



### Quote of the Week

*Words without actions are the assassins of idealism.*

Herbert Hoover (1874 - 1964)

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### HEADLINES

- EU / Entrepreneurship : Action Plan shows goodwill but lacks concrete measures
- EU / SMEs : Consultation on the « MAP » launched

### IN BRIEF

- EU / Enlargement : Statistics on SMEs in the Candidate Countries
- EU / SMEs : Communication on the promotion of co-operatives
- EU / Internal Market : Increase in variation of prices within Europe

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### HEADLINES

#### **EU / Entrepreneurship : Action Plan shows goodwill but lacks concrete measures**

The European Commission officially presented its Entrepreneurship Action Plan at the “Entrepreneurship Day” on 2nd March. The “European Agenda for Entrepreneurship” identifies actions in five key areas, which are: a) Entrepreneurial mindset; b) Attitude to risk; c) Training; d) Access to finances; and e) Regulatory and administrative framework.

During his presentation, Commissioner for Enterprise Erkki Liikanen emphasised the risk aversion mentality among Europeans. Only 4% of Europeans have started a new business in the last three years, compared to 11 % in the US. In addition, the risk of failure is much greater in Europe, dissuading potential entrepreneurs from setting up a business if there is any risk that it might fail.

Some measures of particular relevance include reducing the stigma of failure, facilitating business transfer, creating more equity and stronger balance sheets in firms, or reducing the complexity of complying with tax laws.

**ESBA welcomes the text as it demonstrates an improved awareness of the key challenges for the European economy, above all education, access to finance, and tackling risk aversion. Also, ESBA is pleased to see that many of its proposals expressed during the consultation on the Green Paper have been taken into consideration.**

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ESBA however regrets, first, that the proposed actions do not include enough concrete measures. Secondly, the supposedly prioritised agenda of actions looks more like a catalogue of good ideas and recommendations which however terribly lacks prioritisation. ESBA would have preferred to see fewer but more focused initiatives.

ESBA regrets the absence of a plan of activities that would clearly demonstrate that member States authorities work in cooperation with business and SMEs organisations (improvement of the open method of coordination) on the basis of quantitative targets. Just like entrepreneurs need a detailed business plan if they want to grow, Europe needs its “clear business plan for entrepreneurship”.

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### **EU / SMEs : Consultation on the « MAP » launched**

The current multi-annual programme for SMEs ('MAP') will expire by the end of 2005. The Commission, which will present to the Council and the European Parliament a proposal for the next MAP by mid 2004, has launched a consultation seeking input on the nature of its replacement. The stakeholder consultation on a “Support Programme for Entrepreneurship and Enterprise Competitiveness” will last until 10th May 2004.

The main objective of the intended programme will be to create framework conditions for accelerating enterprises' adjustment to change, encouraging entrepreneurship, fostering co-operation between enterprises, as well as more effective exploitation of innovation and technology.

[Click here for more info:](#)

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise\\_policy/spec/index.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/spec/index.htm)

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### **IN BRIEF**

#### **EU / Enlargement : Statistics on SMEs in the Candidate Countries**

A recent survey on SMEs in candidate countries has been published, covering a wide range of statistical information such as: the number of enterprises, their turnover and employment; gross investment, personnel cost and labour indicators; and training and innovation.

[Click here for more info:](#)

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat&theme=4-Industry%20and%20Commerce&product=KS-NP-04-005--N-EN>

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#### **EU / SMEs : Communication on the promotion of co-operatives**

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On 26th February the Commission published a Communication on co-operative societies in Europe, with the aim of encouraging people to set up more co-operatives by improving the visibility and understanding of the sector, the further improvement of co-operative legislation in Europe and the maintenance and improvement of co-operatives' place and contribution to community objectives. There are currently 132 000 co-operative enterprises in Europe, having 83.5 million members and employing 2.3 million people.

Click here for more info:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/coop/social-cmaf\\_agenda/social-cmaf-cooperatives.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/coop/social-cmaf_agenda/social-cmaf-cooperatives.htm)

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### **EU / Internal Market : Increase in variation of prices within Europe**

According to the latest estimates by Eurostat in 2003, prices differences have increased in 2003, compared to 2002. The failure of eurozone prices to converge, even for the most standardised goods, surprises economists and politicians. Part of the explanation lies in an overestimation of cross border shopping.

Click for more info:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/eurostat/Public/datashop/print-catalogue/EN?catalogue=Eurostat>