



### HEADLINES

#### **EU / SMEs Policy: Commission adopts new SME-oriented policy**

On 9 November, the Commission tabled a new policy for SMEs which seeks to enforce the 'think small first' principle at both the national and EU level. Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen expressed his desire to support SMEs, which play a major role in the European economy. SMEs account for 99% of all enterprises, and provide around 17 million jobs in Europe.

The Commission strategy will focus on streamlining EU policy instruments by synchronising policy areas and coordinating the actions of the EU and Member States. This should have the effect of streamlining EU policy instruments and thereby improve the competitiveness of SMEs. In addition, regulation is to be simplified in order to make it more manageable for SMEs.

Key elements of this single coherent policy framework will include: promoting entrepreneurship and skills; improving SMEs' access to markets; cutting red tape; improving SMEs' growth potential; and strengthening dialogue and consultation with SME stakeholders.

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#### **EU / Environment: Germany negotiates postponement of vote on REACH**

On 11 November, the UK Presidency announced its decision to accept the request of the German government to postpone the competitiveness council's vote on REACH, which had been scheduled for 28-29 November. According to a British spokeswoman, the UK will arrange an additional competitiveness council meeting to reach a political agreement before the end of the year.

The German request had been made in order to allow the newly-elected government, headed by Angela Merkel, to adopt a position on REACH. This development may be particularly important, as the incoming CDU/SPD coalition is likely to be more industry-friendly than the previous SPD/Green government.

However, the development will not affect the timing of the vote on REACH in the European Parliament, scheduled for 17 November. The prospect for an agreement in the Parliament has been boosted by a compromise deal arranged by socialist MEP Guido Sacconi. This deal reduces the amount of information needed for chemicals in the one to ten tonne category. Moreover, the compromise includes the One Substance, One Registration (OSOR) proposal on mandatory data sharing, something which represents a fillip to Europe's Small businesses.

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### IN BRIEF

#### **EU / Internal Market : Impending EU directives may impact industry significantly**

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Two upcoming directives, to be heard in late November, may have significant ramifications for businesses. The Intellectual Property Right Enforcement Directive (IPRED 2) is to undergo its first reading on 22 November, and the Data Retention Directive will have its first reading on 24 November. If accepted, IPRED may criminalise offences which could previously be indemnified against. Combined with the Data Retention Directive, IPRED 2 could affect the scale and scope of punishments for infringements of intellectual property rights.

To read the proposal for IPRED 2, go to:

To read the proposal for the Data Retention Directive, go to:

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### **EU / E-business: Report indicates improvement in e-business practices**

A new report released by the Confederation of British Industry has found that 68% of businesses engage customers online, compared with 50% in 2002. However, many companies are reluctant to fully implement on-line business activities due to concerns over security. Two thirds of companies hold that security issues will have a negative influence on the integration of supply chains.

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### **EU / Enterprise: Commission and Presidency launch 'European Enterprise Awards'**

On 14 November, the European Commission and the UK Presidency launched the 'European Enterprise Awards', which will recognise the achievements of local and regional authorities in supporting entrepreneurship. The awards seek to promote enterprise and honour the contribution made by entrepreneurs to Europe's economy and society. The deadline for entries at a national level is 31 May, 2006, and winners will be announced in November 2006.

For more information, go to:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index_en.htm)

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### **EU / Taxation: Eurostat survey indicates environmental taxation on the decline**

The latest annual Eurostat review has found that environmental taxation in 2003 accounted for 7.5% of all taxation and 2.9% of GDP, slightly lower than in 2000. Moreover, these levels may decrease further, as high structural oil prices and the increasing popularity of non-fiscal environmental protection lead to less support for energy taxes.

To see the report, go to:

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### **EU / Enterprise & Industry: Commission publishes report on consultation with small business**

DG Enterprise and Industry has published its final report of the expert group on 'consultation with stakeholders in the shaping of national and regional policies affecting small business'. According to

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the report, 60% of business representatives and 30% of representatives from public administrations are not satisfied with consultation practices.

To see the report, go to:

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### COMING UP

#### EU Institutions: Important Dates

- 14-17 Nov. European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg.
- 28-29 Nov Competitiveness Council
- 12-15 Dec European Parliament Plenary Session, Strasbourg.
- 1 Jan 06 Austrian Presidency starts

#### Other SME related Events

- 14-15 November 'Communicating European research 2005', international conference, Brussels Exhibition Center - [Further information:](#)
- 14-15 November First conference and launch of the EU/US Retail Banking Forum, Brussels. More information: <http://www.savings-banks-events.org/EU-US/>
- 17-18 November Paxis international conference – 'Innovative start ups and early stage finance. [Further information:](#)
- 24 November Financing Growth and Cohesion in the Enlarged EU, organised by the European Commission and the EIB, Brussels. [Further information:](#)
- 30 November 20<sup>th</sup> 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:](#)
- 6 December 15<sup>th</sup> Annual Summit "EntrepreneurShip - The Winds of Change", organised by **the** The European Confederation of Young Entrepreneurs. More information: [www.yes.be](http://www.yes.be)
- 7 December "The Art of Survival" - FSF, ITPS and NUTEK Entrepreneurship Seminars in Brussels - For more information and registration please contact [helena.ericsson@fsf.se](mailto:helena.ericsson@fsf.se)
- 7 December SME Union Education and Entrepreneurship Conference, Brussels [Further information:](#)

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