

Dossiers coming up for discussion in the European Commission 01 - 28 March 2010

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Monday 1st and Tuesday 2nd March: Tax Policies for a Post-Crisis World - Brussels Tax Forum

The news:

Commissioner for taxation, customs, anti-fraud and audit, Algirdas Šemeta, will host the 2010 Brussels Tax Forum, where the theme this year will be "Tax Policies for a post-crisis world". Discussions will focus on the lessons to be learned from the crisis for tax policy, how to carry out tax reform in the current economic context, and which reforms to implement.

Participants at the Forum will include MEP Sharon Bowles, former Competition Commissioner Mario Monti and Spanish Secretary of State for Finance Carlos Ocaña, as well as many high level academics, policy makers and experts.

The background:

The Brussels Tax Forum is an annual conference that brings together policy makers, experts, stakeholders and the general public from all over the world to discuss tax issues of particular political and general interest.

The event:

15h30: Press conference on the 1 st March with Commissioner Šemeta, MEP Bowles and Secretary of State Ocaña, in the Charlemagne Building, 170 Rue de la Loi, Brussels.

Monday 1st March – Friday 5th March: European e-Skills week

The news:

The first ever European e-Skills Week will take place between 1 st and 5 th of March 2010. European e-Skills Week highlights the growing demand for skilled ICT users and professionals to drive a competitive and innovative Europe. This campaign aims to inform students, young professionals and SMEs about the vast range of opportunities that ICT-related jobs present.

The European e-Skills Week 2010 is expected to involve 300,000 participants in more than 100 activities. The events will take place across Europe with more than 20 participating countries. This exciting collaboration ensures that the European e-Skills Week 2010 will be one that is both informative and memorable for a wide and diverse audience.

The background:

In September 2007 The European Commission presented a long term e-skills agenda for Europe and proposed key action lines at EU level.

Further developing the long term e-skills strategy to encompass higher level innovation skills is a necessity and a logical next step for supporting European growth and competitiveness. Stakeholders also welcome the intention of the Commission to organise a major European awareness campaign.

The event:

Opening event: 2 nd March at the CeBit fair in Hannover.

Closing event: 5 th March at the Square in Brussels.

Wednesday 3rd March: Communication on Europe 2020

News

The European Commission is set to adopt its communication on the Europe 2020 Strategy on 3 March. This is the new Commission's first political initiative in the economic field.

The aim is to provide a European-wide response to the current economic crisis and to prepare for the transition to a more sustainable economy that meets this decade's challenges in particular government deficits, an ageing population, climate change and globalisation.

The Commission proposes three priorities for action: knowledge, employment and the green economy. It also calls on the Member States to step up the coordination of their economies in order to meet these objectives.

Background

The Commission's proposals have been drawn up by way of preparation for the European Council to be held on 25-26 March.

The event

Press conference to be given by President Barroso on 3 March.

Wednesday 3 rd March: Opening of the Galileo Application Days event in Charlemagne

The news:

The Commission is planning to demonstrate satellite navigation applications developed with financial support from the Sixth and Seventh Framework Programmes for Research.

The Galileo Application Days event will take place from 3 to 5 March in Charlemagne and on the Berlaymont Esplanade. There will be workshops, lectures and, above all, the presentation and live demonstration of innovative applications. The event is open to invited guests, the press and the general public. The Berlaymont Esplanade will be transformed into a "mini-world" divided into zones representing the sea, the mountains and the city. The public will be able to discover astonishing applications which can, for example, guide a boat into harbour, monitor patients suffering from Alzheimer's, rescue people lost in the mountains or offer assisted steering to reduce fuel consumption and CO2 emissions.

The background:

Since 2008, the Commission as Programme Manager has been officially responsible for the European satellite navigation projects EGNOS and Galileo.

EGNOS is an "augmentation" system which significantly improves the accuracy of the American GPS system. EGNOS has been operational since October 2009 for the general public (Open Service) and will be certified to offer a Safety of Life Service for the aviation sector as of November 2010.

Galileo is the global satellite navigation system currently being built and deployed by the European Union. The first two satellites will be launched in December 2010. In the spring of 2014, Galileo will comprise an initial constellation of 18 satellites and will begin to offer three of the five services mentioned in the specifications: the Open Service, the Search and Rescue Service and the Regulated Public Utility. The Safety of Life Service and the Commercial Service will be offered at a later date.

