



HEADLINES

EU/ Pensions: EP supports the proposed directive on occupational pensions

The EP approved at second reading on 12th March the proposed Directive on the activities and supervision of institutions for occupational retirement provision (IORPs). The Directive will enable institutions to run a pension scheme for a company located in another Member State, and workers moving to another Member States to take their pension with them. It should thus ensure a high level of protection for members and beneficiaries of pension funds. This is a major breakthrough, as the proposal for the introduction of such a supplementary cross-border scheme has been dates back from 1991. The institutions involved (pension funds, superannuation schemes and "pensions-kassen") manage assets worth around EUR 2,500 billion (29% of EU GDP). The next step shall be completed soon if the Council agrees on the Parliaments' amendments. The text shall be approved in the next weeks under the co-decision procedure.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/360|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

EU/ Innovation: Communication on Innovation Policy in preparation of Spring Summit

Innovation is key to achieve the goals set in the Lisbon strategy. Innovation policy therefore plays a fundamental role in boosting conditions in which European entrepreneurs will improve EU's competitiveness. This was highlighted in the Communication on Innovation Policy adopted on 11th of March by the Commission. The text sets out concrete proposals on how to enhance Europe's innovative results in three fields. First, more shall be done to turn Europe's diversity into a strength. Second, some sectors, because of their specificities, need a sector-based approach. Third, as innovation brings more results if it is embedded in other policies, interaction with other policy areas should be strengthened.

ESBA HAS ALREADY ISSUED POSITIONING PAPERS ON THIS SUBJECT. ESBA WELCOMES THE REFERENCES TO FISCAL POLICY BUT THE COMMUNICATION REMAIN UNCLEAR ABOUT THE CONCRETE STEPS TO BE TAKEN FOR IMPROVING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LISBON STRATEGY. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT MANY INNOVATIVE ENTREPRENEURS IN EUROPE EMIGRATE TO OTHER AREAS BECAUSE THEY DON'T THINK BUSINESS CONDITIONS IN EUROPE CAN SUPPORT THE GROWTH OF THEIR BUSINESSES.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/357|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

EU/ Enlargement : Nine candidates warned for delays in meeting accession commitments

The Commission adopted on 11 March its first progress report on the preparations made by the candidates countries for enlargement. The report shows that the 10 are lagging behind in their

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preparation measures. The Commission sent a "warning letter" to nine of them for a limited number of delays causing serious concern. The 10 candidates have met their commitments in only three areas (the Economic and Monetary Union, SMEs and Research). The next report to be produced by the Commission will cover the Justice and Home Affairs chapter, as well as agriculture, financial and Budgetary provision.

EU/ Innovation: European managers build on qualification and professionalism of staff

Innobarometer 2002, a survey conducted in September 2002 among 3000 EU managers on their innovative performance, shows that qualification of staff is seen as the first key to innovation by 49% of the managers. The share of investment dedicated to innovation has grown since 2001 to over 25%. The role of the markets is also considered as an important factor and managers expect benefits and the opening of new markets from further developments related to EU single markets rules.

More info:

<http://www.cordis.lu/innovation-smes/src/innobarometer.htm>

IN BRIEF

EU / Budget: EU governments will reduce contributions following the 2002 surplus

For the third consecutive year, the EU budget recorded in 2002 a surplus. After 11,6 billions in 2000, 15 billion euros in 2001, 2002 showed a 7 billion surplus. This is mainly due to unde-spending in the EU's regional aid and agriculture budget lines.

EU / Textile: Commission launches debate on the future of textiles trade

On 5-6 May 2003, EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy will host a major conference in Brussels on "The Future of Textiles and Clothing Trade after 2005". In preparation, the European Commission has launched an open consultation on the future of textiles trade policy. Through a dedicated internet forum, interested parties from all over the world can submit their ideas and contributions on trade in textile policies. "In less than two years we shall see the elimination of quota restrictions which have been a feature of world trade in textiles for 40 years. The time is ripe for a fresh, open and thorough analysis of all aspects of textiles trade and we want to hear the views from all interested parties so that we can draw the right conclusions", said Pascal Lamy.

Website page dedicated to the conference:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/goods/textile/index_en.htm

To send contributions to the symposium:

<mailto:textiles-trade-conference@cec.eu.int>

For details of the programme and registration:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/goods/textile/index_en.htm