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2015 COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME: WHAT IS IN IT?



The new Commission Work Programme for this year was welcomed by the business community, especially its focus on decreasing the regulatory and administrative burden. Businesses have the greatest expectations especially when it comes to the proposals on Energy Market, new Single Market Strategy and Digital Single Market. Moreover, they expect positive results from the better law making efforts and revised rules in this area including new set up of Impact Assessment Board. According to the European Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry EUROCHAMBRES it is hard to gauge how much substance the work programme will add to the positive jobs and growth rhetoric of the new Commission, until further details are available on the specific content of the many laudable packages. The 2015 work programme tackles many areas that are crucial to driving the EU's economic revival, none more so than market access. "We don't need a new set of rules for the so-called digital single market; we need to ensure that single market provisions in

general are fit for the digital era," says General Secretary of EUROCHAMBRES Mr Abruzzini. BUSINESSEUROPE welcomes that the Commission work programme focuses on key priorities, especially on those supporting growth and competitiveness. It also appreciates political willingness shown by President Juncker and his team. On the other hand, BUSINESSEUROPE would like to see stronger linkage of initiatives from the work programme with industrial competitiveness supporting measures which is the key priority for European companies. However the most important remains the implementation of new rules at national level as well as adaptation of businesses to the new rules. Therefore business organisations EUROCHAMBRES as well as BUSINESSEUROPE agree less is more and positively assess shorter list of Commission's initiatives. Last but not least the annex of planned withdrawals sends positive signs not to lose time with pending proposals and focus on initiatives where a compromise can be reached.

YEAR OF INDUSTRY AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION HAS BEGUN

In 2014, the European Commission presented its communication "For a European Industrial Renaissance", that recognises the role of industry for sustainable economic growth and the overall competitiveness of the EU. The aim, as the communication mentions, is to increase the share of industry on European GDP from the current approximate of 15% to 20% by 2020. Czech entrepreneurs' associations and especially the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, member of BUSINESSEUROPE, welcomed this communication. The Czech Republic belongs to countries with a long industrial tradition and the share of industry on the total GDP is one of the highest in the EU. As for the rest of the EU, the Czech industry was heavily hit by the crisis, but recent surveys on industrial performance for 2015 are rather optimistic. However, the problem of the Czech Republic is in the long term the lack of qualified workforce.

Technical education does not interest young people and there is a shortage of workers on the market. For all these reasons, the Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic designated 2015 as a "Year of Industry and Technical Education". The main aim of the campaign is to show both to general public and professionals that industry is a modern and perspective sector that offers high-quality jobs, especially to the young generation. The campaign has been supported by the Government of the Czech Republic as well as by hundreds of companies, schools and other stakeholders. The campaign will be accompanied by many events including conferences, seminars and workshops, fairs, open days in technical schools, universities and companies, as well as competitions for students. The Confederation of Industry hopes that the campaign will help to change the general perception of industry and attract many young talents.

CEBRE was founded in 2002 by the three most important Czech business organizations - Czech Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations of the Czech Republic with kind support of the Ministry of Industry and Trade via its Trade promotion agency CzechTrade.



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News FLASH

>CZECH INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION UP AT THE END OF 2014

According to Eurostat data, industrial production in the Czech Republic increased in November 2014 both in month-to-month (+1.2% against October 2014) and year-to-year comparison (+4.7% against November 2013).

>NATIONAL CONVENT ON EU SETS TOPICS FOR 2015

The Coordination Council of The National Convent on the EU defined its priority topics for this year, e.g. internal security, employment, digital agenda, energy security or euro. The Convent will invite broad public to discuss over these topics via conferences and round tables.

>EFSI PROJECTS MUST BE TRANSPARENT

Czech business' and employers' organisations welcomed the publication of the EC proposal on the European Fund for Strategic Investments. However, they stress the need to set sound selection criteria for financed projects, maintain transparency in the selection process and apply mechanism to involve businesses in it. Geographical balance and transparent structure of project selection committee are needed as well.

