



HEADLINES

EU / ENTERPRISE 22/11/2001: Lisbon progress, BEST, Scoreboard and Competitiveness reports

DG Enterprise has published recently several reports to measure progress on the Lisbon agenda (some specifically addressing progress in the field of entrepreneurship and related aspects): - Competitiveness Report - Enterprise Policy Scoreboard 2001 - Best procedure report 2001 - Sustaining the commitments, increasing the pace (entrepreneurship) - Innovation Scoreboard (see ESBA Weekly - Vol 3 - N 40) - Internal Market Scoreboard 2001 (see ESBA Weekly - Vol 3 - N 47) The Competitiveness Report indicates that EU GDP is two thirds of that of the US (largest gap since 1960s) due to lower labour utilisation, labour productivity, levels of innovation, take-up of ICT, .. The Scoreboard provides an overview of developments in the Member States in seven areas that are crucial for the dynamism of the enterprise sector: access to finance, regulatory and administrative environment, open and well-functioning markets, innovation and knowledge diffusion, new technologies, entrepreneurship, and human resources. Within each area, several indicators have been measuring progress in each Member State. There is still much way for improvement due to the unsatisfactory availability of data and other factors, but the benchmarking exercise provides indications where to look for good practice and to a certain extent indicators can indicate the level and quality of performance of a Member State. The BEST procedure report 2001 presents Member States efforts to identify and exchange best practices in field of enterprise policy and the progress made so far. As most of the projects were launched only in 2001 under this procedure, the report concentrates this year still on more general themes (including the report on the implementation of the action plan to promote entrepreneurship and competitiveness), in line with the scoreboard, rather than the 11 projects launched this year. Finally, the Commission Communication on "Sustaining the commitments, increasing the pace" provides an overall assessment of the above mentioned reports and the progress made in the field of entrepreneurship. It concludes that despite important achievements, the pace of implementing the Lisbon commitments on the part of the Member States is too slow. The Council will respond officially during the upcoming Council meeting on 4 and 5 December. A draft position paper has already been released, indicating that the Council agrees with the Commission analysis. ESBA strongly urges all its members and other interested organisations and individuals to assess the mentioned reports and scoreboards attentively (especially the scoreboard indicators and the overall assessment paper of the Commission and the Council).

More info:

http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/doc/comp-leaflet-2001.pdf

and http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/index.htm and <http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/01/st14/14561en1.pdf>

and http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/best/best_projects_2001.htm

EU / SINGLE MARKET 26/11/2001: 2nd reading needed on cross-border payment

Regulation Following the approval by the European Parliament on 15/11/2001, the Council introduced some changes to the text adopted by the European Parliament on the proposed Regulation on cross-border payments. A second reading will now be necessary. The Council generally supported the proposal as presented by the Commission and as amended by the European

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Parliament. However, initially some Member States preferred an alternative solution (voluntary agreement by the bank sector). In the end, the following compromise was concluded: ending differentiation between national and cross-border transfers on 1 July 2002 for electronic payments below EUR 12,500, 1 July 2003 for other payments (bank transfers, not cheques) below EUR 12,500 and 1 January 2006 for payments below EUR 50,000 (EC proposed 1 January and EUR 50,000, the EP demanded 1 March and EUR 50,000). The Regulation can also be applied to other European currencies than the euro in the Member States that want to (e.g. UK). Several Member States, like the European Parliament and ESBA, feared that the banks would increase the charges on national payments in order to offset losses on cross border payments. The Commission is now asked to carry out a study in July 2004 in order to assess the impact that the regulation would have on the cost of national payments and the evolution of the infrastructures of the cross border payment system. The European Parliament still has to approve the Council compromise in its second reading, before the Regulation can come into force. The Commission, consumer groups and the European Parliament already have welcomed the Council compromise. However, different European saving bank groups have stated that the measure will in the end run contrary to the objectives it was meant to achieve. This as they argue that the regulation will prolong the differences in prices for cross-border payments that exist between EU Member States.

More info:

<http://register.consilium.eu.int/pdf/en/01/st14/14344en1.pdf>

EU / SMEs 29/11/2001: Virtual World Congress of entrepreneurs and SMEs launched

The Association of Young Entrepreneurs of Zaragoza (Spain) have launched recently a virtual congress for SMEs, thereby creating a forum for debate and the exchange of ideas and experiences concerning the problems facing young entrepreneurs and SMEs. It also should support the creation of an entrepreneurial culture and spirit in Europe and indeed worldwide which is open to the digital culture, diffuse information technologies among young entrepreneurs, and divulge good business practices. The virtual world congress offers entrepreneurs via its webportal numerous interactive and topical seminars, exhibitions, workshops, and other activities. Both individual entrepreneurs as well as organisations related to the business world are invited to participate in the virtual congress. The virtual congress will run through to March 2002 and is followed by a physical congress.

More info:

<http://www.visionglobal.org>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Brussels (B) 07/12/2001: Public Hearing on the Green Paper on Consumer Protection; Theme: Consumer Protection, Business. More info:
http://europa.eu.int/comm/consumers/policy/developments/fair_comm_pract/hearing_greenpaper_en.html