



HEADLINES

EU / EMPLOYMENT Brussels 07/11/2001: EC wants to strengthen local dimension of EES

The Commission adopted a policy paper suggesting ways to develop employment at local level and enhancing transfer of best practice at European level, thereby further strengthening the European Employment Strategy (EES). The EC recognises that the local actors themselves know better what needs to be done in each specific situation, however, the EC wants to open-up themselves towards local actors and promote the exchange of information and links between the local, regional, national, and Community levels (i.e via websites, research and networking). The communication is adopted in the context of last's year campaign "Acting Locally for Employment", the European Parliament's resolution on "Acting locally" and the Commission's White Paper on European Governance. The employment week 2001 will also focus on this theme and finally the EC has proposed to hold, at the beginning of 2003, a Local Development Forum for all actors concerned.

More info:

http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/com/cnc/2001/com2001_0629en01.pdf

EU / TOURISM Brussels 13/11/2001: No long term negative impact & the future of EU tourism

Following the events of 11 September 2001, the EC has conducted an industry-wide stakeholder consultation and concludes now in its report that, although there is a serious negative short-term impact on certain forms of tourism, destination types and specific sectors, the overall impact on tourism in Europe is expected to be rather limited in scope and time. The analysis and opinion is in line with the conclusions of the World Tourism Organisation, but contradicts with an impact simulation carried out immediately after 11 September forecasting dramatic losses in tourism, with severe effects on GDP and employment world-wide, including Europe. Tourism and related activities account for more than 20 million jobs and 12% of EU GDP, and is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the European economy. At the same time the EC has also published its ideas to develop a future strategy for the European tourism sector that meets the medium and long-term political and economic challenges ahead. It will be based on the open method of co-ordination (with Member States and stakeholders) as tourism is currently not a Community policy domain (it also implicates that the EU will not provide funding for most proposed measures). The strategy aims at enhancing the integration of the concerns of all tourism stakeholders in Community policies and initiatives affecting tourism and tries to raise the awareness of the importance of tourism within the EU economy as a whole. The strategy focuses on five key issues (information, training, quality, sustainable development, and new technologies) and advocates a number of key activities, such as the organisation of an annual Tourism Forum, enhancing the functioning of the Advisory Committee on Tourism, fostering networking services and support functions, promoting sustainable development, and monitoring the quality of tourist destinations and services.

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/tourism-publications/documents/report_en.pdf

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/tourism-publications/documents/communication_en.pdf

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EU / FINANCE Brussels 14/11/2001: EU SME support - ERDF, EIB and EIF sign agreements

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has concluded a 40 million euro financing arrangement (in the form of a global loan) with the UK's Co-operative bank to support SMEs in the UK assisted areas (industry, rural and urban tourism schemes and services). The facility should enable the Co-operative bank to extend the financing it can provide to SMEs, with a particular focus on smaller enterprises which need development finance for further growth. The European Investment Fund (EIF) signed its first micro-credit operation with the Prince's Trust (Wales, UK) for the amount of 31 million euro designed to help young people (through guarantees), who are unable to raise finance from other sources, to set up their own small enterprise. The resources mobilised stem from the so-called "SME Guarantee Facility", created by the EU in the context of the Growth and Employment Initiative and managed by the EIF. The EIF furthermore launched its first operation supporting early stage venture capital in Denmark, as it agreed to invest DKK 100 million (around 13,5 million euro) in Danske Venture Partners Seed K/S fund (total fund DKK 500 million or around 67 million euro). The fund will target start-up and early stage companies in the fields of information and communication technology and derived media sectors. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is to contribute a total of 145 million euro to new business risk capital funds launched in favour of four British regions: Merseyside, South Yorkshire, West Wales and the Valleys, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (eligible under Objective I of the Structural Funds). In addition to the ERDF funds, the public and private sectors will provide a further 177 million, giving a total of 322 million. The funds are designed to create or safeguard some 30,000 jobs and to help launch or maintain 3,800 enterprises over the next ten years. The organisations implementing the schemes are to make the funds and services available to SMEs tailored to meet their specific needs and to contribute to developing the economy in these regions.

EU / ENTREPRENEURSHIP Brussels 14/11/2001: EC launches business incubators database

Business incubators assist newly created companies to get off to a successful start by providing integrated facilities, services, networking opportunities and knowledge. The database aims to provide the interested parties with a single entry point to all business incubators in Europe, regardless of type business sector or location. The database should thereby support entrepreneurs in finding the correct incubators, facilitate networking among business incubators, and provide information on the business incubators. The database contains already over 500 business incubators from EU Member States, Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and the 13 candidate countries. At the end of 2001, it should contain over 950 business incubators. The database is a practical result of the benchmarking exercise on the management and promotion of business incubators, coordinated by the EC.

