



HEADLINES

EU/ Enlargement: The EP welcomes 162 new “observer” members

On 1st May, the 162 new members from the 10 new member states have joined the European Parliament (EP) as “observers”. 69 of them (42%) will join the European People’s Party (EPP-ED), which will thus remain the largest group in the EP. 58 new members (36%) will join the European Socialists (PES), and 13 the Liberals (ELDR). The United Left/ Nordic Green Left Group (GUE : NGL) will have 6 new observer members, and the Greens one (from Latvia). 13 of the newcomers are “non-attached”. The 162 observers will have to wait until their state become fully fledged member states on 1st May 2004 to be allowed to vote.

More info:

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2? PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+BI-20030406-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S>

EU/ Enlargement: Warnings to accelerate take-up of EU law multiply

Regarding implementation of EU law, Enlargement Commissioner Günter Verheugen has recently urged the Parliament chiefs to implement quickly EU legislation. The Commission is expected to issue mid-May an update of the monitoring report of last February, which shows shortcomings in implementation in several areas for nine new entrants. Slovenia is the only new member to be implementing the *acquis* without serious delays. A comprehensive monitoring report will be presented in November, on the basis of which the Commission could introduce “safeguard clauses”, that would be enforced in areas where implementation gaps have been identified. Poland, which experiences implementation difficulties in nine areas, received a strong warning against these “safeguard clauses”.

More info:

http://www.europarl.eu.int/meetdocs/committees/afet/20030218/COM-memorandum-final_EN.pdf

EU/ Convention: Heated debates followed Praesidium’s declaration

On 23 April, the praesidium of the EU Convention, lead by Mr Giscard d’Estaing, unveiled its plans to reform the enlarged EU. The key proposals are to put an end to the rotating Council Presidency, to create a new post of a permanent president of the European Council (2,5 years, renewable) and to reduce the number of commissioner to 15. The proposals were strongly criticized by small countries and the Commission. The suggested reforms would give national governments too much power, ruin the “community method”, and worsen the inter-institutional effectiveness. The Commission indeed supports the principle of “one country, one commissioner” and fiercely opposes the idea of a full-time European Council President.

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The 32 MEPs delegates to the Convention will try to bridge their differences on these issues to be able to counter what they fear would introduce more intergovernmentalism in the future EU institutional architecture.

The Convention will meet again on 15/16th May in plenary. The entire final constitution is expected to be handed over to EU leaders at the Thessaloniki Summit on 20 June.

More info:

<http://european-convention.eu.int/amendemTrait.asp?lang=EN>

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/563|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

EU/ Environment: Legal Affairs Committee votes on Environmental Liability

The Legal Affairs Committee voted on 29 April on the Report by Toine Manders (ELDR, Netherlands) on Environmental Liability (codecision, 1st reading). The Draft Report as amended (adopted with 17 votes in favour, 11 against, 0 abstention) foresees that there would be no mandatory system of insurance, at least in a first stage. A system of “proportional liability” would be introduced, but “joint and several liability” would disappear. The amendments on “permits” and “state-of-the-art” defences were accepted. Regarding the issue of definition, the law would cover “protected species and habitats” at EU level, but Member States would have the possibility to go further at national level. Also, a cap in liability would be introduced, with the possibility of financial subsidies for companies to cover, under certain circumstances, the management of environmental risks. The directive would be subject to review five years after its entry into force.

The vote in Plenary should take place on 14th May. A significant number of rejected amendments are likely to be retabled during the plenary.

More info:

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2? PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+PRESS+NR-20030430-1+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN& L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&LSTDOC=N>

EU/ Research: New roadmap to boost European R&D effort unveiled

In its Communication “Investing in Research, an Action Plan for Europe”, presented 30 April, the Commission outlines the means to reach a level of investment in research of 3% of GDP by 2010 (against 1.9% now). Two thirds should be financed by private operators. This objective would create a 0.5% additional growth of GDP and 400.000 jobs every year from 2010. Key actions include strengthening links between industry and public research, creating European technology platforms, developing better fiscal incentives for research, or redirecting public spending towards research and innovation. Also, special attention should be given to improving access to capital, in particular risk and venture capital, and guarantee schemes, especially for innovative SMEs.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/584|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=

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FAQ on the Action Plan:

[http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?
p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=MEMO/03/93|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=](http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=MEMO/03/93|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=)

EU/ Electronic pay-services: Fight against piracy is cornerstone of EU competitiveness

In a report on the implementation of the 1998 Directive on legal protection for electronic pay services, the Commission stresses that protecting Europe's fast growing electronic pay-services (services provided via TV, radio, and internet) is a priority for EU's competitiveness, since 21st century knowledge-based economies are likely to increasingly rely on these services. The reports calls upon Members States to take action, for example through improved co-operation between industry and enforcement authorities, training enforcement personnel, or exchanging best-practice and information.

The Commission will help existing and future Member States in identifying any legal loopholes and proposing legal action if necessary.

More info:

[http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?
p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/583|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=](http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/583|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=)

EU/ Legal: E-business portal for SMEs launched

On 22 April the Enterprise DG, in cooperation with Euro Info Centres, launched a new online information service on legal aspects of e-business for SMEs. This new portal, called ELEAS (E-commerce Legislation Easily Accessible to SMEs), available in 12 languages, should facilitate cross-border electronic transactions, especially among SMEs. It includes a FAQ (frequently asked questions) section, a database on e-business legislation, an e-business glossary and references to e-business self-regulatory initiatives.

More info on ELEAS portal:

<http://www.ebusinesslex.net/front/home.asp?lingua=eng>

IN BRIEF

EU/ E-Business: Workshop on Good Targets for e-business policies 26/27 May in Brussels

The second European e-Business Support Network for SMEs (eBSN) workshop, organised by the Enterprise DG, will take place in Brussels on 26/27 May (shift of venue from Heraklion, Crète).

The workshop will deal with e-business policy design ideas, and discuss voluntary targets that could be set at regional and national levels. It will bring together about 150 decision makers and e-business policy practitioners, academics, European business associations, and SME networks. Discussion will be based on the 27/03/2003 Communication "Adapting e-business policies in a changing environment: The lessons of the Go Digital initiative and the challenges ahead".

More info :

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/ict/policy/e-bus-snfsme/brus/index.htm>

(NB: As the workshop is open only to eBSN members, anyone wishing to present an e-business policy initiative has to register for membership beforehand).

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EU/ Trade : Transatlantic Business Dialogue to be relaunched

The U.S. Administration and the European Commission have recently agreed on details for a renewed commitment to the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (TABD) as a key forum for government and industry discussions on transatlantic commercial matters. The TABD is likely to be "re-launched" at the time of the June 25 EU-U.S. Summit in Washington, DC.

More info:

http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=IP/03/587|0|RAPID&lg=EN

EU/ European Tourism: Contributions on Sustainability of European Tourism

The Commission invites comments on a draft communication on how to improve the sustainability of tourism in Europe and beyond (deadline: 31 July 2003). The contributions will help prepare the policy options and measures to be proposed in a Commission Communication on Basic orientations for the sustainability of European tourism, expected for November 2003.

More info:

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/consultation/index.htm>

EU/ e-Europe : Conference on sustainable e-Europe in London 22 May

A conference on the economic, social and environmental impact of information and communication technologies (ICT) will take place in London on 22 May. The discussion will focus on whether ICT really add economic, social and environmental value, on the role of e-business and e-government in promoting social inclusion, and the impact of ICT on Europe's stock of human and social capital. Participants will also be asked whether larger companies benefit more than smaller ones from ICT innovation.

More info and registration: <http://www.sustainit.org/e-europe.htm>