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CEBRE – Czech Business Representation, protects the interests of the Czech business community in relation to EU institutions, informs Czech businesses about EU legislation affecting them, trains Czech entrepreneurs in Brussels and represents Czech business associations at European business federations. Contact: Czech House, 60 Rue du Trone, 1050 Brussels, Tel: +32 2 2139 450/2, e-mail: cebre.europe@mail.be, www.cebrecz

Limits to labour market mobility don't help EU competitiveness. On the contrary, they get in the way!



From left: Joelle Milquet (Belgian Minister of Employment), Commissioner Vladimír Špidla, Vladimír Müller (Czech Ambassador to Belgium), Jørgen Rønneest (Chairman of SAC, BUSINESSEUROPE)

In light of the economic crisis, as unemployment is rising rapidly, opening the Belgian labour to people from recently acceded EU countries, including the Czech

Republic market, seemed to be quite uncertain till the very last moment. This happened on May 1, 2009, exactly five years after the accession of the ten new states to the EU. The European Commission proved in its report published last autumn that opening the labour market may have only positive results and restrictions may be highly negative. Limitations of the basic right of European citizens for a free labour movement often have political overtones rather than economic

ones. Germany and Austria's answer to whether they will open the labour market to the newcomers or not is still a resounding "No".

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One question for Commissioner Špidla

Do you consider the opening of Belgian labour market to workers from EU8 as partly your own success?

Belgium and Denmark have become the most recent Member States to start applying EC law on free movement for EU-8 workers. On top of that, Denmark decided to apply EC law on free movement also to workers from Bulgaria and Romania. Of course,

I do commend this approach very much and that is why I would like to take this opportunity first to congratulate both countries for their decision. Indeed, it is

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Commissioner Špidla

Businesses call for a more systematic approach to impact assessments

EU business organisations backed up by the Czech Presidency called on EU institutions for greater transparency and significant improvements in the analysis of costs, benefits and the systematic evaluation of impacts

on businesses (especially SMEs) in EU lawmaking during their gathering on April 28th 2009. Better engagement of the Parliament and Council in the impact assessment process, more cost benefit analysis, ex post evaluations and effective public consultations were all improvements claimed by the business organisations with the advent of the new Parliament and Commission. Gert-Jan KOOPMAN, Director from DG ECFIN noted that while much had been done to improve the Impact Assessment system (IA), "the current economic climate raises some fundamental questions about what more can be done to avoid new burdens on business and reduce existing ones."

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Debate on IAs organised by CEBRE on April 28, 2009 in Brussels

NEWS FLASH

New State Energy Concept

The Czech Republic has a plan of the energy concept of the Czech Republic to 2050. Two thirds of the electricity generated last year came from coal power plants and more than one-third from the nuclear plants. In the future, the Czech Republic should orientate itself more towards nuclear sources of energy and limit gas. The import of gas from Russia and Norway amounts to 75% and 24% of consumption respectively. Crude oil import represents approximately 70% of Czech fuel import from abroad.

Temporary regime for granting loans for the Czech Republic

The Commission permitted Czech governmental, regional and local bodies to provide aid in the form of reduced interest rates for loans for any period of time (which conclude by December 31, 2010) to enterprises struggling with financial difficulties due to loan limitations.

Czech economy continues to fall

The quarterly interannual fall of the Czech economy achieved 3.4 percent. This is the highest slump in the Czech Republic's history. The analysts expected fall by 1.4 to 4 percent. The estimations for this year assume the fall between 2.3 and 2.4%.

Czech Republic remains No. 1 for German companies even in the crisis period

The CR has been elected the most attractive country for investors for the forth consecutive time by German enterprises active in the region of Central and Eastern Europe. The survey shows without a doubt that, compared to the other countries in the region, the situation in the CR is very good.

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TWELVE STEPS TO IMPROVE IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Any proposal with significant impact on business is provided with impact assessment prepared by the European Commission's services. Its aim is to improve policy initiatives and assess potential impacts of the proposal on businesses if it is adopted. Since the proposals change during the life-cycle of the legislation, there is a question of how to adapt the IAs during the negotiations, namely in the Council and European Parliament.

These are the 12 steps defined by UEAPME and EUROCHAMBRES to improve the impact assessment process:

1. Strengthening the process for gathering data about the impacts on SMEs
2. Systematic use of the SME Test
3. Common rules for the application of impact assessments.
4. Earliest consideration of policy options
5. Standard format for all impact assessments
6. Improved transparency – publishing draft impact assessments
7. Accessibility
8. Routine consideration of IAs by the Council and the European Parliament
9. Increased use of cost-benefit analysis by Council and Parliament on their significant amendments to proposals
10. Reinforcing institutional support and monitoring throughout the impact assessment life-cycle
11. Improved commitment by Member States to conduct their own impact assessments
12. Longer consultation periods. Minimum period should be extended from eight to twelve or sixteen weeks.

