



HEADLINES

EU/ Enterprise: European Commission proposes a ‘Small Business Act for Europe’

On 23 October, the European Commission published its Work Programme for 2008. It reveals proposals to establish a ‘Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe’ in order to address the concerns and needs of SMEs in the EU.

Whilst the concept of a US-style SBA in Europe was originally conceived to facilitate SMEs' access to public procurement through an exemption from the WTO's Agreement on Government Procurement, the current version appears wider in scope. It proposes a combination of general principles and concrete action. The SBA seeks to highlight the “Think Small First” principle, which ensures specific treatment for SMEs in EU legislation, to increase SMEs access to innovation and growth, reduce administrative burdens for SMEs and improve SMEs' participation in EU programmes. The Small Business Act will also seek to help small businesses engage in cross-border activities, through the establishment of legal mechanisms such as a European Company Statute. In addition, it will seek to improve SMEs access to the standardisation process and increase small businesses share of public procurement.

The proposal to establish a ‘Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe’ will be in the form of a Communication. It will reportedly feature in the forthcoming report on ‘A Single Market for the 21st Century,’ part of the Review of Single Market Policy, which results from the Communication ‘A Citizens’ Agenda.’ An interim Report has been already presented to the European Council and will be followed by a final report with proposals for action soon.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA supports the Commission’s idea to propose a ‘Small Business Act for Europe.’ A comparison between the EU and US, where a SBA already exists, demonstrates its impact: European SMEs are smaller than in the US and in the past two decades they have created 7 times fewer global players. In order to fulfil its potential and make a contribution towards achieving the Lisbon Agenda goals, however, ESBA urges the Commission to work closely with business organisations in its development and to ensure the scope of the SBA is wide reaching – in Brussels and at national level.

To view the Commission’s Legislative Work Programme, please go to:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1578&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

To read more about the Review of Single Market Policy, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/strategy/index_en.htm

EU/ Labour Law: European Parliament adopts its position on Qualifications Framework

On 24 October, the European Parliament adopted a legislative resolution, based on the report prepared by Mario Mantovani MEP, defining its position on the proposal for a recommendation on the establishment of the European Qualifications Framework (EQF). MEPs expressed their support

ESBA Bulletin of 26 October 2007 – Volume 9 – Number 14

for the EQF initiative, but at the same time adopted 34 amendments to the European Commission's original proposal.

The main policy objectives of the EQF are to facilitate the transparency of qualifications in Europe, to support the comparability of qualifications held by individual citizens and, by doing so, to ease the process of recognition, and to help to improve the transfer of qualifications between different national or sectoral qualifications systems. The EQF is based on a set of eight reference levels describing 'learning outcomes' - what a learner is able to do – rather than 'learning inputs' – how a particular qualification is acquired.

In contrast to the original proposal, the Parliament's resolution calls on Member States to relate the EQF to their national qualifications systems by the end of 2010, rather than 2009, and to incorporate an EQF into individual certificates and diplomas by 2012. Following the agreement between the EU Institutions, the Council will adopt the EQF by the end of the year.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA backs the creation of the EQF, which should increase the mobility of workers in the EU. ESBA is in favour of the proposed approach, which puts emphasis on learning outcomes, irrespective of learning inputs, and its inclusion of general, adult and vocational training, as well as academic education – all of which are necessary for SMEs to set-up and grow. Experience shows, however, that many of the most successful business owners have few or no formal qualifications and train their staff on the job. ESBA considers it important that these types of entrepreneurial mindset and informal training are recognised and valued too.

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

http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0479en01.pdf

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

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2007-0245+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN>

To read more about the EQF, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/education/policies/educ/eqf/index_en.html

IN BRIEF

ESBA/ Website: First audio podcast and new short-films on Admin Burdens available

On 23 October, ESBA launched the first in a series of new audio podcasts on EU SME-related issues. In an introductory speech, ESBA President Tina Sommer outlines the challenges, which SMEs face, describes some of ESBA's recent achievements, and identifies ways in which small business entrepreneurs can help ESBA improve the environment in which they work. The second and third of 4 thematic films in the UK Federation of Small Businesses' campaign on cutting administrative burdens for SMEs are also now available. They explain how SME owners would develop their businesses and what they would do for their local communities if they could claim back the 7 hours a week they spend on red tape.

