



### HEADLINES

#### **ESBA/ Events: ESBA member, the FSB, launches campaign on cutting Admin Burdens**

On 1 October, the UK Federation of Small Businesses supported by ESBA, began an innovative campaign on cutting administrative burdens for SMEs. An introductory short film was launched by European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen at a reception attended by Policy Makers, stakeholders and entrepreneurs. Philip Bushill-Mathews MEP, ESBA President Tina Sommer, who is also Chairman for EU Affairs at the FSB and John Walker, the FSB's Policy Chairman, addressed the guests as well.

The FSB's campaign, which is based on conversations with over 100 SME owners, represents a contribution by the SME sector to the Commission's Better Regulation initiative. Research conducted by the FSB has revealed that small business entrepreneurs spend on average over 7 hours each week filling in forms and reporting! As the first film - entitled "What would you do with 7 extra hours in your week?" - shows, they consider this is time that could be spent much more productively on training, developing their businesses supporting the local community and achieving a better work-life balance.

The first of 4 thematic films was also launched at a Breakfast hosted by Gary Titley MEP in the European Parliament on 9 October. Representatives of the FSB's Northern Regions and their guests viewed and discussed the short film, which explains how SME owners would spend time on training if they could claim back the 7 hours a week they spend on red tape. The additional three films will be available on the 15, 22 and 29 of October.

#### **ESBA OPINION**

**In the context of the FSB's campaign, ESBA urges small businesses to take part in the Commission's new online consultation, launched recently by Vice-President Günter Verheugen, which invites entrepreneurs to identify unnecessary red tape. The consultation (see below) is part of the Commission's Action Programme to reduce admin burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% in 2012. A High Level Group to offer advice on the Programme's implementation is also being established, to which ESBA has nominated 3 candidates. ESBA fully supports the Commission's headline goal.**

To read the campaign's publication, please go to:

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/documentstore/filedetails.asp?id=382>

To watch the compilation film, please go to:

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/data/default.asp?id=529&loc=policy>

To watch the first thematicfilm on training,please go to:

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/data/default.asp?id=533&loc=policy>

#### **EU/SME Policy: European Commission publishes Mid-Term Review on SME Policy**

On the 8 of October, the European Commission published its Mid-Term Review on SME Policy. It takes stock of the progress achieved since the EU's modern SME policy was launched in 2005, focusing on five main areas: cutting red tape, improving access to markets, promoting entrepreneurship and skills, improving growth potential and strengthening dialogue with

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stakeholders. At the same time, the Commission adopted a Communication on reducing the stigma of business failure, which proposes a new 'second chance policy'.

The Review's main finding was that the average cost of setting up and time taken to register a new company has fallen across the EU. It also stressed that entrepreneurship is increasingly part of school education, there is a growing awareness of SME issues and an increasing number of Member States are integrating the interests of SMEs into their policy making process as part of the Lisbon Strategy. The Commission reported that SMEs are a focus of major EU spending programmes in the period 2007-2013 and that implementation of the "Think Small First" principle has so far been successful - it has resulted in 10 fast-track actions in certain areas, which could save SMEs €1.3 billion in administrative burdens.

In its Communication on reducing the stigma of business failure, the Commission invites Member States to disassociate bankruptcy from fraud through legal and awareness-based measures, to help entrepreneurs avoid bankruptcy and to provide a 'second-chance' for non-fraudulent bankrupts. A new website has been launched to promote this policy.

### ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the Commission's Mid-Term Review on the SME Policy and the new 'second chance policy' to reduce the stigma of business failure. Nevertheless, many challenges lie ahead for SMEs. Rigorous application of the 'Think Small First' Principle and implementation of incontrovertible impact assessments across the European Commission are still lacking. These measures are key to ensuring that the needs of small businesses - the backbone of the European economy - are fully taken into account in all policy initiatives. They will help entrepreneurs feel the tangible benefits of the EU's modern SME policy and for progress to be made on the objectives reached so far.

