



HEADLINES

EU / EMPLOYMENT Brussels 24/01/2001: Employment Guidelines and Recommendations 2001

The Guidelines for Member States' employment policies for the year 2001 and the Recommendations on the implementation of Member States' employment policies were published today in the Official Journal. Every year, a set of Guidelines are adopted for each of the identified pillars (employability, entrepreneurship, adaptability and equal opportunities), which set out a number of specific targets for Member States to achieve in their employment policies. The 2001 Guidelines are in line with the 2000 Guidelines. An extra focus has been given to Information Technology matters. Member States receive also each year recommendations on how to improve their employment performance (non-binding, but peer pressure).

More information:

www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/dat/2001/l_022/l_02220010124en00270037.pdf
www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/dat/2001/l_022/l_02220010124en00380038.pdf

ILO / EMPLOYMENT Geneva 24/01/2001: World Employment Report 2001

The International Labour Organisation has published its World Employment Report 2001 - Life at Work in the Information Economy. The report concludes that despite the communications revolution taking place in the world today, increasing numbers of workers are unable to find jobs (160 million workers are unemployed) or gain access to the emerging technological resources, risking to result in a widening global digital division. The prospects for an improving global employment situation will depend mainly on whether the current expansion of the world economy can be expected to continue. On balance, while there are many uncertainties, overall recent developments present a favourable set of prospects for the world economy, according the report.

More information:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/support/publ/wer/index2.htm>
<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/inf/pr/2001/03.htm>

EU / AGRICULTURE / BSE Brussels 29+31/01/2001: Sales of beef down and EUR 971 million extra

Sales of beef inside the Union have plunged by 27% according the Commission and are expected to be even lower in the future. This will put extra stress on the escalating expenditures for the Common Agricultural Policy. Commissioner Fischler (Agriculture) therefore urged Member States to make use of the purchase-for-destruction scheme in order to reduce beef production. Budget Commissioner Michaele Schreyer presented a Supplementary and Amending Budget that provides for additional financing not foreseen in the 2001 budget to deal with the BSE crisis: market support, the destruction of animals older than 30 months and extra co-financing for BSE tests. It will be financed from the surplus from the previous budget year and must be adopted still by the Council and the Parliament.

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EU / AGRICULTURE Brussels 29/01/2001: progress report on simplification of agri-legislation

From April 1999 onwards, when the first report on was adopted, important progress has been made in the efforts to simplify the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). The simplification process should reduce the administrative workload that the CAP imposes on farmers, increase the cost effectiveness of the CAP and reduce the risk of errors and fraud. The simplification resulting from the exercise did not go as far as desired, and it is clear that that much more need to be done, according the report. Aside the initiatives such as internal guidelines, reducing the number of regulations, simplification measures for trade mechanisms, and measures to reform the common organisation of markets, the Commission has also undertaken specific initiatives to reduce burdens on farmers. The "Small Farmers Scheme" for instance, which the Commission adopted recently (see ESBA Weekly December 2000), is a good example in this field. The proposal will greatly simplify the system of applying and paying aids to small farmers. The Agricultural Council already discussed the simplification progress report the days before and instructed the Special Agriculture Committee to continue its examination of the "Small Farmers Scheme" with a view to preparing the discussion as soon as possible at a future Council meeting.

WTO / TRADE Geneva 30/01/2001: 4th WTO Ministerial in November in Qatar

The WTO General Council decided Tuesday to hold from 5 to 9 November the Fourth WTO Ministerial Conference in Doha, Qatar. The Commission supported this decision fully on Wednesday. Several NGO's and political parties, such as the Friends of the Earth, Human Right Watch and the European Greens, have criticised the decision as Qatar has a doubtful reputation in the field of human rights, i.e. restriction on freedom of assembly and association.

EU / GENERAL Brussels 31/01/2001: Commission adopts working programme 2001

The European Commission adopted on Tuesday its working programme for 2001. The working programme consists of four major priorities: promoting new forms of governance (white paper and continued administrative reform), stabilising Europe and increased external relation efforts (accession strategy, new WTO trade round), a new economic and social agenda (spring European Council, follow-up of financial services action plan, e-Europe action plan, start of multiannual programme for enterprise), and a better quality of life for all (environmental action programme, sustainable development strategy, food safety). ESBA will report further on the workprogramme in a later stage.

The workprogramme can be found under:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/off/work_programme/index_en.htm

EU / FINANCIAL SERVICES Brussels 01/02/2001: Commission launches out-of-court complaints network

The European Commission has launched an out-of-court complaints network for financial services to help businesses and consumers resolve disputes in the Internal Market fast and efficiently by avoiding, where possible, lengthy and expensive legal action. This network, called FIN-NET, has been designed particularly to facilitate the out-of-court resolution of consumer disputes when the service provider is established in an EU Member State other than that where the consumer lives. FIN-NET complements the EEJ-NET (European Extra-Judicial Network) which establishes a more general network of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms (ADRs) notified to the Commission by Member States as applying core principles to guarantee their fairness and effectiveness.

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More info on FIN-NET:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/en/finances/consumer/intro.htm

EU / ENVIRONMENT Brussels 01/02/2001: Commission's proposal for increasing public participation in environmental initiatives

The European Commission has adopted a proposal for a new Directive providing for public participation in respect of the drawing up of certain plans and programmes relating to the environment. It also amends the existing Directives on environmental impact assessment and on integrated pollution prevention and control. The adoption of this proposal is a further step towards the ratification of the Aarhus Convention (UN Convention, concerning public participation in environmental decision making). Small businesses across Europe should assess this in order to understand if this will practically help them to have their concerns heard when public environmental initiatives are launched in their respective constituencies.

For more information:

http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2000/en_500PC0839.pdf