To listen to the new audio podcast, please go to:

DABF8/EU_Advocacy/NEW_SME_Podcasts.aspx

To watch the second and third thematic shortfilms on admin burdens, please go to:

C5429/Coaching/Other_ESBA_Events/2007.aspx

EU/ Innovation: Portuguese Presidency signs declaration on Financing Innovation

ESBA Bulletin of 26 October 2007 – Volume 9 – Number 14

On the 9 October, participants at a forum organised by the European Commission and the Portuguese Presidency in Estoril, Portugal, signed a declaration on “Financing Innovation”. The declaration calls for a stronger entrepreneurial attitude in decision making; measures to improve companies’ availability to attract investors; a right environment for new companies to flourish and the channelling of savings into young companies. The declaration is divided into 4 pillars: From Ideas to Market, Investment Readiness, The Right Environment and Savings for Growth and contains concrete recommendations on how to improve current practices.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA welcomes the signature of a declaration on Financing Innovation, in particular the spectrum of financial and support services designed specifically for small businesses. ESBA hopes that the findings of the declaration will be used as a framework for future actions in the field, and stresses, in particular, the importance of the retention of earnings as a measure for financing innovation and growth in SMEs.

In order to read the declaration, please go to:

http://www.eu2007.pt/UE/vFR/Noticias_Documentos/20071012DeclarationEstoril.htm

To read more about financing SMEs growth, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/financing/index_en.htm

EU/ Energy: European Commission promotes use of Hydrogen in new Proposal

On 10 October, the European Commission published a proposal to enable the EU-wide introduction of hydrogen cars. Hydrogen vehicles offer environmental benefits compared to conventional fuel models, as hydrogen is a clean energy carrier, which does not produce any carbon emissions when used either in combustion motors or in fuel-cell systems. In order to facilitate their entry into the EU’s automotive market, the Commission’s proposal aims to introduce hydrogen cars into Whole Vehicle Type-Approval (WVTA) system. Common standards for hydrogen storage will also alleviate perceived safety issues with the use of hydrogen, guaranteeing the safety of the general public. The proposal will now be considered by the Parliament and the Council

ESBA OPINION

ESBA backs the promotion of hydrogen cars in Europe. Earlier in the year, ESBA joined forces to with the representatives of the Regions, Cities, and Civil Society Organisations to urge MEPs to sign the Written Declaration 16/2007 on establishing a distributed Green Hydrogen Economy and advancing a Third Industrial Revolution in Europe. It advocates a post-fossil fuel, decentralised energy model based on renewable energy sources, with considerable environmental and social advantages. The Green Hydrogen Economy, of which vehicles are a part, will facilitate the full participation of “demand side” actors, including SMEs, in the the provision of future energy solutions - with significant economic benefits for Europe and beyond as well.

To read more about the Commission’s proposal, please go to:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/07/405&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

For more information about the Written Declaration, please go to:

[3231A/EU_Advocacy/Latest_ESBA_PRs/16_May_2007_-_ESBA_applauds_MEPs_for_backing_a_Green_Hydrogen_Ec.aspx](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/financing/index_en.htm)

EU/ Entrepreneurship: Candidates for European Enterprise Awards 2007 short-listed

On 24 October, a jury composed of entrepreneurs, business organisations, academics and representatives of European Commission and the Portuguese Presidency short-listed 13 initiatives supporting entrepreneurship for the European Enterprise Awards 2007. The initiatives, chosen from 48 nominees, will compete for awards in 5 categories: the Entrepreneurial Trailblazer Award,

ESBA Bulletin of 26 October 2007 – Volume 9 – Number 14

Enterprise Support Award, Red Tape Reduction Award, Investment in People Award and Responsible Entrepreneurship Award. The Jury's Grand Prize will also be awarded to the entry that is considered the most creative and inspiring entrepreneurship initiative in Europe at a ceremony in Porto, Portugal on 6 December.

ESBA OPINION

ESBA supports all initiatives, which promote enterprise and entrepreneurship in Europe. The European Enterprise Awards are an opportunity to recognise the outstanding initiatives and achievements of Europe's entrepreneurs and small businesses. The showcasing of best practice is intended to create a greater awareness of the role, which entrepreneurs play in society, and to encourage and inspire potential entrepreneurs. ESBA backs these objectives and wishes the candidates well!

To see the list of 13 short listed initiatives, please go to:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1589&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

For more information, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index_en.htm

PUBLICATIONS

OECD: "Globalisation and Regional Economies"

This OECD report looks at how different regions are responding to the challenges posed by globalisation and the strategies they have adopted to support existing competitive advantages and to transform their assets to develop new competitive strengths. Its findings contradict the hypothesis that globalisation reduces the importance of geographical proximity in business, although a new geography of production is seen to be emerging.

To purchase this publication, please go to:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?k=5L4M9MRWV9WC&cid=&lang=EN>

OECD: "Cutting Red Tape: Comparing Administrative Burdens across Countries"

This OECD pilot study measures and compares administrative burdens in the transport sector across eleven member countries: Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Turkey. The aim of the exercise is twofold: to identify good practices and provide input for national simplification strategies, and to develop and test a method for cross-country comparison.