To read the Commission's mid-term review on SME policy, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item\\_id=1048](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=1048)

To read the Commission's Communication on the stigma of business failures, please go to:

<http://www.europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/402&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

To access the new 'second chance', web-site, please go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/sme2chance/>

### **IN BRIEF**

#### **EU/ Energy: European Parliament adopts a Road Map for Renewable Energy**

On 25 September, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the Road Map for Renewable Energy in Europe, drafted by Britta Thomsen MEP. The resolution includes an overall binding 20% target for renewable energy and a binding minimum 10% target for transport biofuels in the EU by the year 2020. The recommendations made in the resolution may be incorporated into the Commission's proposal for a Framework Directive on Renewable Energies, which is expected to be presented on the 5 December 2007.

### ESBA OPINION

ESBA has taken an active stance in the current EU energy debate and welcomes the Parliament's support for the Road Map for Renewable Energy and its ambitious goals. At the same time, ESBA calls on the Commission to incorporate a clear reference to SMEs in its proposal for a Framework Directive. SMEs are one of the biggest consumers of energy in the EU and renewables offer a wealth of opportunities for SMEs to engage in R&D and become involved in energy supply.

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To read the Parliament's resolution on renewable energies, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0406+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

### **EU/ R&D: European Parliament backs proposal for a European Institute of Technology**

On the 26 September, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on the European Institute of Technology, drafted by Reino Paasilinna MEP. MEPS tabled a raft of amendments to the original proposal made by the Commission. Amongst other suggestions, they proposed that the EIT's name should include the word "innovation", called for a pilot phase to test the Institute's feasibility and backed a two-tier structure. The resolution was adopted despite opposition from Green MEPs, who consider the project lacks a realistic budget and is poorly defined.

#### ESBA OPINION

ESBA supports in principle the European Parliament's green light to proceed with the establishment of the EIT. Its objective, of linking research, education and innovation, will make a positive contribution towards reaching the Lisbon Strategy Goals. However, ESBA calls for increased clarity about the EIT's financing and structure. Close consultation with the business community is central to the EIT's success.

To read the Parliament's resolution on the EIT, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2007-0409+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

### **EU/ Postal Services: Member States agree on further liberalisation of Postal Services**

On the 10 October, Member States reached an agreement for the further liberalisation of Postal Services in the EU by 2011. The European postal services market has already been partially liberalised over the past decade, although public operators have retained the right to monopolies over the delivery of letters in certain areas. The deal made during the Council meeting reflects the first reading agreement reached by Parliament in July 2007. 11 Member States were granted 2-year exemptions.

#### ESBA OPINION

ESBA backs the decision of Member States to further liberalise postal services. This represents a significant step towards the completion of the Internal Market in this field, which will provide the consumers with a choice of competitive postal providers. ESBA however considers that a smooth transition must be facilitated, so that services, on which many SMEs rely, are maintained and the industry is able to adapt.

To read more about the Council's agreement, please go to:

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/trans/96265.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/trans/96265.pdf)

### **EU/ Environment: Commission adopts Compliance Assistance Programme for SMEs**

On 8 October, the European Commission adopted a Communication, which proposes the establishment of an Environmental Compliance Assistance Programme for SMEs. It comprises a set of measures that aim to help small businesses minimise the environmental impact of their activities and to implement existing legislation. Funded by Life+, CIP and the Structural Funds, the Programme intends to disseminate information specifically targeted at SMEs and promote support networks and training activities that build expertise.

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## ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the proposal of an Environmental Compliance Programme for SMEs. Whilst many SMEs are already aware of their responsibilities and have integrated these into their activities, an information-based approach to promote good practice can help improve their environmental performance. ESBA urges the Commission to work closely with business organisations, in order to disseminate the message.

To view the Commission's new website on SMEs and the Environment, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/sme/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/sme/index_en.htm)

## **PUBLICATIONS**

### **Robert Schuman: "The Lisbon Strategy: the European Route to Globalisation"**

This study argues that the Lisbon Strategy has produced both encouraging and contrasted results. An assessment of all the EU Member States reveals that some have experienced success, whilst others have produced significant, yet mitigated outcomes.

