



### HEADLINES

#### **ESBA/ Events: ESBA Task Force Report on the Swedish business climate published**

On 13 September, Director of ESBA's Swedish Member Organisation DNV, Patrik Engellau together with ESBA President, Tina Sommer published the ESBA Task Force Report "Entrepreneurs: The Future for Sweden - Suggestions to the Swedish Government" in Stockholm. The launch event was attended by, amongst others, Gunnar Hökmark MEP, Mats Qviberg, Vice-Director Öresund and Anna Eliasson, an expert from the Swedish Ministry of Labour.

The Task Force Report presents the pros and cons of the situation that entrepreneurs face in Sweden. It is based on a programme of seminars that took place in Stockholm from 24-27 April 2007. Organised by DNV, Tina Sommer, ESBA Secretary Gabriel Goucha and Senior Brussels Representative Frédéric Soudain met entrepreneurs, academics and other experts from Sweden. The aim of the seminars was to assess how Sweden's entrepreneurial environment is seen from a European perspective and for the Task Force to offer advice based on their findings to the Swedish Government on how to improve the situation for SMEs. The resulting publication, which can be downloaded in English below, includes many familiar recommendations, but some surprises as well.

To download the ESBA Taskforce Report on the Swedish business climate, please go to:  
[CobraManagedFiles/DNV\\_ESBA\\_Sept\\_07\\_doc.pdf](CobraManagedFiles/DNV_ESBA_Sept_07_doc.pdf)

#### **EU/ Energy: European Commission adopts legislative package on Electricity and Gas**

On 19 September, the European Commission adopted the third package of Directives, which seeks to establish a free and open EU Internal Market of Gas and Electricity. The proposal put consumer choice, fairer prices, cleaner energy and security of supply at the centre of its approach. The need for the adopted legislative package was recognised in the Commission's Energy Policy for Europe, launched at the beginning of the year, and endorsed by the European Council in March.

The aim of the Commission's package is to make the Gas and Electricity Market benefit all consumers whether large or small, and to help to achieve more secure, competitive and sustainable energy. In its proposal the Commission calls for the separation of the production and supply from transmission networks and makes it clear that the preferred option in this respect is ownership unbundling. The Commission also recognises the strategic importance of the Energy Policy for Europe and proposes to establish an Agency for the cooperation of International Energy Regulators, with binding decision powers, to complement National Regulators. In addition, the Commission plans to promote cross border collaboration and investment via a new European Network for Transmission Systems Operators, greater transparency and solidarity.

#### **ESBA OPINION**

**ESBA welcomes the Commission proposal on the Gas and Electricity Markets and supports the Commission's view that the best option for the free and open Electricity and Gas Market is ownership unbundling. ESBA believes that anything short of full unbundling is inadequate, as it will continue to allow giant energy companies to exclude SMEs from network-related activities, while**

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simultaneously keeping the price of energy artificially high. ESBA agrees with the Commission's view that only competitive energy markets will be able to ensure greater supply security, by improving the conditions for investments in energy infrastructure.

To access the third package of Directives on Electricity and Gas Market, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/electricity/package\\_2007/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/electricity/package_2007/index_en.htm)

### IN BRIEF

#### **EU/ Labour Law: Presidency Conference on Flexicurity discusses key challenges**

On 13 and 14 September, the Portuguese Presidency, in the cooperation with the European Commission, organised a major conference on Flexicurity. At the meeting, European Ministers discussed for the first time the Commission's Communication "Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity" and agreed on a common approach. The conference also brought together the representatives of workers and employers, NGOs and other experts. The conclusions of the conference will be incorporated into the common principles on Flexicurity due to be agreed by the European Council in December 2007.

#### ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes conference to discuss the Commission's Communication, in particular the strong presence of social partners. ESBA stresses, however, that flexicurity cannot involve imposing a single system on all Member States, as it is not advisable to adopt an EU-wide 'one size fits all' approach to labour law. While increased flexibility is undoubtedly necessary within Member States with rigid labour markets, those with flexible labour markets will find it difficult to adapt to externally imposed levels job security - providing an insurmountable challenge for many SMEs.

To read the Commission Communication, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/news/2007/jun/flexicurity\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2007/jun/flexicurity_en.pdf)

To read the expert report with examples of flexicurity in 27 Member States, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/employment\\_strategy/pdf/flexi\\_pathways\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/pdf/flexi_pathways_en.pdf)

#### **EU/ Labour Law: Parliament discusses the Impact Assessment on the Working Time Directive**

On 12 September, Members of the European Parliament's Committee on the Employment and Social Affairs met to exchange their views on the impact assessment report on the revision of the Working Time Directive. This impact assessment was requested by the Employment Committee and carried out by independent experts. The main finding of the report says that the introduction of a single reference period of one year to the working time will facilitate the introduction of more flexible working time practices across the EU. This, according to the report, may bring potential benefits for both the employers and employees.

#### ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the initiative of the Employment Committee to request an impact assessment on the Revision of the WTD. Changes to a piece of legislation, which will significantly impact the EU labour market should be widely examined by independent experts. ESBA emphasizes the fact that for SMEs, productivity and competitiveness is dependent on the entrepreneur's ability to meet demand for their goods and services in the most efficient and cost-effective way. Given their limited personnel resources, flexibility in the organisation of time and duties undertaken is therefore essential.

