



HEADLINES

EU / ENTERPRISE POLICY Brussels 02/04/2001: Enterprise Policy Group just set up

The European Commission just finalised the selection of candidates for the professional chamber to be part of the Enterprise Policy Group together with a Chamber of EU Member States Directors-General (dealing with SMEs matters at national level). 35 candidates out of more than 400 have been selected. The list will be available very soon.

ESBA WELCOMES SUCH AN INITIATIVE TO ENSURE THAT THE COMMISSION CAN MEET DIRECTLY WITH ENTREPRENEURS FROM TIME TO TIME. THE SELECTION WILL BE FURTHER ANALYSED IN THE COMING WEEKS BY OUR ORGANISATION. WOULD SOME SPECIFIC SMALL BUSINESS INTEREST BE UNDERREPRESENTED OR NOT (notably the self-employed or un-incorporated businesses), ESBA WILL COOPERATE WITH THIS NEW ENTERPRISE POLICY GROUP.

EU / INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS Brussels 02/04/2001: EIRO presents annual review on industrial relations

The annual review of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) presents the developments in European industrial relations over 2000. It provides a brief comparative overview of developments across the EU Member States and the main relevant issues at the EU level and in each of the individual countries concerned. Examined key issues are collective bargaining (pay, working time, job security, training and skills development), as well as legislative developments, the organisation and role of the social partners, industrial action, National Action Plans on employment, equal opportunities and diversity issues, information and consultation of employees and new forms of work.

The full report can be read online: <http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/2000/review/index.html>

ILO / TOURISM Geneva 02/04/2001: Globalisation leaves SMEs behind in tourism sector

Although the tourism industry sector has fuelling growth prospects, the prospects for SMEs (employing over 50% of the sector's workforce) have become increasingly unclear, according to the ILO report 'Human resources development, employment and globalisation in the hotel, catering and tourism sector'. SMEs have in general certain strengths such as low labour costs, presence in niche markets and adaptability to customer demands. However, they face also many threats such as the insufficient access and application of technology and training, air carrier reservation systems which do not sufficiently take into account the needs of SMEs and market developments such as economies of scope and efficiency via mergers, franchising arrangements and increased linkages between air carriers, hotels, travel agencies and retail distributors. The report raises attention for the need to reduce the burden of red tape on SMEs and reduce levels of taxation that are perceived to be damaging productivity. The report has been made in preparation of the tripartite meeting of industry experts held from 2-6 April in Geneva, where discussions and guidance for action will focus on employment and labour issues in the tourism industry. In relation to SMEs and tourism, the report and the tripartite meeting could be seen as a follow-up of the report issued under the United Kingdom's Presidency of the EU in 1998, which proposed a ten-point framework for action in support

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of SMEs in tourism. These recommendations were aimed at modernising the sector in the light of globalisation by raising awareness among SMEs of business support systems, information technology and the possibilities open to them in respect of finance, and by providing affordable possibilities for better training for managers/owners and staff.

The report can be found at:

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/sector/techmeet/tmhct01/tmhctr1.htm>

EU / ENTERPRISE POLICY Brussels 03/04/2001: Consultation with SMEs organisations on BEST DG

Enterprise just held one of its general SMEs consultation meeting this week aiming at presenting the new developments of the BEST PROCEDURE. The European Commission indicated that it is keen to ensure that BEST can deliver results, namely developing the profile of important initiatives for SMEs and ensuring that Member states will perform real best practices. Some of the 11 projects to be undertaken in 2001 were discussed.

ESBA INDICATED THAT IT IS IMPORTANT TO FURTHER FOCUS THE BEST PROCEDURE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT TOPICS FOR SMALL BUSINESS ENTREPRENEURS. ONLY 4 TO 6 ISSUES SHOULD BE SELECTED FOR 2002. ESBA ALSO CALLED THE COMMISSION TO CONSULT SMES ORGANISATIONS BEFORE SELECTING THESE TOPICS. THIS CONSULTATION DID NOT TAKE PLACE FOR THE CURRENT LIST OF PROJECTS.

EU / EMU Brussels 03/04/2001: Common approach to final phase of euro changeover

Representatives of European consumers, craft organisations, the distributive trades, the tourism industry and SMEs signed an agreement of good practices to promote consumer familiarity and to facilitate the introduction of euro coins and notes. The agreement builds upon and reinforces the voluntary commitments already agreed within the framework of the Euro Logo Agreement of 1998. The agreement's main objectives are to increase awareness, confidence, understanding of the euro among consumers before the end of 2001. Retailers agreed to start displaying prices in euros from September (latest) and commit themselves to do everything to ensure the overall stability of their price level when fixing prices in euro ("new currency, stable prices"). The parties call on Member States to intensify communication campaigns and to increase efforts to familiarise the public with the euro. More info: http://europa.eu.int/comm/economy_finance/document/euro/declaration_02_04_2001/declaration_02_04_2001_en.htm (copy/paste full link) A communication of the European Commission on the preparations for the introduction of euro notes and coins, presented just after the signed agreement, showed as indicated already several times (e.g. see ESBA WEEKLY Vol. 3 - N. 12), that SMEs are lagging behind in the preparations.

EU / TRADE Brussels 04/04/2001: EU signs trade facilitation agreement with Japan The agreement is a mutual recognition of technical testing and controls. In the future, producers will be able to test their products within the EU according to Japanese rules in order to gain access to the Japanese market and vice versa. Previously it was required that this type of testing was carried out in the importing country. The agreement will improve market access between Japan and the EU by reducing costs (as duplicate tests can be avoided), thereby bringing benefits to producers, importers and consumers. The products covered are pharmaceuticals, chemicals, telecommunication equipment and electrical equipment. Other sectors are scheduled to be included after an initial two year period. The agreement, on which negotiations begun in 1995, will come into force in the autumn after ratification by both sides. Similar agreements have already been concluded with the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

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EU / STOCKHOLM SUMMIT Strasbourg 04/04/2001: Prodi demands concrete action after Stockholm
In his speech for the European Parliament plenary session in Strasbourg, the President of the European Commission argued that "Stockholm provides a very good basis for action over the next twelve months", but that "effective ACTION by the EU is the only way to win public support for the European project". He concluded his speech, after having assessed the results of the Stockholm Summit, with the need to close the gap between rhetoric and reality in Europe, as what matters at the end of the day is action to create jobs, disseminate new skills, to recruit and train teachers, and action in national parliaments to cut red tape.

EU / ENTREPRENEURSHIP Zoetermeer 05/04/2001: Understanding entrepreneurship better

The EIM has presented in a new publication an eclectic theory of entrepreneurship to create a better understanding of the different role that entrepreneurship plays in different countries and time periods (of which the causes and consequences are currently extensively debated amongst scientists). The integrated framework which the theory presents should help to guide future empirical research in this area and to provide insights for policymakers striving to promote entrepreneurship. The theory focuses not only on the country level of analysis but is also linked to the level of individual occupational choices. The analysis make a distinction between the supply side and the demand side of entrepreneurship. Key elements of the supply side are the demographic composition of the population, the resources and abilities of individuals, and their attitudes towards entrepreneurship. The demand side represents the opportunities for entrepreneurship.