



## HEADLINES

### **EU / Presidency: Merkel presents German Presidency work programme**

On 17 January 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, presented the work programme for the German Presidency of the EU, and the Portuguese and Slovenian Presidencies which will follow. On Better Regulation, the German Presidency is seeking to establish impact assessments for all new projects. Moreover, the programmes will aim to set up concrete reduction targets and have a standardized system for measuring administrative burdens throughout the EU. To this end, ESBA welcomes calls by the ALDE group to raise awareness amongst the public about 'correlation tables', comparing the EU requirements for legislation, to what the Member State eventually adopts. However, ESBA had hoped to have reduction targets of 25 % expressed explicitly within the text of the work programme.

During the debate which followed between MEPs and the Chancellor, Ms Merkel proposed a 'discontinuity principle', meaning that all legislation which had not passed by the end of a European Parliamentary term would lapse. This corresponds closely with a proposal by the Federation of Small Business (FSB) and is welcomed by ESBA.

However, Ms. Merkel's speech indicated that the main focus point of the German Presidency will be the renewal of the European Constitution, with the Presidency setting out a roadmap for the constitutional process. The bulk of the initial proposal would survive in a Constitution to be adopted before the 2009 Parliamentary elections. ESBA believes that by emphasising the revival of the Constitution, already rejected by the French and the Dutch, the Presidency is risking plunging the EU into a further debacle.

To see the FSB's report on gold plating, please go to:

<http://www.fsb.org.uk/documentstore/filedetails.asp?id=366>

To see the Chancellor Merkel's speech, please go to:

<http://www.bundestkanzlerin.de/Webs/BK/EN/Homepage/home.html>

For links to the work programme, please go to:

[http://www.eu2007.de/en/The\\_Council\\_Presidency/Priorities\\_Programmes/index.html](http://www.eu2007.de/en/The_Council_Presidency/Priorities_Programmes/index.html)

For the official Presidency website, go to:

<http://www.eu2007.de/en/?null>

## IN BRIEF

### **EU / Supply Chain Security: Commissioner confirms plan to withdraw the proposal**

On 18 December 2006, Vice-President Jacques Barrot confirmed his intention to reconsider the Commission's draft Regulation on enhancing supply chain security, which sought to protect freight transport from terrorist attacks through a 'secure operator' scheme. This decision followed a recent appeal from the Parliament's Rapporteur, Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert MEP, to reassess the need for it in light of the new Customs Code and the concept of the Authorised Economic Operator. As reported in previous Bulletins, ESBA has led calls at EU level for withdrawal of the proposal due to

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concerns about its preparation and impact on SMEs. A decision on further action is now due at the beginning of 2008.

To see the Rapporteur's Press Release, please go to:  
[http://www.alde.eu/index.php?id=42&l=0&tx\\_ttnews%5btt\\_news%5d=8290&tx\\_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=54&cHash=a786c78d51](http://www.alde.eu/index.php?id=42&l=0&tx_ttnews%5btt_news%5d=8290&tx_ttnews%5bbackPid%5d=54&cHash=a786c78d51)

### **EU / US relationship: Merkel calls for transatlantic single market on visit to US**

German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who heads the current Presidency of the EU, visited US President George Bush on 4 January 2007. The trip coincided with Germany's assumption of the EU and G8 presidency. The tone of the visit reflected a concerted effort by both sides to overcome the transatlantic differences of the recent past, particularly regarding the war in Iraq. Ms. Merkel asserted that strengthening the transatlantic economic relationship; a successful conclusion to the Doha round on international trade; and seeking to coordinate efforts to tackle climate change would form the core of the Presidency's international agenda. The Chancellor also raised the long-term goal of achieving a transatlantic common market, promising to set up a working group to research the issue ahead of the EU-US summit.

For transcripts of the speeches during the visit, please go to:  
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2007/01/20070104-2.html>

### **EU / Energy: EU energy 'revolution' claims to face up to global concerns**

On 10 January, the Commission adopted its energy package, consisting of nine separate proposals which collectively define the EU's strategy for tackling climate change and the impending energy crisis. The package envisages reducing greenhouse gases by 20 % by 2020; a binding target of 20 % of the energy mix to come from renewables; an aim of reducing overall energy consumption by 20 %.

For the relevant Commission website, please go to:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/energy_policy/index_en.htm)

### **EU / Economy: EU's business confidence climbs as the USA's falls**

According to the initial findings of the latest International Business Support by Grant Thornton, the professional services firm, business confidence has overtaken that of the US for the first time in the annual report's five year history. The report measures the optimism/pessimism balance percentage of respondents for the world's economies, based on a survey of 7,200 business owners. The findings give the EU a balance of +46 %, while the US obtained a balance of +14 %. This positive result stems from growing confidence in several Member States, including Germany, France and Italy. The results of the full survey will be released in June 2007.

For more information on the 2007 report, please go to:  
[http://www.grantthorntonibos.com/main/index1.php?page=123&lang=en&id=113815&country\\_id=0](http://www.grantthorntonibos.com/main/index1.php?page=123&lang=en&id=113815&country_id=0)

### **EU / Parliament: Pöttering becomes President of the Parliament**

On 16 January 2007, Hans-Gert Pöttering, of the German contingent of the EPP-ED, was elected President of the European Parliament. He will sit for two-and-a-half years, replacing Spanish member of the PSE, Josep Borrell Fontelles, in a mid-term change agreed by the two main groups in 2004. The arrangement meant that the PSE and EPP-ED supported the PSE candidate for the first part of the Parliamentary term, and the EPP-ED candidate for the second part, in order to overcome the fact that neither group received the absolute majority of MEPs needed to elect a candidate.

To see Mr. Pöttering's personal website, please go to:

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[http://www.cdu-lkos.de/poettering/2/biographie\\_englisch.php](http://www.cdu-lkos.de/poettering/2/biographie_englisch.php)

For Mr. Pöttering's Parliamentary webpage, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/members/archive/alphaOrder/view.do?language=EN&id=1253>

To see the Parliament's press release, please go to:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress\\_page/008-1954-015-01-03-901-20070115IPR01953-15-01-2007-2007-true/default\\_en.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/008-1954-015-01-03-901-20070115IPR01953-15-01-2007-2007-true/default_en.htm)

## CONSULTATIONS

### **Green Paper: "Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century"**

*Closes 31 March 2007*

As part of the Commission's drive to modernise Labour Law, both companies and workers are invited to participate in the debate and to put forward their views. See the ESBA Opinion above.

You will find information and the questionnaire at the following link:

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=labourlaw&lang=en>

## COMING UP

### **EU Institutions: Important Dates**

22-25 January 2007 Committees

1 February 2007 Mini-plenary of the European Parliament (Brussels)

12-15 February 2007 Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)

26 Feb-1 March 2007 Committees

### **SME related Events**

26 January 2007 'Better Regulation & SME Micro-Financing'; organised by SME Union; taking place in Budapest, Hungary; to register, please enquire for further information from Mr. Bisztray, [bisztray@axelero.hu](mailto:bisztray@axelero.hu)

6 February 2007 EEI Lunch-time Debate on 'European Spirit of Entrepreneurship – is it still alive?'; organised by the European Enterprise Institute; taking place in Brussels; to register, please respond to [eei@european-enterprise.org](mailto:eei@european-enterprise.org)

28 February 2007 5<sup>th</sup> Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research; arranged by ISBE; taking place in Montpellier, France; to register, please go to: [www.iecer.org](http://www.iecer.org)