commission released its spring economic forecast, which predicted that growth will continue at 2.9 % in 2007, down slightly from 3 % in 2006, but still well above potential. Growth is predicted to slow to 2.7 % in 2008 – again, still well above potential growth. Moreover, the Commission predicts that unemployment will shrink to 6.7 % in 2008 through the creation of 5.5 million jobs in 2007 and 2008.

To download the publication, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/forecasts_en.htm

OECD Economic Outlook No. 81, May 2007

Twice a year, the OECD Economic Outlook analyses the major trends and examines the economic policies required to foster high and sustainable growth in member countries. This issue covers the outlook to end-2008. In addition to the themes featured regularly this issue contains two special chapters on globalisation and fiscal consolidation. Forthcoming developments in major non-OECD economies are also evaluated in detail. Each edition of this Outlook provides a unique tool to keep abreast of world economic developments.

To download the report, please go to:

http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,2340,en_2649_201185_20347538_1_1_1_1,00.html

CONSULTATIONS

VAT - Possible introduction of a mechanism for eliminating double taxation in individual cases

The European Commission has launched an online consultation to ascertain the views of the public and businesses on the possible introduction of a mechanism for eliminating double taxation in individual cases.

You will find more information at the following link:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/consultations/tax/article_3316_en.htm

Closes 31 May 2007

Towards a future policy on industrial emissions – public consultation on the IPPC Review

In the context of the process to evaluate and review the IPPC Directive, the Commission is analysing the potential for improving the current EU legislation on industrial emissions. This questionnaire seeks your views on actions which could be taken at EU level to ensure a high level of environmental protection through the prevention and control of industrial emissions. The replies will be used as input to the process of reviewing the legislation during 2007.

You will find more information and access to the questionnaire at:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ippc/ippc_review_consul.htm

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COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important Dates

30 April-3 May 2007 Committees
7-10 May 2007 Committees, groups, mini-plenary (Brussels)
28-31 May 2007 Yellow week
4-8 June Committees, Mini-Plenary
11-14 June Groups
18-21 Plenary (Strasbourg)

SME related Events

31 May 2007 EU Breakfast Briefing with Ben Smulders, Head of Cabinet to Neelie Kroes, Competition Commissioner; organised by the British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/>

5 June 2007 Business Dinner with European Commissioner Meglena Kuneva, Commissioner for Consumer Protection "*How can we build consumer confidence in EU business, products and institutions?*"; organised by the British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/>

5 June 2007 Working Breakfast on European Mechanical Engineering: Keeping this European SME industry world champion; organised by the SME Union; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.sme-union.org/newsletters/index.php?lan=en&id=33>

7 June 2007 ESBA Annual Event: Why should EU leaders think small first?; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to:
COA9F/Coaching/ESBA_Annual_Event.aspx

12 June 2007 EU breakfast briefing with Simon Fraser, Head of Cabinet to Peter Mandelson (DG Trade), 'European trade policy and competitiveness', organised by the British Chamber of Commerce, taking place in Brussels. For more information, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/>

26 June 2007 Energy Europe: Changing Our Energy Culture; organised by Friends of Europe; Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.friendsofeurope.org/>

10 July 2007 'Driven by innovation' CEO luncheon series with Nabil Sakkab, Vice President, Corporate R&D, Procter & Gamble Cincinnati; organised by the American Chamber of Commerce; for more information, please go to:
<http://www.amcham.be/cgi-bin/events.cgi?Action=register&id=>

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