



IN BRIEF

EU/Mobilize: An Erasmus Program for European SMEs - the European Project MobiliseSME

The EU-funded project MobiliseSME wants to provide European enterprises a better access to the Single Market by applying to the small and medium size industry world an idea that has been successfully tested in other areas: an international exchange program for the employees of SMEs. The vision behind MobiliseSME is firmly rooted in the belief that such a European mobility scheme for SME-employees will raise the competitiveness of participating companies, by improving cooperation and opening new business opportunities with foreign partners. To realise this vision, the project is structured in activities that aim to verify the feasibility of the scheme and then to implement it: an online survey aimed at 100.000 MSMEs from 19 EU countries + Turkey, 2 focus groups per country in 13 countries and the testing of a pilot scheme for cross border exchanges during 1-2 months. MobiliseSME will create a win-win-win approach, where hosting SMEs, sending SMEs and the participating employees are rewarded by sharing opportunities.

To read more about MobilizeSME, please click [here](#)

EU/ Intellectual Property Rights: Parliament Votes on Trade Secret Directive

On 14 April, the European Parliament has adopted the Trade Secrets Directive. While the interest in this issue sparked as early as 2003 with legislative action requested by big multi-national companies, the directive will be particularly beneficial to Small and Medium-Sized companies that often do not have the resources to protect their intellectual property. According Constance le Grip, rapporteur for the European Parliament, the new trade secrets directive will be creating a stable legal basis, fight fragmentation and improve those key structures that the smaller enterprises need in order to trust the European soil with their know-hows. Nevertheless despite the advantages, several political groups (Greens and GUE) and journalists have directed strong criticisms towards the dossier claiming that the directive will hamper the freedom of speech of whistle blowers and investigative journalists.

For more information on Trade Secrets, please click [here](#).

EU/ Energy Efficiency: the European Efforts to achieve Energy Efficiency

In 2016, the Commission and the Parliament will be asked to legislate on a series of initiatives on energy efficiency as per the Energy Union Action Plan. Together with the scheduled revision of the energy efficiency directive, the Commission has published a legislative proposal on energy labelling. Energy labelling has the potential to help Europe reach some of the climate change ambitions expressed in the COP21 Paris talks as well as educate consumers to make the most efficient choices for their purchases. Yet the proposal will impact companies and the Parliament is currently debating how to make sure that no business actor is disproportionately burdened by the change in the scaling system. The ITRE and ENVI Committee therefore are currently in the process of reviewing the proposal

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and debating the re-scaling period, the potential requirements of the online product portal and how to make the transition a positive experience for consumers, SMEs and larger companies.

For more information on Energy Efficiency, please click [here](#).

EU/Single Market: Unleashing the full potential of the single market with a specific focus on SMEs

On 21 April 2016, Internal Market Committee MEPs voted on a report that explores ways to unleash the full potential of the single market to the benefit of consumers, employees and businesses, in particular start-ups. Priorities include eliminating unjustified barriers to trade, helping SMEs and start-ups to scale up their activities, reforming and simplifying VAT rules, developing legislative tools to foster the sharing economy and building a strong culture of compliance and enforcement. The MEPs call for EU funding to be made more visible; an easier access to the patent system, and for measures to facilitate (cross-border) crowdfunding. With regard to the sharing economy, MEPs stressed the need for a single market approach, as well as the need for a Commission proposal to address geo-blocking and other unjustified forms of discrimination by market players. Moreover, the committee also called for efforts to tackle the non-tariff barriers SMEs are facing in the EU.

For more information on the European Single Market, please click [here](#).

EU/Public Procurement: new rules favouring SMEs entered in force.

The 18th of April was the deadline for the transposition of three directives on public procurement and concessions adopted two years ago. For small and medium enterprises it will now be easier and cheaper to bid for public contracts. The rules also allow public bodies to promote social inclusion, innovation, and ensure the compliance of tender awards with all relevant rules and obligations. Moreover, public authorities can now provide incentives to companies to develop socially responsible products and services. The new rules will help fighting corruption by respecting the EU's principle of transparency and competition, as stronger guarantees for sound procedures have been now introduced. The Commission is also working on other aspects of the transition to e-procurement: by October 2018, e-submission will become mandatory for all types of public procurement.

For more information on Public Procurement, please click [here](#).

EU/Digital Single Market: the Commission presents the Digitizing EU industry Package.

On 19 April 2016, the European Commission presented the package on the digitisation of industry and public services. As European industry across all sectors must fully use digital opportunities to be globally competitive, the Commission will help coordinate national and regional initiatives on digitising industry, focus investments in EU's public-private partnerships, invest € 500 million in a pan-EU network of digital innovation hubs, set up large-scale pilot projects to strengthen internet of things, adopt future-proof legislation and present an EU skills agenda. The concrete measures proposed by the Commission to speed up the standard setting process involve co-financing the testing and experimentation of technologies to accelerate standards setting and focusing on five priority areas: 5G, cloud computing, internet of things, data technologies and cybersecurity.

For more information on Digital Single Market, please click [here](#).

