



HEADLINES

EU/ Labour Law: ESBA welcomes Parliament's call for SME focus but regrets lack of clear commitment on competitiveness

On 11 July, the European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report on flexicurity and labour law. The report responds to the Commission's Green Paper on labour law and its recent Communication on flexicurity. The report, drafted by Jacek Protasiewicz (EPP-ED, Poland) criticizes the Commission's Green Paper for allegedly claiming that contracts of indefinite duration are outdated.

Although it recognizes the need for flexible working time arrangements, the report states that indefinite contracts should remain the standard. With regard to working time, it states that it is important to balance competitiveness and employment levels with the needs for a family life. At the same time, the report emphasizes that the differences between Member States labour law systems are so great that a uniform approach to labour law across the EU may be problematic. Instead, the report states that the Union should focus on reviewing and implementing existing legislation, with a particular reference to its impact on SMEs. The report points out that SMEs must play a central role in improving labour law, as they are fundamental to increasing employment.

ESBA welcomes Parliament's assertion that SMEs must play a more prominent role in improving labour law and agrees with the report's assertion that there should be no uniform approach to labour law across the EU. However, by simultaneously pushing for indefinite contracts, the report is essentially asking for a uniform approach to labour law. Moreover, the report calls for the correct balance to be struck between competitiveness and the need for family life. In addition to avoiding a clear commitment to competitiveness, this point presupposes a uniform work-life 'balance'.

It should not be the role of the EU to determine the correct balance between life and work across all Member States. While increased flexibility is undoubtedly necessary within Member States with rigid labour markets, those with flexible labour markets will find it impossible to adapt to externally imposed levels job security.

To see the report, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+REPORT+A6-2007-0247+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

To see the amendments tabled in plenary:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sce/server/internet/amend_motions_texts/sce_amend_motions_texts_main_02.jsp?ref=A6-0247/2007

To see the Commission Communication, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2007/jun/flexicurity_en.pdf

IN BRIEF

EU/ Research and Innovation: ITRE Committee supported plans to set up EIT

On 9 July, members of the European Parliament's industry, research and energy committee adopted a report on the European Institute of Technology. Although MEPs supported the Commission's plans

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to set up such an Institute, they proposed a number of changes to the Commission's proposal, including renaming the Institute the European Institute for Innovation and Technology and laying down provisions for the partnerships between the private sector and researchers. The adopted report is scheduled to be voted by the EP on 26 September.

To see the report on European Institute of Technology, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/pr/650/650590/650590en.pdf

To see the tabled amendments, please go to:

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/am/669/669789/669789en.pdf

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EU/ Better regulation: EP adopts Commission proposal for a Directive concerning mergers and divisions of public limited liability companies

On 11 July, the European Parliament adopted the Commission proposal for a Directive concerning mergers and divisions of public limited liability companies. This means that the public limited liability companies will no longer have to order costly expert reports in cases of mergers and divisions, unless there is a demand for such reports among shareholders. The adopted proposal is part of a package of ten "fast track actions" presented by the Commission a few months ago with an aim to cut red tape. ESBA supports all actions leading to the reduction of bureaucratic burdens and therefore welcomes the EP's positive position towards the proposed Directive.

To see the EP position on the proposal for a Directive concerning mergers and divisions of public limited liability companies, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0329+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN#BKMD-3>

To read more about the Commission package of "fast track actions", please go to:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/294&format=HTML&aged=1&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

EU/ Postal services: EP establishes 1st reading position on postal market liberalisation

On 11 July, the European Parliament adopted its 1st reading position on the proposal for a Directive concerning the full accomplishment of the internal market of Community postal services. The EP expressed its support for postal market liberalisation but a large majority of MEPs- 512 in favour and 155 against- voted for delaying the complete liberalisation until 31 December 2010. A transition period of 2 years for the 12 new Member States as well as for Member States with particularly difficult topography was also decided.

To see the 1st reading position adopted by European Parliament, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0336+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

To see tabled amendments, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=REPORT&language=EN&reference=A6-2007-0246>

To see the initial legislative text proposed by the Commission, please go to:

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0594en01.pdf

EU/ Reform treaty: EP gives green light to IGC

On 11 July, MEPs adopted Jo Leinen's report on the convening of the Intergovernmental Conference by 526 votes in favour to 138 against and at the same time gave the green light for the IGC to draw up a Reform Treaty for the EU. The completion of a Reform treaty is one of the top priorities of the Portuguese Presidency. The Portuguese Presidency is committed to opening an IGC on 23-24 July and to finalise its work on the Reform treaty at an informal Summit in Lisbon on 18-19 October.

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To see the resolution adopted by European Parliament, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P6-TA-2007-0328&language=EN&ring=A6-2007-0279>

To see the mandate for the IGC agreed during June Council Meeting, please go to:

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/94932.pdf

To read more about the Portuguese Presidency, please go to:

http://www.ue2007.pt/UE/vEN/Presidencia_Conselho/

EU/ R&D: Portuguese Presidency's R&D and Innovation Service

The Community Research and Development Information Service has recently launched an online service with the aim of providing information on the research and innovation initiatives that will be carried out under the Portuguese Presidency. This online service is aimed at providing information on the latest issues in R&D throughout Europe – e.g. information on symposia, conferences and information events in Portugal, but also in the rest of Europe. In addition, a report on research trends in the EU will be published in the autumn by The 'High Innovation /Gain/Expectation Program'.

To access the Portuguese Presidency's R&D Innovation Service, please go to:

<http://cordis.europa.eu/portugal/presidency/>

PUBLICATIONS

Horizontal evaluations of the performance of network industries providing services of general interest

This is the fifth Commission's report of a series of annual reports, which examine the performance of network industries, covering telecommunications, postal services, electricity, gas, air, road and rail transport. Together, these industries account for around 8% of the EU's value added and employ more than 10 million people.

To download the report, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/structural_policies/structuralpolicies_networkindustries_en.htm

The internationalisation of production, international outsourcing and employment in the OECD

This paper reviews some of the possible changes that may occur in the national labour markets of many OECD countries as a result of international trade and the internationalisation of production by multinational companies, with a particular focus on the impact of outward foreign direct investment (FDI) from OECD countries on employment in the home country of the investing firms.

To download the publication, please go to:

[http://www.oilis.oecd.org/oilis/2007doc.nsf/linkto/eco-wkp\(2007\)22](http://www.oilis.oecd.org/oilis/2007doc.nsf/linkto/eco-wkp(2007)22)

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important Dates

16-17 July 2007 Committees

23 July-23 August No activities in Parliament

SME related Events

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10 Sept 2007 Driven by Innovation" CEO Luncheon Series with Ajit Shetty, CEO of Janssen Pharmaceutica, organised by the American Chamber of Commerce, taking place in Brussels, for more information and to register, please go to: <http://www.amcham.be/cgi-bin/events.cgi?Action=register&id=>

10 Sept 2007 Business Dinner with Ms. Viviane Reding, EU Commissioner for Information Society & Media; organised by the British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/events/registration.asp?Eventid=660>

11 Sept 2007 Breakfast Briefing with Peter Mandelson, EU Commissioner for External Trade; organised by British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/events/registration.asp?Eventid=676>

13 Sept 2007 EU Committee Breakfast Briefing with Petra Eler, Head of Cabinet of Commissioner Gunter Verheugen, Enterprise and Industry; organised by the British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/events/registration.asp?Eventid=653>

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