



Highlights

Economy, finance and tax

- **Four credit rating agencies receive EU registration** (31/10/2011)

Standard & Poor's, Moody's, Fitch and DBRS are now registered under the EU regulation on credit rating agencies and are supervised and assessed by the European Security and Markets Authority.

- **Economic sentiment stable in EU and the euro area** (27/10/2011)

The Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) fell by 0.1 points in the EU to 93.8 and by 0.2 points in the euro area to 94.8. In the EU confidence declined in industry and among consumers but increased in services, retail trade and construction.

- **Stimulating growth is essential** (23/10/2011)

The European Council on 23 October agreed on a number of measures aimed at securing growth and job creation to help overcome the current economic crisis. EU leaders agreed that enhancing economic growth is as important in current circumstances as addressing the immediate challenges of the crisis.

- **Review of 2010 enforcement of accounting standards** (21/10/2011)

The European Security and Markets Authority say national regulators reviewed 1,700 financial reports and took 700 enforcement actions. Of these, 240 required corrections or financial re-statements.

- **New rules for more efficient, resilient and transparent financial markets**

(20/10/2011)

The proposed rules would sanction market abuse and insider dealing under criminal law and increase regulators' power. The Markets in Financial Instruments Directive would also be revised to further protect investors.

- **Five-point plan for stability and growth in Europe** (20/10/2011)

The Commission roadmap sets the agenda for a meeting between Europe's heads of state and government on the economy (23 October).

- **New structure for European Financial Stability Facility approved** (13/10/2011)

All euro area countries have approved the changes, including a €440bn effective lending capacity and €780bn in guarantees. The EFSF also has expanded its scope to support euro area financial stability.

- **Banking transparency improves, but further effort needed** (13/10/2011)

The European Banking Authority's review calls for greater harmonisation of the transparency disclosures made to market participants and identifies best practices credit institutions should follow.

- **ESMA addresses late transposition of UCITS IV Directive** (13/10/2011)

The European Security and Markets Authority proposes practical arrangements for cross-border operations to minimise the impact on industry and investors when EU countries fail to transpose the directive.

- **Roadmap outlines actions needed to restore economic confidence** (12/10/2011)

Quick and coordinated actions are needed on Greece, euro area crisis interventions, strengthening banks, stability and growth policies, and additional economic governance proposals.

- **EU countries to face challenges in tax policies** (10/10/2011)

The 2011 report on tax reforms identifies three potential challenges: addressing severe debts and deficits, making the tax structure more growth friendly and improving the design of individual types of taxes.

- **The ECB announces details of two longer-term refinancing operations**

(06/10/2011)

They will be supplementary to regular and special-term operations. The ECB also decided to continue its main refinancing operations for as long as is necessary, and at least until 10 July 2012.

- **The ECB announces new covered bond purchase programme** (06/10/2011)

The €40 billion programme will begin in November by means of direct purchases in the primary and secondary markets and is expected to be completed by the end of October 2012.

- **Stronger economic governance** (04/10/2011)

The Ecofin Council on 4 October gave the go-ahead for a package of six laws to enhance economic policy coordination and surveillance in the European Union, and more specifically in the eurozone. The aim of this "six-pack" is to ensure fiscal and macroeconomic stability throughout the Union.

Euro

- **Construction up by 0,2% in eurozone - August 2011 compared with July 2011**

(19/10/2011)

In the construction sector, seasonally adjusted production rose by 0.2% in the euro area and remained stable in the EU 27 in August 2011, compared with the previous month.

- **Facilitating the professional transport of euros** (27/10/2011)

The regulation adopted by Council guarantees the free movement of euro cash by road between euro area countries as well as the security of transactions and staff. Companies will need a licence from the country of origin.

- **Doing more for the stability of the eurozone** (23/10/2011)

The Heads of State or Government of the euro area agreed on the objectives and outlined the strategy for the stability of the eurozone.