To read the impact assessment, please go to:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/dv/wtdstudy/wtdstudyen.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/dv/wtdstudy/wtdstudyen.pdf)

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To see the proposal for a Directive amending Directive 2003/88/EC concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time; please go to:

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005\\_0246en01.pdf](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2005/com2005_0246en01.pdf)

To see the European parliament 1<sup>st</sup> reading report, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+TA+P6-TA-2005-0175+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&language=EN>

### **EU/ R&D: European Commission adopts EUROSTARS programme for R&D-performing SMEs**

On 13 September, the European Commission adopted a funding programme for research and innovation-performing SMEs. The EUROSTARS project is a European research and development project that can address any technological area with an aim to develop a new product, process or service. EUROSTARS is a collaborative project and will involve at least two SMEs from at least two participating countries and shall be market driven. EUROSTARS will begin its funding activities in 2007 with a budget of 800 million EUR over six years.

#### **ESBA OPINION**

**ESBA welcomes the Commission's initiative to adopt a funding programme that targets the niche market of research and innovation-performing businesses in Europe. ESBA hopes that EUROSTARS will fulfil its important aim of stimulating SMEs to lead international collaborative R&D projects and to this end will be communicating the programme to its member organisations through the monthly ESBA EU Programme Tracker.**

To obtain more information about the EUROSTARS programme, please go to:

<http://www.eurostars-eureka.eu/what.do>

### **EU/ Better Regulation: European Commission nominates chair of the HLG on administrative burdens**

On 14 September, the Commission President nominated Mr. Edmund Stoiber, currently Prime Minister of Bavaria, as chair of the new high-level group on administrative burdens. The high-level group will be composed of 15 experts representing SMEs organisations, trade unions, NGOs, academia and politics and will start its work in October, with a three-year mandate. The main aim of the group, described by Commission President José Manuel Barroso as a 'flagship project' for the Commission will be to support the Commission in meeting the goals of the Action Plan for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the EU. The key target of this Programme is to reduce administrative burdens for business in the EU by 25% by 2012.

#### **ESBA OPINION**

**ESBA supports the initiative to set up a high-level group on administrative burdens and welcomes Mr. Stoiber to his new role. The emphasis in the Action Programme on stakeholder involvement through on-line questionnaires, workshops and now the HLG, is also important. ESBA fully backs the ambitious target – research shows that SMEs on average over 7 hours each week filling in forms - and looks forward to supporting Mr. Stoiber's work. ESBA is soon co-launching a campaign on this topic – see below!**

To read more about the Better Regulation initiative, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/better\\_regulation/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/better_regulation/index_en.htm)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

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**OECD: Gaining from Migration - towards a New Mobility System**

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This publication presents a summary of recommendations on how we can all gain from migration. They are the result of a multi-faceted project undertaken in partnership with the European Commission to rethink the management of the emerging mobility system. New ideas based on an exhaustive review of past policy experiences in Europe and elsewhere, are offered for policies related to labour markets, integration and development co-operation.

To purchase the publication, please go to:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?k=5L4MJZ7DQVJG&cid=&lang=EN>

### COMING UP

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#### **Reminder: FSB and ESBA to launch campaign on cutting administrative burdens**

On 1 October, the UK Federation of Small Businesses, an ESBA member, will with the support of ESBA begin a one-month campaign on cutting administrative burdens. Together with the European Commission's Vice-President Günter Verheugen, the FSB will launch an introductory short film (to be followed by a four-film series) with the title "What would you do with 7 extra hours?" The viewing and reception, will take place at the West Midlands in Europe Office from 18:00 to 20:00.

For more information and to register, please go to:

[C5429/Coaching/Other\\_ESBA\\_Events/2007.aspx](http://C5429/Coaching/Other_ESBA_Events/2007.aspx) –

#### **EU Institutions: Important Dates**

24-27 September Plenary Session

24-25 September Portuguese Presidency: International Conference on Energy Efficiency

28 September Portuguese Presidency: International Conference on the Lisbon Strategy and the Fights against Tax Fraud and Evasion

27-28 September Competitiveness Council

01-02 October Transport, Telecommunication and Energy Council

#### **Other SME related Events**

24 Sept 2007 Business Lunch on "The New Approach for Standardisation and Normalisation: A Key Dossier for Companies" with Jacques McMillan, Head of Unit of Regulatory Policy, DG Enterprise; organised by the European Training Institute; taking place in Brussels; for more information please go to: [http://www.e-t-i.be/download/lunches\\_190307.pdf](http://www.e-t-i.be/download/lunches_190307.pdf)

01 Oct 2007 Launch of the FSB short film campaign on cutting administrative burdens "What would you do with 7 extra hours in your week", hosted by the Vice- President of the European Commission Günter Verheugen; organised by the FSB with the support of ESBA; taking place in Brussels; for more information please go to: [C5429/Coaching/Other\\_ESBA\\_Events/2007.aspx](http://C5429/Coaching/Other_ESBA_Events/2007.aspx)

08-11 Oct 2007 "OPEN DAYS 2007- European Week of Regions and Cities" organised by DG for Regional Development and the Committee of Regions; taking place in Brussels; for more information please go to: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/conferences/od2007/about.cfm?nmenu=2](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2007/about.cfm?nmenu=2)

17 Oct 2007 Presentation of the EU Leonardo Project "Passport to Trade: Working across cultures in the EU"; organised by the European Enterprise Institute and partners; taking place in Brussels; for more information and RVSP please contact: [sme@sme-union.org](mailto:sme@sme-union.org)

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18 Oct 2007 EU Committee Breakfast with Jorgen Holmquist, Director General, Internal Market and Services Directorate-General; 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=654>

7 Nov 2007 EU Committee Business Dinner with Mr. Andris Piebalgs, European Commissioner for Energy; organised by British Chamber of Commerce; taking place in Brussels; for more information please go to: <http://www.britcham.be/events/registration.asp?Eventid=711>