



HEADLINES

EU/ Social Security: The European health card to be launch on 1 June 2004

The Commission announced on 21 February its plan to launch on 1 June 2004 the common European Health Insurance Card to replace the E111 Form, needed for health treatment during a temporary stay by EU citizens on holidays or business trip in another Member State. First, an administrative card, to be read by the social security service official, will allow the patient to be reimbursed in another Member State. In a later stage, a smart card (readable by computer) will be introduced. This will foster interoperability between systems, which are often very different. The new system, far from granting free access for treatment, will grant the same standards for treatment as residents of the state visited. Ireland and the UK, who have no national card, will benefit from a two-year period of derogation to allow them to introduce their insurance card system.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/271|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

EU/ Social Policy: Recommendation of health and safety for self-employed workers adopted The Ecofin Council on 18 February formally adopted without debate a Recommendation on the protection of health and safety at work for self-employed workers. The recommendation aims to reduce the risks of occupational accidents and diseases to which self-employed workers are exposed. The farming, fishing, construction and transports sectors, considered are "high risk" sectors, often comprise a larger number of self-employed workers than other sectors. The recommendation also calls on Member States to prompt prevention action on health and safety, through for instance, awareness raising campaigns and access to training opportunities.

More info:

<http://ue.eu.int/pressData/en/ecofin/74571.pdf>

EU/CSR: First SMEs Roundtable of the CSR Multi stakeholder Forum

The European Multi Stakeholder Forum held its first SME roundtable on 24 February. The debate focused on an exchange of CSR experiences among SMEs. It was lead by three groups of speakers, including two SMEs, Triselec Lille (waste recycling), and Cocomat (mattress manufacturing), and one cooperatives' network, COOP Italia. The conclusion stresses the need to identify the incentives to boost socially responsible business among SMEs. It was also decided to collect case studies on SMEs' activities to prepare the next meeting. The Round Table meeting (17 march) will deal with developments aspects of CSR. The second Round Table on SMEs will take place on 30 June/1 July.

More info:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/csr/forum.htm>

EU/ Trade: Symposium on EU Market Access Strategy

The Symposium "A New century of Advances in Market Integration: The European Union's Market Access Strategy" held in Brussels on 27 February, chaired by Pascal Lamy, aimed at raising awareness on the changing environment for access to third markets, and explaining the related EU strategy. Pascal Lamy shed light on 3 major changes in the trade environment: the growing proportion of non-tariff barriers (NTBs) compared to classic tariff barriers, the growing number of actors, and the strong trends for regionalisation. The need to adjust is therefore threefold and concerns, first, the degree of technicity required to deal with NTBs, second, the necessity to integrate the multiplicity of actors and third, the call for more transparency in dealing with trade issues, since trade has become a significant citizen's concern. ESBA participated to the Workshop 2, on Trade Facilitation and non tariffs-barriers. Notes and background documents available on request.

More info on market access:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/mk_access/index_en.htm

<http://mkacddb.eu.int/>

IN BRIEF

EU/ Convention: First treaty articles will have to deal with 1000 amendments

More than 1000 amendments have been tabled to the first 16 articles of the future EU constitutional treaty, dealing with the definition, values and objectives of the Union, fundamental rights and citizenships, and the Union's competences. These amendments were subjects to debate on the Plenary session of 27/28 February. Given the amount of amendments, it is now questionable whether the Convention will be able to comply with the initial timetable, under which Convention President Valéry Giscard D'Estaing is supposed to present the results of the Convention on 20 June (European Summit in Thessaloniki).

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/futurum/index_en.htm

EU/ Consumer Protection: EP calls for simpler rules

The non-legislative report by Marianne Thyssen (EPP-ED, Belgium) adopted on 20 February in the Legal Affairs Committee stresses that legislation needs to be simpler and easier to implement. The report, on the Commission Green Paper on future Consumer Protection, highlights the lack of consistency of internal market legislation ending up in a general lack of consumer confidence. The report also deals with the desirable level of harmonisation, mutual recognition and the country of origin principle, and the idea of a directive on fair commercial practices. On the last point, Mrs Thyssen's report suggests that such a directive should go together with non exclusive black-list practices that may endanger consumer interest.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/policy/intro/intro_en.html

And the report:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/committees/juri/20030219/482092en.pdf>

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EU/ SMEs: Business support measures and good practice: data base upgraded

More than 2,500 EU and national business support measures are now listed with contact details in the Enterprise DG's newly expanded Support measures and initiatives for enterprises (SMIE) web pages. These pages give access to over 100 good practices in business support. The support measures data base, covering the EU, EEA, and 6 candidate countries, provides an overview of measures by type, objective, sector, target population and level of government (European, national, and regional). The good practice data base contains those selected as exemplary by the European Commission and national experts.

More Info:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/smie/>