



### HEADLINES

#### **EU / POSTAL SERVICES Luxembourg 15/10/2001: Council position: full liberalisation by 2009 ?**

The EU's Council of Telecommunications Ministers adopted a common position to further liberalise postal services, based on a compromise proposition of the Belgium Presidency, and will now be submitted to the European Parliament for a second reading (as defined under the co-decision procedure). The adopted Council position tends to maintain the balance between competition (through gradual and controlled liberalisation) and ensuring the provision of the universal postal service. The agreement states that Member States would have to open up to competition gradually as from 2003 (>100 grams or costing more than three times the price of a standard letter; and all outgoing cross-border mail (unless universal service endangered) and as from 2006 (>50 grams or costing more than two and a half times the price of a standard letter). Based on a Commission impact study, the EC will propose either a further step in the liberalisation or their total opening by 2009 (under the co-decision procedure again).

#### **EU / GOVERNANCE Brussels 16/10/2001: EC launches: "Your voice in Europe"**

The European Commission has launched the multilingual website "Your Voice in Europe" further to its plans of April 2001 to improve governance by using better the Internet (see ESBA WEEKLY - Vol 3 - N 19). It also organised a stakeholders meeting to further spread and explain the project. The webportal should enable citizens, consumers and businesses to give input to new initiatives, give feedback on the application of existing legislation, discuss the future of Europe or lodge complaints. The Interactive Policy Making (IPM) initiative consists of three main mechanisms: - Collection of spontaneous feedback via existing intermediaries (based on for example the already existing Business Feedback Mechanism, which will be applied to all other EU policy areas and a wider range of intermediaries); - More rapid and structured consultations to new initiatives directly addressed to the public or targeted groups; and - Platform for online-discussions (chats, debates). ESBA welcomes the IPM initiative and expresses the hope that all EU consultations, discussions, feedback mechanisms and complaint procedures (IPM based or not) will be included as soon as possible on this new site in order to improve EU transparency and efficiency. Currently, consultations, debates, chats, feedback mechanisms and complaint procedures are still spread on multiple sites and pages, making it practically impossible for citizens and businesses to be informed properly.

More info: <http://www.europa.eu.int/yourvoice>  
<http://ipmmarkt.homestead.com>

#### **EU / TRANSPORT Brussels 17/10/2001: Road driving times and rest periods reviewed**

The European Commission has proposed, as announced in the White Paper on European transport policy (see ESBA WEEKLY - Vol 3 - N 37), to simplify and update existing legislation in the road transport sector. The EC proposes adjusted maximum daily (9 hours, with exceptions) and fortnightly (90/144) driving times, breaks and minimum daily (12 hours) and weekly rest periods for all drivers of road haulage and passenger transport. Furthermore, the proposed regulation wants to reduce the number of exceptions possible (only small or light vehicles, vehicles used over short distances or a clearly defined public interest), and seeks to facilitate more efficient enforcement and monitoring of

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the legislation (strengthening the provisions on employer liability, and penalise drivers for offences committed in another Member State). The directive will complement the directive on working hours of drivers (driving and other activities), currently the subject of conciliation procedure between the Council and European Parliament.

More info (copy/paste full link): [http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001\\_0573en01.pdf](http://www.europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/pdf/2001/com2001_0573en01.pdf)

### **EU / TAXATION Brussels 18/10/2001: EC communication on company taxation out soon**

The European Commission has just finalised a major survey on company taxation in the internal market (a review of effective tax rates). This survey of over 500 pages will be made available to the public before the end of October with a Communication on the same subject (a review of obstacles and solutions for cross border activities). This was confirmed by Commission civil servants earlier this week. Also Commissioner Bolkestein addressed the issue recently and already gave some insights of its content. Identified tax obstacles faced by cross-border operating companies: - Directives on dividends and mergers; - Cross border loss relief; - Transfer pricing; - Double taxation conventions; Aside the obstacles (only few mentioned here) and possible solutions, the survey also examined options for a EU consolidated corporate tax (e.g. home state taxation, a consolidated common base, a European Union company income tax, a compulsory harmonised tax system).

More info (copy/paste full link):  
[http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p\\_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/01/470|0|RAPID&lg=EN](http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/start/cgi/guesten.ksh?p_action.gettxt=gt&doc=SPEECH/01/470|0|RAPID&lg=EN)

### **EU / ENTERPRISE Brussels 19/10/2001: Short public consultation on revision of SME definition**

Further to the informal consultation with few selected business organisations, among which ESBA (see ESBA WEEKLY - Vol 3 - N 41), the European Commission has launched a public consultation for all interested parties on the proposed revised SME definition. Reactions can be provided until the 9th of November 2001. The issue will also be discussed with all business organisations during a consultation organised by DG Enterprise of the EC on November 7 2001.

More info (copy/paste full link):  
[http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/consultations/sme\\_definition/index.htm](http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/consultations/sme_definition/index.htm)

**UPCOMING EVENTS** Louvain-la-Neuve (B) 24&25/10/2001: SMEs Finance; Theme: risk management, role public/private sector, attitude banking sector, revision of Basle agreement, obstacles to award loans, action plan on venture capital Info: <http://www.kubla2001.be/uk/colloque/colloque.htm> Geneva (CH) 1-3/11/2001: Global Employment Forum; Theme: Employment, Info: <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/employment/geforum/program.htm> Brussels (B) 05/11/2001: The Security of European Energy Supply, consequences for SMEs; Theme: Energy, SMEs. Info: <http://www.sme-union.org/activities/sme5november.htm> Brussels (B) 07/11/2001: Meeting between business organisations and the EC, DG Enterprise; Theme: 2001 Best Procedure Report and revised proposal for SME definition.