DATA PROTECTION REFORM: MORE CLARITY NEEDED FOR BUSINESSES



One of the hot topics of 2015 is the data protection and the revision of the General Data Protection Regulation. Since the beginning of her mandate, the Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality Věra Jourová has made it clear that data protection reform is one of the top priorities both for her and for the whole Juncker's Commission. For the Commission, the increased protection of personal data is one of the cornerstones for creating Digital Single Market in the EU that hides huge untapped potential for EU's economy. The necessity and urgency of the reform is further supported by the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU, which announced its ambition to achieve general approach by the end of its mandate in June. At the end of January, the European Parliament hosted a debate organised by the Federation of European

Direct and Interactive Marketing (FEDMA) that focused on this topic and more specifically on one of the main issues of the reform: how to strike the right balance between the protection of personal data and the potential of data usage for businesses. The growing significance of personal data protection is also seen in increasing usage of tools that ensure higher level of privacy for internet users. MEP Anna Maria Corraza Bildt, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Internal Market and Consumer Protection stated that as for the Commission and Latvian presidency, data protection reform is the top priority also for the European Parliament, given that the final version of the legislation puts sufficient emphasis on privacy for EU citizens. She also acknowledged the current version of the proposal for including measures to increase children's safety on the internet. Both the

Commission and representatives of the private sector stressed that the regulation must not put excessive burden on businesses. Data is the fuel of digital economy and it is expected that in 2015, big data technology and services will grow by several billion EUR; the EU should seize this opportunity in its endeavour to get the EU back on the track of economic growth. As mentioned by the European Data Protection Assistant Supervisor Wojciech Wiewiórowski, in 1995, when the first version of the data protection regulation was being prepared, businesses were afraid of it, but he is convinced that the legislative framework helped them in the end. He is sure that the same will happen with the new regulation. Self-regulatory principles and codes of conduct for various sectors should help businesses make the best use of the new legislation. Furthermore, the proposal establishes the so-called one-stop-shop mechanism for businesses, providing that EU businesses will have to deal with only one supervisory authority instead of various ones for different member states. Due to this mechanism, companies should save both time and money when dealing with regulators while giving them higher legal certainty. However, according to EU businesses, the mechanism is not properly explained in the current proposal and creates confusion. Therefore, EU companies call for further clarification of the one-stop-shop principle, so that it is clear under which data protection authority each falls within.

EESC CORNER: ACTION PLAN ON INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY RIGHTS

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The EU action plan "Towards a renewed consensus on the enforcement of Intellectual Property Rights" sets out ten specific actions that outline new policy for creating and using tools to address IP-infringing activity, particularly on a commercial scale. These activities are the most harmful and represent a key challenge for the EU as they undermine investment in innovation and sustainable job creation and lead to lost tax revenue. These new tools which include a series of measures based on the "follow the money" approach which seeks to prevent commercial scale infringers from accessing means for promoting and distributing counterfeit goods, and to deprive them of their revenue. The objectives of the plan form a joint set of objectives - to use all means to effectively dissuade and impede the entry and diffusion on the EU's internal market of IP-infringing products from third countries, and to stimulate investment, growth and employment in IP reliant sectors that are so key to our respective economies. The EESC endorses the

Commission's general approach, which involves adopting an action plan to address infringements of intellectual property rights in the European Union and a strategy for the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in third countries. The EESC could support the Commission's "multi-targeted" approach if the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the targets were better defined and specified. The EESC welcomes the communication campaigns run by the European Observatory on Infringements of Intellectual Property Rights to raise awareness among young people - as well as among judges and legal practitioners - about the impact and repercussions of IP infringements. Very important is also the attention that the Commission has given to SMEs to facilitate their access to means of judicial redress and also supports the European IPorta project, which is a support system for SMEs taking into account issues linked to the enforcement of intellectual property rights and coordinating national assistance. Committee urges the Commission to ensure

that the means of accessing and effectively protecting intellectual property in Europe are available and affordable to all businesses, regardless of size.



Marie Zvolská,
EESC Member - Employers'
Group

CEBRE CALENDAR:

- 17th - 18th February - CEBRE consultations with Czech companies (Prague)
- 25th February - CEBRE debate on Capital Markets Union (Prague)

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