- **Eurogroup gives green light for latest disbursement of aid to Greece** (21/10/2011)

Euro area members approve the disbursement of the sixth tranche of aid to Greece following its evaluation mission to the country. It is expected in early November, pending IMF approval.

- **Ireland on the right track according to fourth review mission** (20/10/2011)

The Commission, the European Central Bank and the IMF conclude that the country is making the necessary reforms to consolidate its budget and return to growth.

- **Annual inflation up in EU and euro area** (14/10/2011)

In the euro area, inflation rose from 2.5% in August to 3% in September. The EU's annual inflation was 3.3% in September, up from 2.9% in August. It rose in fourteen EU countries and fell in seven.

- **Euro area report underlines challenge of sovereign debt** (11/10/2011)

The latest quarterly report shows that significant measures will be needed in a number of EU countries to put public finances back on a sustainable path.

- **Commission, ECB and IMF conclude fifth review mission to Greece** (11/10/2011)

Euro area members approve the disbursement of the sixth tranche of aid to Greece following the latest evaluation mission in the country. It is expected in early November pending IMF approval.

- **No change in euro area interest rates** (06/10/2011)

European Central Bank keeps interest rates on the main refinancing operations, the marginal lending facility and the deposit facility at 1.5%, 2.25% and 0.75% respectively.

- **August 2011: Industrial producer prices down by 0.1% in euro area** (04/10/2011)

In August 2011 compared with July 2011, the industrial producer price index fell by 0.1% in the euro area (EA17) and by 0.2% in the EU27. In July prices increased by 0.5% and 0.4% respectively.

- **Eurogroup: waiting for the next report on Greece** (03/10/2011)

At their meeting on 3 October in Luxembourg, the finance ministers of the euro area postponed a decision on the next disbursement of financial aid for Greece, but firmly ruled out any possibility of the country defaulting or leaving the euro area.

Business

- **Commission requests Belgium to cut administrative burden on SMEs** (27/10/2011)
The European Commission has requested Belgium to reduce administrative burdens on small and medium sized companies (SMEs).

- **Euro area business climate indicator continues decline** (27/10/2011)

The indicator fell for the eighth consecutive month in October. The drop indicates a significant slowdown in industrial production growth and increased pessimism about order books and exports.

- **More responsible businesses to foster growth in Europe** (25/10/2011)

The Commission proposes a package of measures to strengthen social responsibility of businesses, to improve transparency of multinationals and to simplify accounting rules for SME.

- **EU firms increased R&D investments in 2010** (18/10/2011)

Investments in research and development by top EU companies were up 6.1% in 2010 following a 2.6% decrease in 2009. However, EU companies as a whole are lagging behind major competitors from the US and Asia.

- **Restoring growth through industrial competitiveness** (14/10/2011)

The Commission presents plans for enhancing the global competitiveness of European industry and identifies key areas where the EU's economy could be further strengthened.

- **SME employment growth set to resume after two year slump** (04/10/2011)

A survey finds SMEs accounted for two-thirds of EU private-sector employment and 58.4% of gross value-added in 2010. SME employment is forecast to rise by 0.4% in 2011 and gross value-added by 3.9%.

- **Problems remain for online shoppers in EU's single market** (04/10/2011)

Tests by the European Consumer Centres' Network found 94% of orders were delivered, up from 66% in 2003. Returning goods was more difficult and 60% of sites were unsuitable for cross-border purchases.

- **The proportion of unsuccessful loan applications by SMEs has risen with the economic crisis** (03/10/2011)

The economic crisis has made it more difficult for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to access banking credit. The proportion of unsuccessful loan applications rose between 2007 and 2010 in 19 of the 20 Member States for which data are available.

Employment and social policies

- **Unemployment up in the EU and euro area** (31/10/2011)

The euro area (EA17) seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate was 10.2% in September 2011, compared with 10.1% in August. It was 10.1% in September 2010. The EU27 unemployment rate was 9.7% in September 2011, compared with 9.6% in August. It was 9.6% in September 2010.

