



IN BRIEF

EU/ Trade Secrets: Council Unanimously Adopts Trade Secrets Directive

On 27 May 2016, the Council has adopted the directive that sets out rules for the protection of trade secrets and confidential information of EU companies. This Council decision follows the one taken by the European Parliament that adopted the text in single reading at the Plenary Session of the 14 April 2016. The directive clarifies the definition of 'trade secret' by introducing an EU-wide denotation: information which is secret, has commercial value because it is secret, and has been subject to reasonable steps to keep it secret. While the directive explicitly states that it will not impose any restrictions on workers in their employment contracts, criticism have been raised in terms of its impact on whistleblowers. Nevertheless, the directive was much needed in order help SMEs protect their IP. Trade secrets have an important role in protecting the exchange of knowledge between businesses, in particular SMEs, and the directive will strengthen their use helping small and big companies protect their know-hows.

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

EU/ Single Market: Commission launches Standardisation Package.

On 1 June 2016, the European Commission presented a Communication setting out measures to modernize European standard setting in the light of technological developments, political priorities and global trends. The package elaborates on the Commission's decision to develop a Joint initiative on Standardisation (JIS) which will be formally launched on 13 June 2016. The JIS will draw bridges between the various stakeholders (standardisation organisations, industry, SMEs, consumer associations ...) in order to achieve a modern framework that will deliver adequate and fit for purpose standards by the end of 2019. Among a series of actions contained in the Package, the Commission also suggested a Pilot project to improve the representation of European SMEs and societal stakeholders' interest in international standardisation processes.

For more information on the Standardisation Package, please click [here](#).

EU/Single Market: European Commission supports the Collaborative Economy.

On 2 June 2016, within the context of the Single Market Strategy, the European Commission published a Communication on the collaborative economy. The Communication: "A European agenda for the collaborative economy" contains a mixture of recommendations that provide provides guidance on

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how existing EU law should be applied to collaborative economy business models, clarify key issues such as market access requirement, liability, consumer protection, employment rules and taxation. Within their communication, the Commission invited Member States to review and revise existing legislation according to the suggestions made in the document. Both Vice-President Katainen and Commissioner Bienkowska both emphasized how the Commission's efforts tried to come up with a regulatory environment that simultaneously allows new business models to flourish and protects European consumers.

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

EU/Capital Markets Union: Opinions of MEPs differ greatly on the review of the EU's Investment Plan.

It has been one year since the Investment Plan or Juncker Plan was launched and the Commission announced that it plans on extending it beyond 2018, the initial end date. In a debate with Jyrki Katainen, Vice-President of the European Commission, MEPs expressed very different opinions on the matter. The debate focused on the functioning of the European Fund for Strategic Investment (EFSI), which is only a part of the Investment Plan. While the two biggest parties – EPP and S&D – welcomed the working of that fund, the others were not convinced the Plan had achieved enough during its first year. The position of the Commission itself is that the Plan works well and that it has helped SMEs access investments they otherwise might not have received.

For more information on the discussion of the Investment Plan in Plenary, please click [here](#).

EU/Brexit: Brexit uncertainty fueling pessimism among British SMEs on financial prospects for the year ahead

The Close Brothers Business Barometer, a quarterly survey of UK SME owners and senior management from a range of industries revealed that only 20% of British SMEs feel confident about the prospects of the UK economy. The numbers show that 31% of those surveyed believe that financial recovery would be slow. The survey also registers growth of the number of SMEs that foresee a decline in the economy, which has risen slightly from the 25% it was at the beginning of the year. The CEO of Close Brothers Invoice Finance, Mr David Thomson, explained that a lot of UK SMEs have ambitious and innovative plans for their businesses, but pessimism over the development of the economy is preventing them from acting on them. He further argues that the Brexit debate is based on personal preferences rather than calculations of its effect on business.

For more information on the impact of Brexit on SMEs, please click [here](#).

