



HEADLINES

EU / Environment: SME-unfriendly vote in Environment Committee

The vote on the REACH proposals in the Environment Committee on 04 October was much greener than the votes of the Industry (ITRE) and Internal Market (IMCO) Committees. The liberals gave support to Sacconi's line and voted together with the socialist and green MEPs. Socialist, liberal and green MEPs welcomed a vote that put more emphasis on environment and human health protection, whilst the EPP-ED shadow rapporteur Ria Oomen Ruijten (EPP-ED, Netherlands) blamed the liberals and socialists for introducing amendments that will add red tape to the proposal.

In particular, a number of amendments supported by the EPP-ED and adopted by IMCO regarding risk and volume prioritisation; pre-registration; and testing requirements for low volumes were voted down by ENVI. The amount of information required will only be reduced for the 1 to 10 tonnes-per-year category, although the shadow rapporteur Oomen Ruijten and IMCO rapporteur Nassauer were also calling for lower requirements to be applied to the 10 to 100 tonne bracket.

However the final deal remains uncertain since some of the amendments voted by IMCO and ITRE committees will go straight to the November plenary vote. Also, the EPP-ED will retable a substantial number of amendments. The UK Presidency aims for a political agreement by the end of the year. This would allow the legislation to be put in place by early 2006.

More info: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/chemicals/index_en.htm

EU / Services: Vote in Internal Market Committee postponed

Political groups have decided to postpone the vote on over 1500 amendments on the proposal for a directive on services in the Internal Market, which was due to take place last week. The idea is to try to reach compromise amendments and avoid a 10- to 12-hour vote.

EPP-ED spokesman Malcolm Harbour (Conservative, UK) said that more time should allow for a better directive. In particular he stressed that the EPP-ED group was fully committed to safeguarding the freedom to provide services and improve and clarify the legal text.

The vote in the Internal Market Committee is scheduled on 20/21 November and the vote in Plenary in January. The UK Presidency will therefore not be able to complete its first reading, and will pass over the issue to the Austrian Presidency.

For more info on the service directive, read:

IN BRIEF

EU / Internal Market : Capital Requirements Directive (Basel II) voted in plenary

On 28 September the European Parliament adopted the report by Alexander Radwan (EPP-ED, Germany) on the capital requirements directive, known as Basel II. According to the amendments adopted, member States may apply capital requirements on a single and consolidated basis. Under certain conditions, they may allow zero risk weighting for internal group lending to be extended to banks operating in an institutional protection scheme.

The vote demonstrated that some progress towards more transparency has been made regarding the rating procedure. In particular, banks will have to explain to SMEs applying for loans which information will be required, a procedure that could become compulsory at national level if voluntary agreements fail. Also, some measures towards simplification of small scale loans were adopted. However the procedure of ratings as such will be cumbersome, especially for very small and micro businesses.

A final agreement is expected from the UK presidency by the end of the year.

[You can access the adopted report here:](#)

EU / SME charter : Report calls for exempting small businesses from certain regulatory requirements

In her own initiative report on the Implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises, Mrs Vlasto (EPP-ED, France) regrets the complexity of the Commission's report, as well as the rather patchy character of collected data. Mrs Vlasto also notes that progress towards implementation is unequal. Persistent fiscal impediments limit SMEs' access to finance. Also, more should be done to exempt small businesses from certain regulatory requirement, as requested in the Charter. Finally, the report stressed that the open method of coordination should not exonerate the Commission from active participation. Professional organisations are also called on to be more involved. The deadline for tabling amendments is 08 November.

[Access the draft report by Mrs Vlasto](#)

[The draft opinion by P. Bushilll Matthews is available at:](#)

[The Commission report is available at:](#)

EU / Lisbon: Meeting of the national coordinators responsible for the Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs

The national coordinators sent by Member States to work on the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs met in Brussels on 6 October. Issues discussed included the preparation of National reform Programmes at national level and the progress made on the new system of governance for economic reform under the Lisbon strategy.

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More info on the Lisbon Strategy : http://europa.eu.int/growthandjobs/index_en.htm

EU / SME Access to finance : EU-US working group report calls for greater cooperation

Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission and the United States Department of Commerce have published their final report regarding venture capital, advised by industry representatives and academia. It recommends better policy cooperation in venture capital, and the creation of information resources supporting policy-makers in developing and implementing appropriate policies.

[Read the report:](#)

EU / SME Access to finance

Another report has been published by DG Enterprise and Industry on “Best practices of public support for early-stage equity finance”. The report, drafted by an expert group chaired by the European Commission stresses that equity investment is essential for SMEs and that the public sector can play a crucial role. The report contains the outcome of these discussions on national ways for helping SMEs including an inventory of existing programmes and criteria for good practices.

[Access the report here:](#)

EU / E-business: Trends show continued growth

According to the latest survey on e-business, European e-business is still growing at a sustained rate thanks to new technologies and competitiveness. The survey will be discussed in Brussels on 26 October at 'E-Business Trends in 2005: Industry Perspectives', organised by the e-Business W@tch team. This year's event will focus on research into the services and manufacturing sectors of the European economy, including tourism, IT services, construction, machinery & equipment manufacturing, food & beverages.

See the the provisional programme of this event: http://www.ebusiness-watch.org/news/2005_09_20.htm

EU / Social Affairs : Competition Commissioner against long summer holidays

At a hearing in the European Parliament on 6 October, Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes attacked the long European summer, which she said causes the economy to slow down for three months every year.

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important Dates

- 11 Oct Competitiveness Council
- 17 Oct Environment Council
- 24-27 Oct European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg
- 16 Nov Likely date for Parliamentary Plenary, Strasbourg
- 28-29 Nov Competitiveness Council
- 12-15 Dec Strasbourg Plenary
- 1 Jan 06 Austrian Presidency starts

Other SME related Events

- 14 October World Standards Day 2005: “International Cooperation in Standardisation” Conference organised by the Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General – Brussels, Belgium.
[More info & registration:](#)
- 26-28 October 2nd European Microfinance Conference 2005: “Microfinance for financial and social inclusion”, organized by European Microfinance Network – Barcelona, Spain
[More info & registration:](#)
- 1-3 November Small Business & Entrepreneurship 28th National Conference – Blackpool, UK - Further information: www.isbe2005.org
- 9 November “Fail Forward – is failure victory?” FSF, ITPS and NUTEK Entrepreneurship Seminars in Brussels - For more information and registration please contact helena.ericsson@fsf.se
- 30 November 20th Anniversary of the New Approach, Organised by the European Commission, Brussels – Further information will be posted at the end of August 05 [at the following website:](#)
- December 7 “The Art of Survival” - FSF, ITPS and NUTEK Entrepreneurship Seminars in Brussels - For more information and registration please contact helena.ericsson@fsf.se