



HEADLINE

EU/Brexit: FSB defend SMEs on the European scene

On 19 February 2016, the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union went under the spotlight as David Cameron came up with a deal negotiating a special status for the UK in the EU. The Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) - the UK's pressure group representing small business owners' interests - will be the voice of micro and small businesses during the EU referendum campaign.

The Prime Minister - David Cameron - responded to FSB's call by asserting that he sought to improve competitiveness in the EU and prioritise SMEs in his EU reform. Furthermore, FSB's in-depth study revealed the main concerns of SMEs regarding the EU referendum. Measures facilitating and reducing red-tape in order to boost cross-border trade are welcomed by SMEs. Among the top priorities of small business owners are the simplification of VAT and the completion of the Single Market whilst protecting the United Kingdom's economy.

Mike Cherry - the FSB Policy Director - outlined that a key issue for SMEs is the lack of clear evidence of the impact of the UK's membership on the EU. SMEs owners' opinion has been divided on whether the EU is beneficial or not for the UK and their businesses. Indeed, if both campaign groups do not provide tangible and concrete evidence, SMEs owners will have difficulties to understand the real impact of this referendum on their economic activities. Hence, FSB members ask for neutral and unbiased information of the real impact of the forthcoming referendum.

For more information about the new settlement for the United Kingdom with the European Union, please click [here](#).

IN BRIEF

EU/Environment: The impact of Circular Economy on European Businesses

On 1 March 2016, an analysis of the implications of the Circular Economy has been presented by James Murry- reporter for Business Green. *De jure*, the umbrella term 'Circular Economy' represents the alternative to the classical economic model that has been used in the past decades. Practically speaking the implementation of the Circular Economy Strategy will impact virtually every single department within any given business. Whilst the direction in which the various policy proposals are going is the right one according to the journalist, circular economy appears confusing and presents plenty of challenges for businesses. What has been suggested is that said challenges should be tackled one step at the time and an honest assessment of how businesses can play a role in the circular economy ought to be conducted. Prioritization is key in order to achieve in practice this massive project.

For more information on Circular Economy, please click [here](#).

EU/Single Market: Economic, social and single market priorities 2016

On 25 February 2016, the European Parliament adopted three resolutions concerning the Stability and Growth Pact, social aspects and economic progress in the single market. The first resolution

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highlights the importance of full implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact which should leave room for addressing the refugee and security challenges, and investment and structural reforms. The second resolution addresses the employment indicators which are included in the Annual Growth Survey for monitoring social developments in Member States. In the third resolution Members of the European Parliament asked for inclusion of a “single market pillar” in the European Semester. This should be accompanied by a system for identification of country-specific barriers to the single market, regular monitoring, and an evaluation of its integration and competitiveness.

For more information on the Annual Growth Survey 2016, please click [here](#).

EU/Public Procurement: More access to public tenders for SMEs

On 29 February 2016, the Cambridge Network published an article on better access to public procurement. The article elaborates on the new process that has been introduced, making it easier for SMEs to participate in public tenders. One of these new elements is the European Public Procurement Document (ESPD) was adopted early this year as part of implementation of EU Directive 2014. The tool requires small companies no longer to submit all their documents. Since it is established on at European level, it would make cross-border bidding for tenders easier. Besides the ESPD, difficult pre-qualification questionnaires are no longer required for low-value contracts and access has been increased due to splitting up of larger contracts.

For more information on public procurement, please click [here](#).

EU/Capital Markets Union: The EESC supports the CMU however raises some questions about whether it will really help the SMEs.

On 17 February 2016, The European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) published their opinion on the Action Plan on building a Capital Markets Union. The Committee supports the goals of the action plan namely, creating a more resilient financial system, providing both companies and investors with more options for funding and investing. However the Committee believes that capital markets will not be accessible for small and micro-enterprises. The Commission should further explore how to diversify funding options that would suit the small and micro-enterprises best. The EESC calls upon the Commission to address the information deficit and to create a framework for lending that is more SME-friendly. The Committee believes that the European Investment Bank should play a more active role in helping SMEs gain access to finance.

For more information on the EESC’s opinion on the Capital Markets Union, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

ECIPE: What is Wrong with the Single Market?

In late February, the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE) published a paper on the Single Market and its implications for Europe. In this paper, the authors explore what it is meant by a Single Market, and what the possible reasons for its failure to meet its goals are. While the nature and profile of the Single Market, and its regulations, have changed over the years, they often have focused on the wrong issues, or on factors that would not change the nature of markets as such. The Single Market Strategy would open up commerce in the EU and greatly benefit SMEs among other European actors

To access this publication, please click [here](#).

