

The EU signals its intention to tackle tax haven abuse ...

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The [EU Observer](#) has reported:

Commission chief Jose Manuel Barroso unveiled his work programme for next year at the European Parliament in Strasbourg on Tuesday (15 November), calling it a "blueprint for stability and growth."

Out of the list of 129 separate projects for new EU laws and assorted non-binding strategy papers and recommendations, he highlighted the publication of a commission Annual Growth Strategy; measures to put an end to tax havens and a "quick reaction mechanism" against VAT fraud; as well as laws to end fiddles in the disbursement of EU funds.

The reported continued:

According to commission papers, the tax-haven document, due in autumn 2012, will not be legally binding. But it will aim to "develop a reinforced strategy to protect the EU against the challenges of unco-operative jurisdictions outside the EU."

Also welcome was the report that:

EU countries will next year be asked to create a pan-EU "framework" for freezing the funds of people involved in terrorist activity and build a joint electronic register to screen financial transactions for terrorist groups on the model of the US Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme.

The EU has an impressive record in tackling tax haven abuse: in my opinion it has been the most effective agency in the world in doing so. Its European Union Savings Tax Directive is flawed, but is making progress, and even as it stands is a beacon for the importance of automatic information exchange whilst its EU Code of Conduct on Business Taxation has been enormously helpful in tackling tax abuse both on and offshore and is pushing the Crown Dependencies steadily out of business.

The new development looks like an update on the Code of Conduct on Business

Taxation. That is also not law, but it has been extraordinarily effective. As such I warmly welcome this move.

In addition, the moves on terrorist financing simply won't work without better company registries and registries of trusts. Might they be on the way