



### HEADLINES

#### **EU / INDUSTRY Manchester 21/02/2001: Priorities to promote entrepreneurship**

European Industry/Economic Affairs Ministers and several European Commissioners met on 20 and 21 February in Manchester for an informal meeting, discussing the development of European competitiveness and entrepreneurship in a knowledge-based economy. The meeting served as a preparation for the Stockholm Summit in March and as an assessment of the implementation of the Lisbon Strategy. The objective was to discuss priorities and build consensus amongst the Member States.

The Manchester conclusions, which will be taken into account during the Industry and Energy Council meeting in May, can be found at:

[http://www.eu2001.se/eu2001/news/news\\_read.asp?informationID=12124](http://www.eu2001.se/eu2001/news/news_read.asp?informationID=12124)

ESBA welcomes the Manchester conclusions, especially the need to: - Implement and further develop recently adopted frameworks (MAP, SME Charter, BEST, Benchmarking); - Monitor progress by introducing a number of quantitative targets in the enterprise area; - Strengthening the interests of small enterprises at EU-level; - Make the European Charter for small enterprises more operational; - Formulate a "think-small-first" approach in policy making; - Promote risk taking and improve attitudes in society towards business culture, and business related failure; - Present as soon as possible, by the Commission, the strategy on better regulation, based on regulatory impact assessment, including cost/benefit analysis, as well as considering alternatives to regulation; - Consult the business sector from the earliest stages of policy development and throughout the legislative process; - Include simplification measures and initiatives on the agenda for the spring summit meetings on a regular basis; - Benchmark policies in support of e-commerce for SMEs and the launch of the Commission GO Digital initiative by 2001 to strengthen the take up of e-commerce by SMEs. ESBA, however, expresses the need for further and real progress as most actions have been proposed already several times before in recent years.

#### **EU / HEALTH & SAFETY Bilbao 21/02/2001: OSHA launches online forum**

The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA) has launched the online forum as a pilot project to provide safety and health professionals and practitioners across the EU with the opportunity to exchange and share experiences and expertise on occupational safety and health topics.

The forum can be found at:

[http://europe.osha.eu.int/good\\_practice/forums](http://europe.osha.eu.int/good_practice/forums)

#### **EU / RESEARCH Brussels 21/02/2001: Commission adopts draft 6th framework programme**

The European Commission adopted on Wednesday the 6th framework programme on research and innovation. The budget, 16.2 billion Euro, covering the four-year period 2003-2006, represents an increase of 17% over the budget of the current programme. Concerning SMEs, the new programme

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has set a target participation of 15%, compared to the 10% in the current scheme. The final decision on the new programme lies jointly with the Council and the European Parliament and is expected to be adopted over 2002. The newly proposed framework programme is part of a wider political initiative aiming at creating a European Research Area, as endorsed by the Lisbon Summit in March 2000.

More information can be found at:

<http://www.cordis.lu/rtd2002/>

### **EU / BUSINESS SERVICES Brussels 21/02/2001: Commission integrates support networks**

The Commission has decided to streamline its business support services networks into one more coherent and simple system in order to enhance its effectiveness. The Commission wants to create a common platform for these networks while maintaining the flexibility of multiple entry points for businesses. This as the precise nature of the different services provided by these networks has not always been easily recognised by enterprises. The European networks for business support services are: - "Euro Info Centres": information and assistance to access EU programmes and initiatives. - "Innovation Relay Centres": assistance with the transfer of innovative technologies throughout Europe. - "Organisations for the Promotion of Energy Technologies": promotion of results of new and innovative renewable energy technologies to enterprises. - "European Business Information Centres": support enterprises in accessing the Asian markets. - "COOPECOs" and "EUROCENTROS": facilitate cooperation and investment in Latin America.

### **EU / EMU Brussels 23/02/2001: SMEs are still lagging behind for Euro changeover**

A new Eurobarometer poll found that only a quarter of small and medium-sized businesses have already made their preparations for the Euro, while a majority are planning to make the switch at the last moment. Only 19% of very small businesses have a detailed plan of action and there are systematically fewer of them than of other categories to have taken practical steps for the changeover. Preparations are seen often from a technical angle, often ignoring the strategic and commercial aspects. The European Commission calls on all public to do their utmost to encourage companies to get ready and to mobilise the professions dealing with companies to help them make the changeover. Pedro Solbes, European Commissioner for Economic and Financial Affairs, also underlined this aspect once more in his speech on 19 February 2001 in Loughrea; Ireland. He called for the need for information campaigns in the final run up to Euro-day to concentrate on SMEs and the retail sector.