More info / Database:

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

EU / DATA PROTECTION Brussels 14/11/2001: Spamming and cookies in the European Parliament?

In its first reading, the European Parliament voted to leave it up to the different Member States to determine under their own legislation whether unsolicited email for marketing purposes should be allowed only with the prior consent of subscribers ('opt-in') or whether subscribers should just have the right to insist on being removed from mailing lists ('opt-out'). The European Parliament's only exception to this proposed solution is the situation where a consumer already has a commercial relationship with a company, in which case he would have to opt out if he did not want further information. However, direct marketing by fax, SMS or automated calling systems should be done via the opt-in system, according the European Parliament. It also wants the opt-in option for so-called internet cookies (recording users passwords, names, language preferences, etceteras). The

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Commission initially proposed the "opt-in" option to be applied across the EU for all electronic communications tools. The European Parliament initially seemed to favour this option also, but the plenary vote in September returned the proposal to the responsible committee, a reviewed proposal and current outcome as a result. The text will now probably be examined by the Telecommunications Council on 6 December 2001, of which several members already indicated to prefer the opt-out option. The proposals form part of a package of draft legislation put forward last year by the EC to bring EU rules into the internet age and to ensure data protection rules also cover the new technologies. The proposal intends to enhance personal privacy in electronic communication, thereby boosting confidence in the internet. ESBA questions the usefulness of some aspects of the proposal and the European Parliament amendments. A more balanced approach is needed between data protection and commercial interests (i.e. SMEs undertaking legal commercial activities for whom it is an effective marketing tool). Only a world-wide opt-out system together with effective legal prosecution could possibly resolve the current "problem" and boost confidence in the internet. ESBA fully supports the need to make a distinction between illegal 'spamming' (the dispatch of non-targeted emails, generally considered tantamount to harassment as messages often promote pornographic sites or fraudulent practices) on one side and serious direct and interactive marketing on the other (mainly used by SMEs in their commercial communications strategy). SMEs in the EU need a clear, coherent and simple business environment to be able to compete on equal footing with its non-EU competitors. As e-mails originating from outside the EU are not falling under the scope of the proposals and as most authors of 'spamming' messages often themselves use false Internet addresses, the opt-in system is unlikely to reduce the volume of unsolicited emails and will only undermine business interest.

EU / ENTREPRENEURSHIP Brussels 15/11/2001: European Awards for the Spirit of Enterprise 2001

Also this year again, JEE organised the "European Awards for the spirit of enterprise". Four main prize categories are defined: young people with the education and training institutions as a partner (SPIN-OFF & EDUCATION), the launch of new enterprises (SEED), the growth of new enterprises (START-UP), and the growth and the innovation of SMEs over the break-even point (EXPANSION & INNOVATION). The European Awards for the Spirit of Enterprise 2001 were awarded to the following European initiatives: - SPIN-OFF: T.C. PROJECT, Italy - SEED: TBsC Technology, UK - START-UP: UPPONETTI OY, Finland - EXPANSION & INNOVATION: STEM ALPHA, France The European Awards are designed to stimulate and promote the spirit of enterprise in order to encourage the development and growth of new enterprises. The enables young entrepreneurs to gain recognition, to present their activities and to exchange their ideas and experiences. It affords the winning companies recognition by professionals, the administration and the general public, as well as facilitating contacts with potential prospects and investors. The JEE hopes also to be able to develop a European fund for start-ups (EFS) that will invest in the best European new and expanding e-content enterprises from 2002 onwards. The idea is to make use of the business evaluations carried out by the JEE awards selection committees in order to allocate funding (although there will not be a definite financial or organisational link between the EFS and the European awards for the spirit of enterprise). This as there is a large number of digital content business plans submitted to the JEE awards. The funding for the e-content start-ups would be provided by major banks, pension funds and venture capitalists, with both local-level and hands-on co-investment by financial backers. ESBA has been supporting the competition for the first time and as such was involved as a member of the European jury. The award is a good example of an open, democratic and concrete effort to foster entrepreneurship in Europe. Entrepreneurship is the most important value in a society requiring the creation of wealth. A successful and free society encourages entrepreneurship and competition. If a society stifles this, it simply fails to maintain the necessary creativity and initiative spirit to answer evolving human needs and desires through processes of innovation. Small business entrepreneurs are the natural pool of entrepreneurship in a society. Their strength is innovation and flexibility.

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UPCOMING EVENTS Brussels (B) 22-23/11/2001: Closing conference European Week 2001 - Prevention of work-related accidents: a different strategy in a changing world of work; Theme: SMEs, Health and Safety. Info: <http://osha.eu.int/ew2001/programme.stm>