



### HEADLINES

#### **EU / Italian Presidency: Priorities of the new presidency**

Mr Silvio Berlusconi, Prime Minister of Italy, which took over the EU presidency on 1st July, unveiled on 4th July its priorities for its six-month tenure. One of the core issues will be to promote European competitiveness through launching "Action for Growth", a programme to boost big infrastructure programmes in Europe, in conjunction with financial institutions such as the European Investment Bank. Encouraging "a spirit of enterprise", especially at small and medium-sized companies, was also mentioned as a priority, as well as considering policies "aimed at increasing the activity level of older workers and reducing trends toward pre-retirement", in order for the EU to tackle the ageing of its population.

Italy will also focus on rebuilding EU-US relations after the fall-out over Iraq; opening the Intergovernmental Conference to negotiate the EU's new Constitution in mid-October; adopting new measures to combat illegal immigration and people trafficking, and deepening co-operation with the enlarged Union's neighbours (the Middle East, North Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova).

[More info](#)

#### **EU / Consumers: New Proposal for a Directive on unfair commercial practices**

Following several years of consultation with various stakeholders, the European Commission adopted on 18th June a proposal for a Directive on unfair business-to-consumer commercial practices. The directive aims to establish a single, common, general prohibition of unfair commercial practices distorting consumers' economic behaviour. This should improve clarity of consumers' rights and simplicity of cross-border trade. A single set of common rules will replace the existing wide range of national rules and court rulings on the issue. In order to give consumers the same protection against sharp business practices and rogue traders, equally if they buy from the shop around the corner or from a website in another Member State.

The proposal will now be forwarded to the European Parliament and the Council for adoption through co-decision. It could enter into force beginning 2005.

[More info](#)

#### **EU/ Environment: New Communication on IPP directive**

The European Commission has adopted on 18th June a Communication on Integrated Product Policy (IPP), which outlines its strategy for reducing the environmental impact caused by products. This is the step of a series of actions to be taken in order to encourage the different actors to improve the environmental performance of products throughout their whole life-cycle. In 2003, the phase of identification of the products with the greatest potential for environmental improvement should be completed; and pilot projects on specific products will be conducted. In 2005, the Commission is

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expected to publish a practical handbook on best practice with Life Cycle Assessment (LCA). The development of a Commission action programme for greening its procurement should follow in 2006. The identification of a first set of products with the greatest potential for environmental improvement and the beginning of action to tackle them is expected for 2007.

[More info](#)

### **EU/ Cross-border transfers: Regulation aligns charges for cross-border transfers in euros**

Since 1st July European bank clients can enjoy lower charges thanks to new EU rules slashing the cost of cross-border transfers made in euros. The new regulation obliges bank to charge to charge the same for cross-border euro transfers within the EU as they do for domestic transfers; which means that in practice an average 24 euros will be cut from a 100 euro transfer from one EU country to another. The regulation will apply to transfers of up to 12,500 euros. This regulation will bring intra-EU bank transfers into line with withdrawals from automated teller machines. Indeed, since July 2002 banks are not allowed any more to charge customers any more for withdrawing euros from a cash machine in another EU country.

[More info](#)

### **EU/ SMEs: Campaign to help SMEs to make the most of enlargement**

A pan-European has been launched by the DG Enterprise Euro Info Centres (EICs) network to help SMEs take advantage of EU enlargement opportunities. In 2004, more than 400 activities including workshops, information days and business clubs will be organised by 200 EICs from 26 countries. Information will be supplied on national markets as well as on specific industry sectors. The EICs (joint ventures between local or national business organisations and the European Commission) inform and assist SMEs on EU matters. About 300 centres are now established in 42 countries.

[More info](#)

## **IN BRIEF**

### **EU / Entrepreneurship : Europe lacks risk-takers, says Commissioner Liikanen**

Commissioner Liikanen, at a meeting with industry leaders in Vienna on 16th June, regretted the lack of entrepreneurial initiative and risk-taking spirit in Europe. These deficits need to be addressed if the EU wants to stimulate growth and solve its unemployment. In this meeting Mr Liikanen outlined plans to boost the EU's enterprise culture and bring it into line with the US. According to a EU survey published in November 2002, only one half of the Europeans questioned said they were ready to start a new business when there was risk of failure, against three quarters of US citizens.

[More info](#)

### **EU/ SMEs Charter: Charter endorsed by Western Balkans**

The countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro) endorsed the European Charter for Small Enterprises at the EU- Western Balkans Summit of Thessaloniki on 21 June 2003. This brings the total number countries that have committed to the Charta to 34.

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### **EU/ Business transfer: New practice guide of measure to help transfer of businesses**

A new guide “Helping the transfer of businesses” has been recently published by the Enterprise DG. It includes 23 examples of proven good practice in business support for the transfer of business to new ownership. It covers the areas of information, training, advice, market places or finances for business transfers. Some of the cases mentioned in the final report of the Best project on business transfer are also highlighted.

[Electronic copy in English](#) (translated versions should be available soon)  
Free paper copies in English: [Entr-Business-Support@cec.eu.int](mailto:Entr-Business-Support@cec.eu.int)

### **EU/ Packaging: EP's positive vote on revision of packaging directive**

The European Parliament voted at its latest session in Strasbourg on the revision of Directive 94/62/EC on Packaging and Packaging Waste. The new directive will more than double the minimum recycling targets. One of the key remaining open question for conciliation concerns the deadline by which the new targets must be reached.

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