The Commission also manages the funds of the Framework Programme for Research. Under the Sixth Framework Programme (2002-2006) and since the start of the Seventh Framework Programme, the Commission has already invested almost €150 million in projects linked to satellite navigation, most of which relate to the applications.

The event:

Opening session on Wednesday, 3 March at 15.30 in Charlemagne, attended by the Vice-President of the Commission Antonio Tajani, responsible for Enterprise and Industry.

The opening session will be preceded by a round table (14.00) involving senior managers in the satellite navigation sector. At 16.30, the event will move to the Berlaymont Esplanade for the official

inauguration of the "mini-world", with the participation of Vice-President Tajani and the press. Cocktail.

The event programme can be consulted at <http://www.application-days.eu/>. It is also possible to enrol for the workshops and lectures on the website and to request a press pass if necessary.

Thursday 4 March: European Programme for Recovery

The news:

The Commission will adopt the second batch of the €4-billion-Economic Recovery Package. This second batch concerns electricity interconnection projects and pipeline projects in the European Union.

Guenther Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy, will present this decision in a press conference. The complete lists of projects that will receive funding and the exact amount received will be published.

The background:

In March 2009 the EU set aside €3.98 billion to assist European economic recovery. The European Energy Programme for Recovery foresees Community financial assistance to energy projects in the fields of CO₂ Capture and Storage (CCS), offshore wind energy (OWE) and gas and electricity infrastructure. In December 2009, the first batch was agreed. This was for projects for carbon capture and storage and offshore wind projects.

The event:

12h15: Press conference with Guenther Oettinger, Commissioner for Energy, followed by a technical briefing in the Berlaymont Press Room, Brussels.

Friday 5 March: Hands-on on Gender Equality: EU to tackle gender pay gap

The news:

Ahead of International Women's Day, Vice-President Viviane Reding, Commissioner for Justice, Fundamental Rights and Citizenship, will present the new findings of a Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to gender equality. How is gender equality perceived in the EU? Is the EU doing enough? What are priority areas for action? The European Commission will address all these questions with the launch the Gender Pay Gap Campaign 2010.

Against the current economic backdrop, gender equality has a key role to play in boosting competitiveness, economic recovery and growth. Only by employing *all* the smart brains and committed workers that Europe has will the EU make a successful exit from the current crisis.

Launching the second phase of a European-wide communication campaign on the gender pay gap, Vice-President Reding will present possible Commission actions for tackling it. This second phase of the campaign that started last year will introduce new tools and take the campaign to the national, regional and local level.

The background:

Across the economy, women in the EU earn an average of 17.6% less than men for each hour worked. This gap remains intolerably high and stable. The gender pay gap is the difference between men's and women's pay (based on hourly earnings across the economy).

Equal pay for equal work has been a fundamental principle in EU law for over 50 years (currently Article 157 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). The 1975 Equal Pay Directive has been implemented in all Member States, and makes pay discrimination on the grounds of sex illegal. The 2002 Directive on equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions, also applies to pay. It introduced the

definitions of direct and indirect discrimination and requires Member States to set up Equality Bodies to promote and support equal treatment between women and men.

But despite this fundamental principle and the existing legislation to tackle direct discrimination, the gender pay gap persists and in some countries has even widened. The gap is the result of multiple and complex factors which go beyond the single issue of equal pay for equal work, such as labour markets that are segregated horizontally and vertically or difficulties to reconcile work and private life. Tackling it therefore requires a wide range of actions going beyond legislation.

The event:

12h15: The findings of the Eurobarometer on Gender Equality will be presented together with the launch of the Gender Pay Gap Campaign with a press conference by Vice-President Viviane Reding in the Press Room of the Berlaymont, Brussels.

Monday 8 March: 10 years of higher education reform - Briefing on upcoming Bologna Process Ministerial Conference

The news:

The Commission will provide a technical briefing on the upcoming Bologna Ministerial conference on university reform in Budapest and Vienna, 11-12 March. Ministers responsible for higher education from 46 European countries will take stock of the achievements of the first decade of the Bologna Process (1999–2010) and officially launch the European Higher Education Area, as decided at the original Bologna Conference in 1999.

The background:

The Bologna Process has grown from 29 countries in 1999 to 46 today. Several reports on the reform progress to date will be presented to Ministers in Budapest/Vienna, among them the new Eurydice "Focus on Higher Education in Europe 2010", which gives a comprehensive country-by-country picture of how the Bologna Process has changed the university landscape in Europe over the past 10 years.