- **Opening up EU labour markets to Bulgarian and Romanian citizens** (25/10/2011)

All EU Member States should allow Bulgarians and Romanians onto their labour markets by the end of 2011, says a resolution passed on Tuesday.

- **Report tracks impact of the "great recession" on job structure** (13/10/2011)

The EU lost five million jobs in 2008–2010. Employment grew in top-paying jobs, mostly in knowledge-intensive services and business services. Medium-paying construction and manufacturing jobs shrank.

EU affairs

- **Parliament votes growth-stimulating budget for 2012** (26/10/2011)

Parliament aimed for a 2012 budget for growth, employment and innovation in the Union and for supporting development and democracy in neighbouring countries, when it voted its position on next year's budget on Wednesday.

- **Way out of the debt crisis** (26/10/2011)

The Euro Summit on 26 October agreed a comprehensive set of measures to address the current tensions in financial markets and restore confidence.

- **The 27: common resolve to overcome the crisis** (26/10/2011)

The heads of state and government of all EU member states meeting on 26 October expressed their "common resolve to do their utmost to overcome the crisis and to help face in a spirit of solidarity the challenges confronting the European Union and the Euro area".

- **Connecting Europe** (19/10/2011)

The EU will invest €50bn in infrastructure – connecting Europe, boosting competitiveness and creating jobs.

- **Step up in fight against EU budget fraud** (03/10/2011)

Better monitoring is finding more cases of EU funding misuse, including fraud. This means more money is being recovered for programmes intended for citizens.

Regional policy

- **Report on e-government projects supported by the ERDF** (21/10/2011)

The Court of Auditors concludes that European Regional Development funding has improved e-government programming, but weaknesses remain. It also makes recommendations for future projects.

- **Growth & jobs focus for regional cohesion funding 2014-2020** (06/10/2011)

Proposals aim to improve funding for the EU's regions and focus more on high-impact growth and jobs programmes.

EU Enlargement

- **FYROM ready to start accession negotiations** (12/10/2011)

The latest process report confirms that the country fulfils the political criteria for an EU accession. Challenges remain regarding the judicial and administrative reform, fighting corruption and press freedom.

- **Albania: limited progress towards EU accession** (12/10/2011)

Whilst the conditions have yet to be met for the opening of accession negotiations, the country has made progress in the 12 key areas identified in 2010.

- **Turkey accession: still work to be done** (12/10/2011)

The country has made progress towards EU accession but efforts are still required, particularly regarding fundamental rights and freedom of expression. The EU also calls on Turkey to implement its customs obligations.

- **Croatia moves closer to EU membership** (12/10/2011)

In its latest progress report, the Commission says the country has made good efforts to meet EU requirements in all key areas. Croatia is expected to join the EU in July 2013.

- **Iceland well prepared for accession to the EU** (12/10/2011)

The Commission considers Iceland to have a functioning market economy and continues to meet the political criteria for accession to the EU. However, a number of challenges remain.

- **Commission ready to grant candidate status to Serbia** (12/10/2011)

Serbia has made significant progress related to the rule of law and the economy. However, further significant progress is needed towards achieving EU accession.

- **Kosovo must continue with its reform efforts** (12/10/2011)

According to the first progress report, the country has made efforts to align its legislation with European standards, particularly in trade. However, challenges remain in implementing these reforms.

- **Towards the opening of accession negotiations with Montenegro** (12/10/2011)

The Commission recommends beginning accession negotiations with the country after it intensified its reform efforts, in accordance with the seven priorities set by the EU.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina: more efforts needed for EU integration** (12/10/2011)

In its latest progress report, the Commission underlines that little progress has been made towards EU accession. The main obstacle remains the country's inability to form a state-level government.

- **Annual enlargement reports track progress on EU accession** (12/10/2011)

Reports examine progress by the Western Balkans, Turkey and Iceland towards EU accession and include recommendations on opening accession negotiations with Montenegro and granting Serbia candidate status.