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Evropa
bez bariér

Europe
without barriers

Europe
sans barrières

TALKING ABOUT...



HOW TO IMPROVE IAs AT THE EU LEVEL?

Since the signing of the Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Lawmaking in 2003, both the Parliament and Council must consult Commission impact assessments from the start of discussions. It is critical that they take into account impact assessments throughout the negotiations, conducting further analysis of costs and benefits where significant amendments to proposals are tabled. Unfortunately, there has been very little evidence of their engagement. Steps must be taken to ensure that this procedure improves by providing the required support and means for Presidencies and Parliament reporters to request that further analysis is undertaken as

a routine part of negotiations when it is considered necessary. Significant strengthening and further embedding of the use of thorough impact assessments – especially if a proposal imposes or reduces cost on business (particularly SMEs) – is needed. Business stakeholders should be engaged throughout the negotiation life-cycle of proposals across all three institutions. In this aim, the IAs must be accessible, readable, transparent and professional. Still, the Commission has a lot to do when it comes to the consultation of businesses. The minimum period of consultation (8 weeks) is not often respected and should be extended to twelve or sixteen weeks.

EU BUSINESS REPRESENTATIVES UNITED FOR BETTER IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

CEBRE with the Czech Presidency hosted a meeting with EU business representative organisations on April 28th 2009 to discuss the use of Impact Assessments by the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. Erik Berggren of BUSINESSEUROPE stressed the need for greater transparency in the way the Commission's impact assessments are scrutinized for their quality. Luc Hendrickx of UEAPME agreed that the system is not transparent enough and that "it cannot be properly impartial when the Commission assesses the impact of its own proposals in house, especially if it does so relying on data coming from interested parties". Ben Butters of EUROCHAMBRES also considered the current Impact Assessment process to be often opaque, both in terms of timing and the data used. However, he went further, calling for a significant increase in the use of IAs by the Council and the Parliament. Speakers for the Parliament and the Presidency on behalf of the Council concurred that there were difficulties faced by both. However, Ales Pecka from Czech Permanent Representation to the EU said that "making progress on a better regulation agenda remained a priority for the Czech Presidency and we will reflect on the views presented by business in the

Council's deliberations to the topic of impact assessment in May". Elisabeth Kristensson from the incoming Swedish Presidency confirmed that better regulation would be a "top priority" of their agenda. Robert Bray, Principal administrator from the Committee on Legal Affairs/European Parliament, underlined the usefulness of impact assessments to the Parliament, particularly the impacts on SMEs. Furthermore, Impact Assessments offer a real opportunity to "measure the success of legislation through ongoing evaluation". Fabian Zuleeg, Senior Policy Analyst at the European Policy Centre, joined the business call for a more robust, independent and transparent Impact Assessment process. "In addition, all of the institutions need to do more to evaluate impacts after the fact and to assess how legislation is operating on the ground," said Zuleeg.



Speakers of the debate on „Impact Assessments on SMEs: Enough and good enough?“ on April 24, 2009. From left Michal Kadera (Director of CEBRE), Gert-Jan Koopman (Director of DG ECFIN, European Commission), Ales Pecka (Czech Permanent Representation)

EUROPEAN NUCLEAR FORUM IN PRAGUE AND THE RESULTS

At the end of May, the 4th session of the European Nuclear Forum took place in Prague. Around 300 participants from all over Europe attended this event which again has given rise to a very interesting discussion about



Zuzana Krejčířiková

nuclear energy, its role in the European energy mix and its future. Three working groups of the European nuclear forum created in 2007 under the auspices of the European Commission presented their results and reports about the opportunities and risks of nuclear energy and the transparency of its use. The Czech Republic, whose energy mix is composed of more than 30% nuclear energy, plays an important role amongst the Member States of the EU that use nuclear energy for energy production. Currently in the Czech Republic there are two nuclear power plants: one in Temelin (two units), one in Dukovany (four units). However, further plans are being developed by the Czech power company CEZ, a.s. in the Czech Republic and in other countries such as Slovakia and Romania. For this reason, the objective unbiased debate about the use of nuclear energy that has taken place in Prague is important, and the Nuclear Forum provides the optimal place for it. Further information about the 4th session of the Forum can be found at: http://ec.europa.eu/energy/nuclear/forum/forum_en.htm.