EU/TTIP: A survey finds record low levels of public support for TTIP in Germany and the US

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On 21 April 2016, the Bertelsmann Foundation published its latest findings on the public opinions in Germany and the United States for trade, and more specifically the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. The survey shows a decline in support for both free trade in general, and TTIP in particular, with a significant drop from the same foundation's 2014 survey. The Germans' support for TTIP is at an all-time low, with 17% of the German participants expressing support for TTIP - seeing it as a good thing. In the US, 18% of the respondents completely oppose the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership. These results show a big diminishing of support as in 2014, 55% of Germans thought TTIP was a good thing. They demonstrate the public's growing concerns over lowering of standards, consumer protection and the labour market. These results were published just before the start of the current, 13th round of negotiations on TTIP in New York.

For more information on the results of the survey, please click [here](#).

EU/Internal Market: The EP calls for stronger efforts in removing non-tariff trade barriers within the EU

On 22 April 2016, the European Parliament's committee on the internal market adopted a report calling for the full elimination of non-tariff barriers in the EU. The rapporteur, Daniel Dalton, argues that not much has changed when it comes to red tape in trade among EU members, as compared to trade with the outside world. His report outlines the disproportionate burden that non-tariff trade barriers place on European SMEs, seeing that an insignificant percentage of young SMEs have undertaken cross-border expansion, and that for them such an expansion is still seen as international trade.

For more information on the EP report, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

Hill+Knowlton: No more reward for know-how theft

On 19 April 2016, Hill + Knowlton Strategies published an article commenting the Trade Secrets Directive. Jessica Faure author of the piece, presented an overview what EU lawmakers validated: a text which defines trade secrets for the first time in EU law and provides common EU-wide remedies to companies that are victims of trade secret misappropriation. The publication touches upon the ongoing debate around this directive and foresees the future policies in the field

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

CER: The Economic Consequences of leaving the EU: Final Report of the CER Commission on Brexit

On 21 April 2016, The Centre for European Reform (CER), an independent think-tank published a report on the economic impact of Brexit on the UK and EU. After the announcement of the referendum in 2013, the Centre for European Reform invited leading economists, journalists, business people and EU experts to form a commission to discuss the economic consequences of withdrawal from the EU. Their claims can be found inside this publication.

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

FOE: Why is Europe still lagging behind in digital skills and entrepreneurship?

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On 21 April 2016, the Friends of Europe- leading think-tank that aims to stimulate thinking on key global and European issues, has published a briefing on the digital skills in the Union. The digital economy offers new opportunities for citizens and businesses as it spurs innovation, growth, jobs and competitiveness in an increasingly-connected world. Yet Europe is still struggling to keep up with the ongoing global digital revolution and complete its much-hoped-for Digital Single Market. Friends of Europe have gathered some views of prominent individuals on the matter.

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

CONSULTATIONS

Public 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](#).

Consultation on an effective insolvency framework within the EU

DEADLINE: 14/06/2016

This consultation seeks stakeholders' views on key insolvency aspects. In particular, it seeks views with regard to common principles and standards which could ensure that national insolvency frameworks work well, especially in a cross-border context.

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

Public consultation on the role of publishers in the copyright value chain and on the 'panorama exception'

DEADLINE: 15/06/2016

The Commission is launching a public consultation on the role of publishers in the copyright value chain and on the 'panorama exception'. It will serve to gather views in particular on the impact that granting an EU neighbouring right to publishers could have on the publishing sector, on citizens and creative industries and as to whether the need (or not) for intervention is different in the press as compared to other publishing sectors.

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

Public consultation under the Start-up Initiative

DEADLINE: 30/06/2016

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The objective of this public consultation is to seek direct feedback from all relevant stakeholders, including entrepreneurs and start-up communities, with the aim of improving the environment for start-ups in Europe.

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

Public Consultation on the Evaluation and Review of the ePrivacy Directive

DEADLINE: 05/07/2016

The objective of the consultation is to collect opinions which will be used for an overall review and a future REFIT of the ePrivacy Directive. It is looking at a number of issues with the existing 2009 Directive, which include: ensuring consistency of ePrivacy rules with the General Data protection regulation; updating the scope of the directive in light of the new market and technological reality; enhancing security and confidentiality of communications; addressing inconsistent enforcement and fragmentation at national level.

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

[Public consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights](#)

DEADLINE: 31/12/2016

The objective of the consultation is to make an assessment of the present EU social "acquis", determining the extent to which existing rights are practiced and remain relevant or whether and where new ways to deliver on these rights should be considered; to reflect on new trends in work patterns and societies due to the impact of new technologies, demographic trends or other factors of importance for working life and social conditions.

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

COMING-UP

04 May 2016	Coreper I
04 May 2016	Coreper II
09-12 May 2016	Plenary session of the European Parliament in Strasbourg
11 May 2016	Coreper I
11 May 2016	Coreper II
11 May 2016	Trade Policy Committee (TPC) - Experts (Services and Investment)

Other SME-related events

E-COMMERCE in EUROPE: Lessons for Parcel Delivery from Electronic Communications 03/05/2016, Brussels

On 3 May 2016, Bruegel is hosting an event with the participation of Andrus Ansip, the European Commission Vice-President in charge of the Digital Single Market. He will discuss the place of parcel delivery in the DSM, and comment on research by Bruegel scholars which suggests that there are useful parallels with telecommunications interconnection and with roaming.

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How to Most Effectively Use Technical Assistance for ESI Funds 2014-2020?

12/05/2016, Brussels

On 12 May 2016, Lexxion Publisher is hosting an event answering questions and explaining procedurally how to use the Technical Assistance for ESI Funds as with the new Programming Period a number of changes for the implementation and management of Technical Assistance have been introduced.