



### HEADLINES

#### **EU / GENERAL Brussels 01/07/2001: Belgium takes over EU Presidency**

The top priorities of the Belgium's Presidency are: social policy (including quality of work), sustainable development, asylum and immigration, enlargement, taxation and the debate over the future of the EU. ALTHOUGH THE PRACTICAL WORKING PROGRAMME OF THE BELGIAN PRESIDENCY REFERS TO SMES ("A special policy for SMEs, consisting of the following three key factors: actual implementation of the European Charter for Small Businesses, access to funding, and improved rules governing the awarding of public contracts".)

**AND WHEREAS THE WORK PLAN OF THE INDUSTRY COUNCIL ARGUES THAT IT WILL FOCUS ON SMES AND ITS SPECIFIC CONCERNS (state aid, access to finance, the time has come to take concrete actions), ESBA REGRETS THAT THERE IS NO REFERENCE AT ALL TO SMES NOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN THE PRIORITY NOTES OF THE PRESIDENCY. IF THE EU WANTS TO REACH ITS AMBITIOUS GOALS AS SET IN LISBON, IT WILL HAVE TO KEEP SMES AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ON THE POLITICAL AGENDA AS A TOP PRIORITY AND IMPLEMENT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE ALL COMMITMENTS MADE OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS TO FOSTER ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT PROSPEROUS TO ALL ENTERPRISES, ESPECIALLY TO SMES.**

More info: General site: <http://www.eu2001.be>

Priorities: [http://www.eu2001.be/Images/pdf/Priorit\\_Eng.PDF](http://www.eu2001.be/Images/pdf/Priorit_Eng.PDF)

Policy issues (copy/paste full link): <http://www.eu2001.be/Main/Frameset.asp?reference=01-01&lang=en&sess=863711>

#### **WIPO / INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY Geneva 01/07/2001: WIPO SMEs Division launches own SME website**

The SMEs Division of the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), established in Autumn 2000, launched its own website with information on Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs), focusing on the specific needs and concerns of SMEs, presented from an entrepreneur's/SMEs perspective. ESBA recalls that the Milan Forum on IPRs and SMEs, organised earlier this year, adopted an action plan stating that: "- SMEs, through adequate and effective management and commercialisation of intellectual property (IP), can significantly enhance their competitiveness, export opportunities, market share and their overall market value; - SMEs, in particular in developing and least-developed countries, often do not sufficiently exploit the potential of the IP system for increasing their competitiveness, innovative capacity and market access; and - The underutilization of the IP system may be largely due to lack of information on how to acquire and manage IP assets and technological information in an effective manner, absence or shortage of IP related services in SME support institutions, as well as the perception that the IP system is complex, time-consuming and expensive, making it difficult for SMEs to acquire, maintain, enforce and use their IP rights effectively in trade whether domestically and internationally".

**THEREFORE, ESBA WELCOMES THE LATEST WIPO INITIATIVE AND CALLS ON ALL ITS MEMBERS ORGANISATIONS TO PROMOTE THE WEBSITE EFFECTIVELY AMONG ALL ENTREPRENEURS. BESIDES APPROPRIATE INFORMATION FOR SMEs, ESBA CALLS FOR EFFORTS TO REDUCE THE COSTS OF**

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### ACQUISITION, MAINTENANCE, AND ENFORCEMENT OF IP RIGHTS WHILE MAINTAINING QUALITY AND RELIABILITY OF RIGHTS.

More info: <http://www.wipo.int/sme/en/>

#### **EU / SMEs Brussels 04/07/2001: EP Liberals demand urgent reforms in favour of SMEs**

The policy paper shows the clear vision of a dynamic and enterprising Europe for SMEs of the European Parliament's Liberal Group (ELDR). The ELDR calls on the urgent need to take better care of people with ideas and be more supportive of entrepreneurship and innovation. The key propositions of the policy paper are: - a legally binding European charter for small enterprises; - a total review of the acquis from an SME-friendly perspective; - business impact assessments before legislation by an independent agency; - lower the overall tax burden in Europe; - no VAT on E-commerce until 2005; - promotion of entrepreneurship in all of society; - all Member States should have "one-stop-shop desks"; - procedures for setting up a company must be simplified and costs cut; - cross-border business of SMEs should be much more facilitated - reversed burden of proof for companies intending to export; - venture capital should be promoted and facilitated; - state aide to be further reduced; - make public procurement more accessible for SMEs; - increased SME-participation in research programmes; and - the Commission's SLIM initiative should be extended. Having regarded ELDR's vision on a dynamic and enterprising Europe for SMEs, ESBA expresses its warm welcome for the initiative. ESBA especially welcomes the following proposals: to make the European Charter for small enterprises legally binding, to undertake BIAs before new legislation is passed, by a special independent agency (including independent entrepreneurs !), to reduce the overall tax burden, and not to charge VAT on E-commerce for the moment (provided that EU service providers will be treated equally compared to non-EU service providers). The relevant issues at stake are known to all of us. It is time to move forward urgently and to take concrete steps to create a dynamic and enterprising Europe for SMEs on the highest political level.

More info: <http://eld.europarl.eu.int/docs/2001-STAFF-0214-EN.pdf>