The reports will show that good, albeit somewhat uneven, progress has been made in implementing the Bologna reforms and indicate the areas where reform efforts should concentrate in the coming years.

The main Bologna reforms concentrate on the three-cycle degree structure (bachelor, master, doctorate), quality assurance in higher education and recognition of qualifications and periods of study.

The Commission fully supports this intergovernmental process because it can help to develop the skills and capacity of the European workforce to be innovative. This is especially acute in times of crisis and changing labour markets.

The event:

8 March:

11h00: Technical briefing in the Berlaymont Press Room, Brussels

12 March:

13h00: Press Conference in Vienna

Tuesday 9 March: Commission launches European Heritage Label for sites which celebrate history and ideals of the EU

The news:

The European Commission will launch the 'European Heritage Label' as an EU-wide initiative. The aim of this initiative is to highlight sites that celebrate and symbolize European integration, ideals and history.

The background:

The Commission's proposal builds on a 2006 intergovernmental project involving 17 Member States. Expanding the European Heritage Label into an initiative of the European Union will give it greater credibility, visibility and prestige.

Sixty-four sites have received the label under the existing scheme. They include the house of Robert Schuman, the French statesman who was one of the founding fathers of the EU, in Scy-Chazelles (Lorraine), and the Gdansk Shipyards, where Solidarność, the first independent trade union in a [Warsaw Pact](#) country, was founded and which helped trigger the events that would finally unite the continent after the end of the Cold War.

The event:

16h00: Press Conference by Commissioner Androula Vassiliou after the College meeting in Strasbourg.

Wednesday 10 and Thursday 11 March: Conference "EU Projects in Favour of the Roma Community"

The news:

As part of its contribution to 2010, the European Year Against Poverty and Social Exclusion, DG Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth (EAC) is organising a conference and exhibition to discuss how EU programmes help the Roma minority.

500 people will meet at the Charlemagne building for the event which is based on a selection of Education, Culture and Youth best examples of projects related to the Roma communities funded through the DG EAC programmes and structural funds run by DGs EMPL and REGIO.

The background:

The Commission has designated 2010 to be the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The Roma population is one of the biggest ethnic minorities in the EU with millions living in many Member States. Their situation is characterized by persistent discrimination and far-reaching social exclusion; they are at greatest risk of being poor and unemployed. European and national opinion surveys show that many Europeans have negative views on this group which are often based on stereotypes and prejudice. Other traditional European ethnic minorities in Member States share their situation.

Many of the key areas for Roma inclusion - education, employment, social inclusion, health services, gender equality or infrastructure and urban planning - are mainly or entirely national responsibilities. The Commission is committed to supporting Member States in implementing policies to improve the situation of the Roma Community.

The event:

The conference "EU Projects in Favour of the Roma Community" will take place in the Charlemagne building, 170 Rue de la Loi, Brussels.

Thursday 11 March: Launch of new selection procedure for EU officials

The news:

Better, Faster, Stronger: The European Personnel Selection Office launches modernised and streamlined selection procedures for EU officials.

- Better: There will be annual competitions for the most common job profiles. This allows potential candidates to plan their application and helps strategic human resource planning by the institutions.
- Faster: The new selection procedures will be quicker, with fewer steps.
- Stronger: A key principle is a shift from knowledge to competency-based assessment. This is well proven to be one of the best predictors of future job performance.

The background:

On 16 th March, EPSO will launch the first of its new, modernised and streamlined selection procedures for EU officials.

In an increasingly competitive jobs market, the European institutions need to ensure that our selection procedures enable us to attract a diverse range of excellent applicants.

The event:

13h15: Press Conference on the 11 th March by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič, David Bearfield, Director of EPSO and John Speed, chairman of the Inter-Institutional Management Board of EPSO.

Friday 26 March: Conference "What future for milk?"

The news:

The European Commission will organise the Conference "What future for milk" in Brussels on 26 March. It will bring together leading representatives from the dairy sector. The objective of the Conference is to discuss different issues that emerged during the recent dairy crisis: Contractual relations between milk producers and dairies, bargaining power of milk producers, market instruments, information on markets and products, innovation and research.

The background:

The recent crisis in the dairy sector leads to questions about the future viability of this sector. In this context the Commission established a High Level Group (HLG) with the purpose of discussing mid-term and long term arrangements. In addition to the discussions within this HLG the Commission would also like to consult more widely, and this conference forms part of that wider consultation.

The event:

Conference in the Charlemagne building, GASP Room, Rue de la Loi 170, 1040 Brussels

Source: European Commission