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Enjoy reading,
Zuzana Krejčířiková,
Director European Affairs, CEZ

European Nuclear
Energy Forum

Prague - Bratislava



Entrepreneurs, get involved and create standards for yourself!

At the opening of European Small and Medium-Sized Enterprise (SME) Week, a day-long conference under the title Better access of SMEs to standardization took place in Prague on May 6th 2009. More than forty representatives of entrepreneurs, SMEs and experts spoke about stumbling blocks of standardization and the best way to increase the involvement of SMEs in the process of standards creation. Standards come into existence on the basis of consensus of all the interested entities. They are voluntary, officially acknowledged and used by the European Commission as a means of harmonisation. One European standard substitutes thirty national standards in Europe. Correct use of standards reduces costs, increases effectiveness, reduces risk to export and brings legal guarantees. However, the access of SMEs to the standards is more difficult due to language barriers, high cost, lack of human resources, as well as lack of knowledge of the standardization process. With regards to insufficient sources and expert capacities of SMEs, intermediary organisations, as their representatives, play an important role in the standardization process. Even entrepreneur representatives themselves of-



ten feel the impact of a lack of information and expertise. Firstly, there are very few experts in technical standardization, and interest in this field has been falling for a while. Secondly, the feedback from the actual environment (i.e. from entrepreneurs) is insufficient. The participants in the conference reached an agreement that interconnection of both spheres and mutual cooperation of the entrepreneurs with the communities and subsequently with the standardization authorities in the creation of standards is a guarantee of success. SMEs can be involved in the creation of standards at the national level directly, namely through their participation in working groups, or indirectly through their communities. The same is valid for the European level. Transformation of the Czech Standardization Institute into the Czech Office for Standards, Metrology and Testing took place in the Czech Republic on January 1st. The result is a considerable lowering of the cost of standards. Every entrepreneur can obtain access to all valid and invalid standards for €30 per year (€115 a year for printed standards) through a new electronic library of Czech State Standards. The Prague conference took place within the SMEST project (www.smest.eu).

SMEST

ONE QUESTION FOR COMMISSIONER ŠPIDLA

(continued from page 1)

the role of the Commission to promote the principle of free movement of workers, and I believe we have stand our ground really honourably in this respect. Figures speak for themselves: in 2004, only 3 Member States (Ireland, Sweden and UK) opened their labour markets to workers from EU 8. Recently, we have entered into the final stage

of the 7 years transitional period with only 2 Member States (Austria and Germany) which still maintain their right granted by the 2003 Accession Treaty to apply restrictions. No doubt there has been a lot of hard work of the Commission including DG Employment, my team and myself behind this major progress.

Free movement of workers

(continued from page 1)

Liberalisation of the labour market in the EU for Czech citizens was the priority of the Czech Presidency. The endeavour was reflected by the motto "Europe without Barriers" and the Czech Government emphasized that it is necessary to solve the economic crisis by removing barriers preventing internal market development. On the eve of the decision of the Belgian government, on March 18, 2009, CEBRE and the Ambassador of the Czech Republic in Belgium, Mr. Vladimír Muller, held a round table on the topic of the EU labour market with the MEPs, representatives of the business sphere, employers, Member States and the Belgian Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, Mrs. Joelle Milquet. The transitional period applied to new EU members since 2004 was approved for the period of 2+3+2 years. The last two-year period can commence on May 1, 2009 on the condition that the Member State gives the Commission sufficient reason for

it. The first countries that opened their labour markets to the new members of the EU were Great Britain, Ireland and Sweden. The other countries followed them. However, according to the statistics, the mobility of Czech employees is very low. Perhaps only the neighbouring countries, such as Germany and Austria, could have justified concerns. In 2006 there were 3.6 million employees in Belgium, of which 296,000 were foreigners (8.3%), 212,000 of them came from the EU and only 8,700 of them from EU+10.



Round table on „Free movement of workers“ organised by CEBRE on March 18, 2009

What You Shouldn't Miss

Concert by the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra June 11, 2009

A concert of the world-famous Czech Philharmonic Orchestra will mark the 15th anniversary of the death of the composer Bohuslav Martinů. The first concert by the Orchestra took place on January 4th 1896 at the Rudolfinum Concert Hall. This time, the Orchestra will play Symphony No. 1, H 289 by Martinů and Cello Concerto op. 104 by Antonín Dvořák at the Palais des Beaux-Arts.