To purchase or download this publication, please go to:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?sf1=identifiers&lang=EN&st1=422007171p1>

European Commission: "Financing SMEs: recommendations for action"

What are the best ways of improving the flow of finance to small firms? The European Commission, the Member States and finance professionals have recently looked at ways that promise to improve the situation of many SMEs. This summary presents the key conclusions of five reports that have reviewed both loan and equity finance and complements the conclusions on seed investment that were published in March 2007.

To read the publication, please go to:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/financing/publications.htm>

CONSULTATIONS

NEW:

Public consultation on the Consumer Scoreboard

The European Commission has launched a public consultation with the aim of collecting the stakeholders' views on the monitoring of consumers' markets and establishing a Consumer Scoreboard to reflect its findings. The consultation is open to Member States, consumer NGOs, businesses and individuals. Responses will be used as an input to the Commission's thinking on the development of the Consumer Scoreboard, which forms part of the Commission's Citizen's Agenda, specifically the ongoing Review of the Single Market.

For more information and to download the questionnaire, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/consultations/consultations_en.htm

Closes 28 November 2007

Public consultation on the Doorstep Selling Directive

The European Commission has opened a public consultation on the Doorstep Selling Directive as a part of the ongoing Review of the Consumer Acquis. The aim of this consultation is to take a stock of the effectiveness of the existing Directive on contracts negotiated away from business premises. The Commission invites stakeholders to comment on the implementation of this Directive and to report any problems it might be not aware of.

For more information and to download the questionnaire, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_int/safe_shop/door_sell/doorstepselling_discussionpaper.pdf

Closes 4 December 2007

ONGOING:

Public consultation on possible European Private Company Statute

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on the obstacles faced by businesses, in particular SMEs, when conducting cross-border business in the EU and on the content of a possible European Private Company Statute. The responses will be taken into account in a forthcoming impact assessment and in any resulting legislative proposal.

For more information and to download the questionnaire, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/company/epc/index_en.htm

Closes 31 October 2007

Public consultation on Social Reality Stock-Taking

The European Commission launched a public consultation on the "social reality" of Europe. It covers the nature of work, family life, demographic trends, social mobility, the position of women in the society, poverty and inequality. The role of the consultation is to generate debate on the social reality across Europe and to seek views on current social trends and on what contributes to today's "well being". It will invite views on access to education and employment as well as on the implications of changing social relationships.

For more information and to download the questionnaire, please go to:

ESBA Bulletin of 26 October 2007 – Volume 9 – Number 14

http://ec.europa.eu/citizens_agenda/social_reality_stocktaking/index_en.htm

Closes 31 December 2007

Online consultation on Administrative Burdens Reduction

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

To access the online consultation, please go to:

[A5B5B/EU_Intelligence/Test_an_SME_Tool_.aspx](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/online_consultation/test_an_sme_tool_en.htm)

Closes 21 September 2008

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important Dates

29-02 Oct 2007 Constituency week in EP

05-09 Nov 2007 Committees and Political Groups in the EP

30 Nov 2007 Environment Council

Other SME related Events

07 Nov 2007 Working Breakfast on Renewable Energy Sources & SMEs; organised by SME Energy/SME Union; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.sme-union.org/event/index.php?lan=en&id=66>

08 Nov 2007 Presentation of the 'Handbook of Research on Entrepreneurship Policy'; organised by FSF, ITPS & NUTEK, together with ECSB, ICSB and EIM; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: http://www.fsf.se/files/Brussels_Nov08.pdf

13 Nov 2007 Conference "Information and Communication Technology Uptake for SMEs Competitiveness"; organised by Portuguese Presidency; taking place in Lisbon, Portugal; for more information, please go to: <http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/newsbytheme.cfm?displayType=calendar#>

14 Nov 2007 Stakeholders Conference on the Review of Consumer Acquis; organised by European Commission, DG for Health and Consumer Protection; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/cons_int/safe_shop/acquis/index_en.htm

21 Nov 2007 SME Action Day; organised by BUSINESSEUROPE; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://businessseurope.e-subscribe.eu/>

21-22 Nov 2007 The 3rd Annual European Energy Policy Conference 2007 on "EU Energy Policy and Technology Challenges"; organised by Epsilon and CEPS; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://guest.cvent.com/EVENTS/Info/Summary.aspx?e=455c0ca8-3464-4a45-9181-2c24fb62ff74>

27 Nov 2007 Conference on "Towards a Global Low Carbon Economy"; organised by European Commission and the High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and Environment; taking place in

ESBA Bulletin of 26 October 2007 – Volume 9 – Number 14

Brussels; for more information, please go to:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/hlg/conference_nov_2007.htm

28 Nov 2007 Breakfast Policy Briefing on the Priorities of the Slovenian Presidency of the EU; organised by European Policy Centre for members; taking place in Brussels; for more information, please go to: <http://www.epc.eu/en/cal.asp?typ=ABOUT&lv=224&pg=AE/en/calendar&ai=1&see=n>