PUBLICATIONS

CEPS: The Impact of the Collaborative Economy on the Labour Market

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On 3 June 2016, the Centre of European Policy Studies (CEPS) published a report on the collaborative economy. In this CEPS Special Report, Willem Pieter De Groen and Ilaria Maselli the direct and indirect impact of the collaborative economy on the labour market. The findings, based on a collection of empirical studies, suggest that most workers do not earn their main income through online platforms and they obtain earnings from different types of platforms. Earnings from physical/local services are, in general, substantially higher than virtual services that can potentially be delivered globally.

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

ECIPE: Digital Investments, Data and Growth in Europe: A Framework for Analysis

In May 2016, the European Centre for International Political Economy (ECIPE) published a paper on digital investments and the use of data. In this paper, Erik van der Marel tries to create a coherent policy framework for policy makers which connects several recent papers that have addressed the issue of digital investments and extends discussion on their issues covered, which are data, software investments, how it can induce economic growth within the EU, and what kind of policy reforms are subsequently needed.

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

Bruegel: E-commerce in Europe: parcel delivery prices in a digital single market

On 25 May 2016, Bruegel published a policy contribution on parcel delivery. In this report, J. Scott Marcus and Georgios Petropoulos analyse the parcel delivery issues in the European Union, mainly the high prices for cross-border parcel delivery, while making a comparison with the telecommunications sector.

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

CONSULTATIONS

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.

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

Public consultation under the Start-up Initiative

DEADLINE: 30/06/2016

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 for the Fitness Check of EU consumer and marketing law

DEADLINE: 02/09/2016

This consultation takes place in the context of the 'Fitness Check' of EU consumer and marketing law. The purpose of the Fitness Check is to evaluate if these directives are fit for purpose on the basis of the criteria of effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, relevance and EU added value.

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

Public consultation on the possible revision of the Mutual Recognition Regulation (EC) No 764/2008

DEADLINE: 30/09/2016

With this consultation the Commission seeks the views of all interested parties on: the mutual recognition principle and its possible shortcomings; the functioning of the Mutual Recognition Regulation; potential options to be explored for the revision of the Mutual Recognition Regulation.

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

Main barriers to the cross-borders distribution of investment funds across the EU

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DEADLINE: 02/10/2016

This consultation supports the creation of a Capital Markets Union, of which a key aim is to foster retail and institutional investment of investment funds. This consultation is part of the Action Plan package and builds upon the replies received to both the CMU consultation and the Commission's recent Call for Evidence on the EU regulatory framework for financial services. The Commission will use this information as a basis for taking action to address the cross-border barriers to distribution.

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

10 June - 24 June

10 June 2016	COREPER I
10 June 2016	Trade Policy Committee - Deputies
13 June 2016	ECON Committee meeting in the European Parliament
13 June 2016	IMCO Committee meeting in the European Parliament
14 June 2016	Trade Policy Committee - Experts (Services and Investment)
14 June 2016	IMCO Committee meeting in the European Parliament
14 June 2016	ECON Committee meeting in the European Parliament
14 June 2016	JURI Committee meeting in the European Parliament
14 June 2016	ITRE Committee meeting in the European Parliament
15 June 2016	COREPER I
15 June 2016	COREPER II
15 June 2016	EMPL Committee meeting in the European Parliament
15 June 2016	REGI Committee meeting in the European Parliament
16-17 June 2016	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council
16 June 2016	COREPER II
16 June 2016	EMPL Committee meeting in the European Parliament
17 June 2016	Economic and Financial Affairs Council
17 June 2016	Trade Policy Committee
20 June 2016	Environment Council

Other SME-related events

New rules for posted workers - Better protection of workers or the end of posting?

15/06/2016, Brussels

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On 15 June 2016, the Confederation of Swedish Enterprise is organising a seminar discussing the controversial proposal that has received a yellow card from national parliaments as well as causing much dispute in the European Parliament.

Who, What and for Whom? Shaping European Microfinance

16-17/06/2016, Warsaw

On 16 and 17 June 2016, the European Microfinance Network (EMN) will hold its 13th Annual Conference in Warsaw (Poland). The purpose of the event is to be a meeting of minds, ideas and experiences, with more than 300 delegates of actors active in the microfinance sector.