Meeting of the BUSINESSEUROPE Council of Presidents June 11 – 12, 2009

Every six months BUSINESSEUROPE supreme authority Council of Presidents meets to monitor progress in the organisation, discuss current events affecting business, and plan strategy for the future. In mid-June 2009 the meeting of the presidents of Europe's largest employer federations will be hosted in Prague.

CEBRE debate: How do we handle the economic crisis? June 17, 2009

This panel discussion will focus on the implementation of the European Economic Recovery Plan and on national measures to combat economic crisis. To register, contact us at brussels@cebre.cz.

High Level Panels on Entrepreneurship Education June 25 – 26, 2009

The Third territorial High Level Reflection Panel on Entrepreneurship Education will take place in Prague, co-organized by DG ENTR, DG EAC, Czech Ministry of Education and Industry and Trade and CEBRE. Representatives from central European Member States will gather to discuss ways to enhance entrepreneurship education from the perspectives of teachers, students, entrepreneurs and policy makers.

Czech Street Party - Closing Ceremony June 27, 2009

Do not miss the closing ceremony of the CZ PRES in front of the Czech House! Last year, more than 3000 people participated. You can look forward to street performances, rock music and selected works of contemporary Czech visual artists. In brief, you can expect a modern and dynamic show!



Events

March 18, 2009

ROUND TABLE WITH COMMISSIONER ŠPIDLA ON FREE MOVEMENT OF WORKERS

A high-level panel in March discussed the impact of transitional periods applied to the free movement of workers by some Member States. Participants agreed that such restrictions are of a political rather than economic nature.

(See more on page 3)

April 6 - 7, 2009

CONFERENCE ON PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND EMPLOYERS

The Czech Presidency hosted approximately 200 delegates from education institutions, companies and EU authorities in Prague. The aim of the conference was to discuss the ways to achieve in practice the most effective forms of partnership between education in-

stitutions and employers, to motivate both partners to cooperate in terms of recognition of the education and qualification frameworks. It also dealt with matters related to the involvement of employers in education and training as well as the interlinking of education, research and innovations with companies.

April 28, 2009

CEBRE BUSINESS BREAKFAST ON IMPACT ASSESSMENTS: ENOUGH AND GOOD ENOUGH?

BUSINESSEUROPE, EUROCHAMBRES and UEAPME called on the European Commission, Parliament and Council for greater transparency and significant improvements in the analysis of costs, benefits and systematic evaluation of impacts on business, especially SMEs, in EU lawmaking.

(See more on page 2)

May 7, 2009

BUSINESSEUROPE SME EVENT: SMEs, how are you doing?



At the beginning of the first European SME week, BUSINESSEUROPE organized an SME event in Brussels. Arndt Kirchhoff, Chairman of BUSINESSEUROPE's Entrepreneurship & SME Committee, stressed that European SMEs are the key actors in a swift and successful economic recovery. However, to release their huge potential, decisive policy action

the European Commission for Entrepreneurship and Industry Günter Verheugen, as the key note speaker.

May 14 - 15, 2009

EUROCHAMBRES CONGRESS IN PRAGUE

Under the theme "Doing Business without Barriers", the 16th EUROCHAMBRES Congress closed the first



From left: Petr Kužel (President of the Czech Chamber of Commerce), Pierre Simon (President of EUROCHAMBRES), Günter Verheugen (Vice-President of the EC), Jan Fischer (Czech Prime Minister), Vladimír Tošovský (Czech Minister of Industry and Trade)



Speakers' family photo of debate titled „How are you doing? – SMEs in a larger Europe“ organised by BUSINESSEUROPE on 7 May 2009

is necessary. The Czech Republic was represented by Mr. Josef Lat, Chairman of the Board of Benes & Lat Company, who questioned the EU environmental policy and its negative impact on SMEs.

European SME Week jointly with the European Commission. Congress addressed the major challenges that businesses, and therefore Chambers of Commerce, face. Respect of Internal market principles, cutting red tape and better regulation are all more acute in the current economic crisis. Vice-president of the EC Gunter Verheugen confirmed his support for

May 12, 2009

CEBRE DEBATE WITH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

CEBRE organized a debate on entrepreneurship in Europe in cooperation with the Metropolitan University Prague with Jiří Plecity, Member of the Cabinet of Vice-President of



Jiří Plecity

From left: Jan Fischer, Petr Kužel, Günter Verheugen during the EUROCHAMBRES Congress



better lawmaking, especially when it comes to SMEs. The future of the EU is in energy efficiency, investment in education and innovation.

AVAILABLE
IN BRUSSELS!



Any questions or comments?
Interested in participating in some events?

Contact us at:
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