



What does the new Commission mean for small businesses?

The European Parliament will take a decision on the whole college of Commissioners on 9 February. Commissioner Antonio Tajani (Industry and Entrepreneurship, Italy) and Commissioner Michel Barnier (Internal Market and Services, France) are set to be the 'small business' Commissioners. The FSB welcomes Mr Tajani's top priority to meet the president of the European Investment Bank to discuss access to funds for enterprises. The FSB is also very much in favour of Mr Barnier's initiative to visit the member states and discuss the slow implementation of the Services Directive. The FSB has been closely involved in the implementation of this directive in the UK and urges other member states to quickly set up their Points of Single contact, if they have not done so yet.

Reinforcing his message to prioritise access to funds for enterprises, Mr Tajani guaranteed that the allocated 30bn Euros will "really go to small businesses", now, and without too many intermediaries. Funds should also be available for small businesses to restart as 'green businesses'.

Mr Tajani outlined his plans for a new industrial policy, which should focus on small and medium enterprises (SMEs), together with promoting innovation, hand in hand with sustainable development and encouraging young people and women to become entrepreneurs. Small businesses are central to the 2020 policy (the EU's new jobs and growth agenda) and the upcoming innovation action plan. Micro enterprises should be encouraged in those areas where industry is shutting down, for example in the tourism sector or sunrise industries like the textiles sector.

Mr Tajani is also keen on standardisation to complete the single market and to cut costs. The FSB is very happy that he insists on involvement of SMEs in the standardisation procedure but it remains to be seen how standardisation will cut costs. With regard to red tape he said he would insist on an SME test for every Commission proposal and he will also actively promote the 'think small first principle' and urged Parliament and Council to swiftly adopt the pending legislative proposals of the Small Business Act (Late Payment, VAT invoicing, European Private Company). He also promised to make sure that small businesses have good access to public procurement by a cleanup of the rules for public tender. The FSB will closely monitor the fulfilment of Mr Tajani's promises.

Commissioner Barnier's priority is the re-launch of the single market. The FSB strongly supports this and will help identify areas where it is not delivering with regard to small businesses. He also wants to modernise the Intellectual Property Rights system and eradicate counterfeiting of patents. Therefore he aims at concluding negotiations on patent litigation and the Community Patent and he will modernise the legal framework for trademarks. Mr Barnier will also aim at modernising accounting regulations for SMEs and seek completion of legislation on the European company statute.

Mr Barnier promised that all legislative proposals from his portfolio will be accompanied by an Impact Assessment. He plans to "make life easier for SMEs" and to bring down expenditure as a result of the EU's administrative burden by seven billion Euros. For example, the revision of 4th and 7th company law directives will mean simplification and reduction of costs for small businesses.

Plans of other Commissioners include:

- a re-tabling of the Working Time Directive, Health and safety legislation, a Green Paper on pensions, and an assessment of the implementation of the professional qualifications directive, a CO₂ tax (László Andor, Employment)



Federation of Small Businesses

The UK's Leading Business Organisation

- fighting tax evasion, reconsider a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base, harmonise VAT calculation rules (Šemeta, Taxation and Customs Union)
- Review and or complementary legislative instruments with regard to the climate and energy package, e.g. legislation on cutting CO₂ emissions from lorries and cars (Connie Hedegaard, Climate Action).
- Effective implementation of existing environmental legislation (Janez Potočnik, Environment)

For further information please contact:

Sietske de Groot

sietske.degroot@fsb.org.uk