To download the publication, please go to:

<http://www.robert-schuman.eu/notes.php?num=41>

### **Technopolis Study: "The Effects of Counterfeiting on SMEs"**

This publication, prepared for DG Enterprise and Industry, seeks to find out what has been done to help SMEs in the fight against intellectual property infringements across the 27 EU Member States, and assess what can be done to improve existing mechanisms.

To download the publication, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/industry/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/industry/index_en.htm)

### **EPC Brief: "Cultivating a Market for Innovation in Europe"**

This Policy Brief sets out a ten-point plan for making Europe truly innovative and unlocking all its economic potential. Innovation is crucial to achieving the Lisbon Agenda goals and a strategic policy framework, which allows it to thrive can only be created at the European level.

To download the publication, please go to:

<http://www.epc.eu/en/pub.asp?typ=TEWN&lv=187&see=y&t=30&pg=TEWN/EN/detailpub&l=12&ai=906>

### **Commission "Eurobarometer on Entrepreneurship in the EU"**

This survey on entrepreneurship is about peoples' entrepreneurial mindset. It examines the motivation, choices, experiences and obstacles linked to self-employment. The results will help EU policy makers to understand problems and develop future policy responses.

To download the publication, please go to:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/survey/eurobarometer\\_intro.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/survey/eurobarometer_intro.htm)

## **CONSULTATIONS**

### **Online consultation on Administrative Burdens Reduction**

On the 21 September, the European Commission launched an online consultation on the reduction of administrative burdens. Inspired by an example of Best Practice in Belgium, the consultation invites entrepreneurs to identify unnecessary red tape in order to help the EU improve the quality of its

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legislation. The consultation is part of the Commission's Action Programme to reduce admin burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% in 2012 (see above).

To access the online consultation, please go to:  
[A5B5B/EU\\_Intelligence/Test\\_an\\_SME\\_Tool\\_.aspx](http://A5B5B/EU_Intelligence/Test_an_SME_Tool_.aspx)

### COMING UP

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

15-19 Oct 2007 Political Groups in EP  
22-26 Oct 2007 Plenary Session of the EP  
18-19 Oct 2007 Informal meeting of Heads of States and Governments

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

17 Oct 2007 Conference on the EU Leonardo Project “Passport to Trade: Working across cultures in the EU”; organised by European Enterprise Institute, SME UNION of the EPP, EUROCHAMBERS, STRATEX, and EUROPUBLIC; taking place in Brussels; for more information please contact: [sme@sme-union.org](mailto:sme@sme-union.org)

17 Oct 2007 Seminar on Consumer Policy; organised by the ALDE Group MEPS MEPs Karin Riis-Jørgensen, Diana Wallis and Alexander Graf Lambsdorff; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please contact: [karin.sauerteig@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:karin.sauerteig@europarl.europa.eu)

17 Oct 2007 World Standards Day 2007: ‘Standards and the citizen: contributing to society’; organised by the European Commission; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: [http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/standards\\_policy/international/world\\_standards\\_day/2007\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/standards_policy/international/world_standards_day/2007_en.htm)

17 Oct 2007 Working Breakfast on Plant Protection: “SMEs & the Future of Plant Protection in Europe”; organised by the European Crop Protection Association (ECPA) and the SME Circle of the EPP-ED Group; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please contact: [sme@sme-union.org](mailto:sme@sme-union.org)

18 Oct 2007 EU Committee Breakfast with Mr. Jorgen Holmquist, Director General, DG Internal Market and Services; 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>

18 Oct 2007 Conference on “Collaborating into the Future: Empowering SMEs to Innovate”; organised by the ETI-Project smE-MPOWER; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: [http://www.iff.fhg.de/formulars/SME/SME.php/t\\_blank](http://www.iff.fhg.de/formulars/SME/SME.php/t_blank)