CEPS: The EU deal to avoid Brexit: Take it or leave

On 23 February 2016, the Centre of European Policy Studies (CEPS) published a special report on Brexit. In this CEPS Special Report, Stefani Weiss and Steven Blockmans analyse the substance of the “Decision of the Heads of State or Government, meeting within the European Council, concerning a New Settlement for the United Kingdom within the European Union” and shed light on its legal character. They contextualise this EU deal to avoid Brexit, and draw on the conclusions reached in a simulation of European Council negotiations between representatives of think tanks in the European Policy Institutes Network (EPIN), conducted by CEPS and the Bertelsmann Stiftung in October 2015.

To access this publication, please click [here](#).

(FEPS): The "tug war" about the inclusion on financial services in TTIP

On 26 February 2016, the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) published a report analysing the inclusion on financial services in TTIP. The United States (US) and the European Union (EU) have the largest financial sectors worldwide and are the main trading partners in financial services. The combined level of bank assets in the US and the EU is about 50% of the world total and so is the combined level of stock market capitalisation. The combined level of debt securities markets in the US and the EU exceeds 60% of the world total. Thus, financial services, which include banking, securities markets, insurance, are an important and controversial issue in the negotiations of the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP).

To access this publication, please click [here](#).

CONSULTATIONS

Green Paper on retail financial services: better products, more choice, and greater opportunities for consumers and businesses

DEADLINE: 18/03/2016

The Green Paper seeks the views on how to improve choice, transparency and competition in retail financial services to the benefit of European consumers. It also inquires on how to facilitate cross-border supply of these services, so that financial firms can make the most of the economies of scale in a truly integrated EU market. Finally, it is discussing the impact of digitalisation on retail financial services with a view to allow for growth of innovative solutions in this area in the EU.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#).

Public consultation on the evaluation and modernisation of the legal framework for the enforcement of intellectual property rights

DEADLINE: 01/04/2016

With this consultation the Commission seeks views from all interested parties, in particular rightholders, the judiciary and legal profession, intermediaries, public authorities, consumers and civil society, on the question if the legal enforcement framework is still fit for purpose.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#).

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Consultation on proposal to reform notifications of new regulatory requirements for services providers

DEADLINE: 19/04/2016

The aim of this public consultation is to seek the view of stakeholders on the existing services notification procedure established by the Services Directive and on potential improvements of that procedure. The results of this consultation will provide invaluable input for the Commission when preparing any future policy proposals and assessing the impact of different policy options

To access this consultation, please click [here](#).

Consultation on the Written Statement Directive

DEADLINE: 20/04/2016

The main purpose of this consultation is to gather insights and contributions from the public in the context of the ongoing evaluation of the Written Statement Directive.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#).

Consultation on Improving double taxation dispute resolution mechanisms

DEADLINE: 10/05/2016

The consultation is part of the work on implementing the June 2015 Action Plan for a Fair and efficient Corporate tax system in the European Union and focuses on improving the double taxation dispute resolution mechanism.

To access this consultation, please click [here](#).

COMING-UP

EU Institutions: important dates

03 March - 19 March

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|------------------|--|
| 08 March 2016 | Economic and Financial Affairs Council |
| 09 March 2016 | COREPER I |
| 10-11 March 2016 | Justice and Home Affairs Council |
| 11 March 2016 | COREPER I |
| 14 March 2016 | Agriculture and Fisheries Council |
| 14 March 2016 | Foreign Affairs Council |
| 14-17 March 2016 | European Parliament Committee Meetings |
| 15 March 2016 | General Affairs Council |
| 16 March 2016 | COREPER I |

Other SME-related events

Data Protection - Safe Harbour and the GDPR

09/03/16, Brussels

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On 09 March 2016, The British Chamber is organising an event with the intent to discuss the current legal framework and guidance for transfers of personal data out of the EU. It will also gather policy makers and different actors in order to shed the light on the recent Safe Harbour development.

To find out more about this event, please click [here](#).

Stability of EMU and prospects for fiscal union

09/03/16, Brussels

On 09 March 2016, Bruegel will organized an event in which it will host an in-depth debate on political implications and the recent development of the EMU in Europe. Major advances have been made. However, failures will be discussed between experts, academics and businesses representatives.

To find out more about this event, please click [here](#).

Better regulation for consumers?

10/03/16, Brussels

On 10 March 2016, the EESC will be holding the 18th edition of the European Consumer Day “Better regulation for Consumers?” to encourage an exchange of views between businesses, consumers and European Commission representatives on what should be taken into account by the Commission and other institutions in implementing this new Better Regulation strategy.

To find out more about this event, please click [here](#).

DIA-CORE Final conference options for the upcoming renewable energy package

22/03/16, Brussels

CEPS is organizing an event on the Upcoming Renewable Energy Package. During the course of the event various themes will be debated such as: Assessment of the existing policy mechanisms, a dialogue on future policy needs for renewable electricity (RES-E), heating & cooling (RES-H) and transport (RES-T).

To find out more about this event, please click [here](#).