



### HEADLINES

#### **EU / Convention: Accelerating path in the Convention**

The debate on the future shape of the EU is becoming more intense and controversial. Commission President Romano Prodi unveiled on December 5th his proposals for a European constitution. The main idea is to adjust the balance of powers within the EU institutional framework and boost power of the Commission. Mr Prodi also clearly opposes the idea supported by major EU member states to create an EU president, and calls for the creation of an EU foreign minister post that would be closely linked to the EU executive.

Commenting Prodi's proposals on Friday, the president of the Convention, Mr Giscard d'Estaing, radically criticised the method of these so-called "secrete constitution", which lacks the legitimacy of the college of commissioners, and adds confusion to the debate. He also implicitly underlined that the only text to be dealt with is the project prepared by the Convention.

More Info:

[http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p\\_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/02/615|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=](http://europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/02/615|0|RAPID&lg=EN&display=)

#### **ESBA/ CEA-PME: Proposals submitted to the Convention**

ESBA, together with CEA-PME/ CEDI presented its proposal to the European Convention on December 6th, during a press conference hosted by M. Wieland, MEP and Manfred Vohrer former MEP. The proposal underlines the need for more transparency in all EU activities and the necessity to create a more friendly environment for businesses, i.e simplification of tax systems for cross-border transactions, flexibility in cross-border labour activities, and the creation of an independent EU legislative audit office. ESBA supports the enlargement as long as it does not lead to any distortion of the internal market.

The text will be soon online on

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

#### **EU/European top 500 fastest growing high tech companies identified**

A recent study by Deloitte&Touche Tohmatsu, European technology fast 5000 ranking, highlights success stories for technologies, media and telecommunication (TMT) firms. These companies, based in Europe, Israel, Russia and South Africa, have been able to find thriving ways for developing their products and services over the past 2 years, despite major economic slowdown in the sector. The most dominant industry represented in the list is software (36% of the list). The top ten include companies based in Norway, the UK, the Netherlands, and Israel. The companies are mostly based in the UK (142), France (99), Germany (54) and Norway (50).

More Info: <http://www.fast500europe.com/>

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### **EU/Social: Temporary workers draft directive discussed at the Council**

On 3 December, the EU ministers for Employment and Social affairs discussed the draft directive on working conditions for temporary workers, on which a formal agreement is expected under the Greek presidency. The aspects of the text requiring debate were the following: the concept of "comparable worker", the application of the principle of non-discrimination and the exemption of this principle for workers carrying assignments for up to six weeks, and the use of temping agencies.

More info:

[http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2002/com2002\\_0701en01.pdf](http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2002/com2002_0701en01.pdf)

### **IN BRIEF**

#### **EU/ Convention: Launch of Social Group at the Convention**

The eleventh working group of the Convention on Social Europe was launched at the plenary session of the Convention of December 6th. The list of its members was announced at this session.

More info:

[http://european-convention.eu.int/doc\\_wg.asp?lang=EN](http://european-convention.eu.int/doc_wg.asp?lang=EN)

#### **EU/ Social Partners: Social Partners Work programme for 2003**

The Social Partners UNICE, ETUC and UEA-PME published their work programme for 2003-2005 at the Social Partners Summit in Genval on 28 November. The work programme focuses on three main themes: employment, enlargement and mobility. It also stresses the role of social partners in social governance in Europe.

#### **Enterprise Commissioner Erkki Liikannen to unveil new industrial policy guidelines**

A Communication on "Industrial Policy in an Enlarged Europe" will be presented by Enterprise Commissioner Erkki Liikannen at a press conference in Brussels on 16 December. He is also expected to comment the main Commission's policy priorities for 2003.

More info and contact

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/library/enterprise-europe/news-updates/enterprise-policy/20021206.htm>

#### **Energy / taxation: Energy tax deal blocked by Germany**

During the ECOFIN Council of 3 December, the EU ministers failed to reach an agreement on the proposal on taxation of energy products. The text needs unanimity to be approved, but Germany is still opposing it. The energy tax directive or "Monti Proposal" has been discussed since 1997, and was expected to be adopted by the end of 2002. The proposal will be reconsidered during an extraordinary session of the ECOFIN this week.

See full text:

[http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=51997PC0030&model=guichett](http://europa.eu.int/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=EN&numdoc=51997PC0030&model=guichett)

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### **EU/Social: Ministers make progress on coordinating social security laws in the EU**

The Ministers managed to hammer out a political agreement on a general approach on a proposal to overhaul Regulation 1408/71 EEC on co-ordinating national social security systems, pending the European Parliament's opinion in first reading.

More info:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/soc-prot/schemes/news/slim\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/soc-prot/schemes/news/slim_en.htm)