



HEADLINES

EU/ SMEs: Adoption of SME package on 21 January

The Commission adopted on 21 January its Green Paper on Entrepreneurship and several proposals aimed at fostering entrepreneurship within the EU. This SME package includes five documents: a Communication "Thinking small in an Enlarging Europe"; a Report on the implementation of the European Charter for Small Enterprises in the 15 Member States; a similar Report on the implementation of the Charter in candidate countries; a background document "Creating an entrepreneurial Europe"; and a document on the role of the SME Envoy.

DG Enterprise organised a seminar on Entrepreneurship and SMEs on 22 January in Brussels. During this conference, Commissioner E.Liikanen presented to participants the Green Paper on Entrepreneurship and the package of texts adopted on 21 January. ESBA Brussels participated (notes from the meeting to read in the next edition).

Stakeholders have until 30 June 2003 to send their comments on the Green Paper to the Commission. The Commission's proposals will be on the agenda for a first exchange of views on the Competitiveness Council of 3 March.

A Conference on "Europe's Entrepreneurial Future", jointly organised by the European Commission and Greek Presidency of the Council, will be held in Thessaloniki on 13 February. This conference will focus on key issues raised in the Green Paper on entrepreneurship.

More info:

- http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme-package/index.htm
- http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/green_paper/index.htm
- <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/events/thessaloniki/invitation.pdf>

EU / Spring Summit: Commission presented critical reports on Lisbon Strategy and implementation of Broad Economic Policy Guidelines

The Commission adopted on 14 January two communications in preparation of the Spring Summit of 21 March. The Communication "Choosing to grow: Knowledge, innovation and jobs in a cohesive society" re-asserts the right option set in the Lisbon Strategy, and stresses the need for accelerating the path of reforms in the following fields: employment; the markets of goods, services, and capital; knowledge innovation and commercial growth, social cohesion and the environmental dimension. According to the Commission, the major risk for the good functioning of the Internal Market lies in the inability of Member States to fully implement the decisions agreed upon. Success will not only rely on the Member States' commitment, but also on the social partners' commitment.

The second report ("Communication on the implementation of the 2002 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines") is not more enthusiastic about the way Member States have implemented the EU's

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recommendations on their economic policies so far. The Commission complains about the Member States' rather sleepy reaction to the economic slowdown, and warns against deteriorating budgetary situations in Germany, France and Italy.

More Info:

- Communication "Choosing to grow: Knowledge, innovation and jobs in a cohesive society"
COM(2003)5 final:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/lisbon_strategy/pdf/comm_prov.pdf
- "Communication on the implementation of the 2002 Broad Economic Policy Guidelines":
http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2003/com2003_4finalen.pdf

EU / Convention: Franco-German proposal received mitigated support

In an attempt to boost the Franco-German ties and to outline the future power structure of the EU, President Jacques Chirac and Chancellor Gerhard Schröder presented on 14 January a common statement to the European Convention. The idea is to install two full time presidents to lead the EU, with, on the one hand, a de facto president of the Council, and, on the other hand, a president of the Commission, to be elected by the European Parliament.

The scheme received limited support from the UK and Spain, and circumspect reactions from the Greek Presidency as well as from the other smaller Member States. It was explicitly rejected at the session of the Convention on 20 January 2003.

IN BRIEF

EU / Consumer Protection: Workshop on Unfair Commercial Practices

The European Commission is holding a two-day workshop on Unfair Commercial practices on 22/23 January. This seminar marks the end of a series of open consultations that started after the launch of the Green Paper on European Consumer Protection on October 2001. The Commission is expected to issue a propos in the second quarter of this year. ESBA Brussels participated (more info available on request).

More Info:

Speech given by Commissioner Byrne at the opening of the workshop:
http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/03/21|0|RAPID&lg=EN

EU/ Convention / Social Group: Call for a minimum wage in future European constitution fails to get a majority

A call presented by French MEPs to include minimum wage provision in the next treaty of the EU had to face a strong opposition led by British and Spanish MEP's and was finally rejected. The working group on Social issues is expected to present its report to the Convention's plenary in February.

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EU / Election of the new Ombudsman

The EP elected last week a new ombudsman. The former national ombudsman for Greece, Nikiforos Diamandouros, was elected after the second round with 294 votes against 215 by British Conservative Roy Perry.