



HEADLINES

EU / Internal Market: Watered down services directive passes first reading in plenary

On Thursday, 16 February 2006, the services directive passed its first reading vote in the Strasbourg plenary, with 394 votes for and 215 against. The plenary vote followed negotiations for compromise amendments which took place on 8 February 2006 and an intensive debate on 14 February.

The conservative EPP-ED and socialist PSE succeeded in passing all of the compromise amendments which they had already negotiated. As agreed, the directive will not cover several services, including public healthcare, gambling and audiovisual. In addition, the 'country of origin' principle was dropped, which is a disappointment for SMEs. However, as Gay Mitchell MEP (EPP-ED, Ireland) stated, the "directive does not go as far as it could have in liberating the services sector but it is about as far as Parliament could go, on its first reading".

The services directive will now be reviewed by the Commission before the Council vote, taking the amendments proposed by the MEPs into account. This new Commission proposal is expected in April.

To see Evelyn Gehardt's report as adopted on 16 February, please go to :

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade3?PUBREF=-//EP//0061+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=X&L=EN>

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EU / Education: Brussels outlines vision for European Institute of Technology

The European Commission released its plans for a European Institute of Technology (EIT) on Wednesday 21 February 2006. The purpose of the establishment will be to address Europe's deficit in education and research compared with the US. A major aim of Commission President Barroso's draft plan is to improve the ties between researchers and entrepreneurs.

The Institute would have an annual budget of around € 1 billion, derived from the EU, member states and private companies. It would be composed of a small central core which would determine research priorities and dispense degrees, with 'knowledge communities' at traditional universities setting up pan-European research teams.

At a press briefing on 22 February, Jerzy Buzek MEP (EPP-ED, Poland, Rapporteur on FP7)) and Jorgo Chatzimarkakis MEP (Liberal, Germany) acknowledged the shortcomings identified by the Commission and broadly welcomed the proposal. However, they stressed that the EIT should not be a copy of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, in that it should emphasise innovation rather than research. Also, it should have a leading role in disseminating results of fundamental research, and should not replace the existing network of universities.

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To see the Commission press release, please go to:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/06/201&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

To see Mr. Chatzimarkakis' position paper, please go to:

<http://europa.fdp.de/sitefiles/downloads/931/2.pdf?PHPSESSID=611c51631fbae00fbf53fdd02afabe7b>

JCH7-2-2005-

IN BRIEF

EU / Internal Market: Commission releases internal market scoreboard for 2005

The Commission has released its 2005 internal market scoreboard, which measures the extent to which Member States have created the conditions for a well-functioning internal market. The overall transposition deficit of 1.6% for the EU-25 is the best result ever achieved. However, the level of infringement proceedings has risen in all but five old EU Member States.

So see the internal market scoreboard, please go to:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/score/docs/score14bis/scoreboard14bis_en.pdf

EU / Internal Market: Commission launches European year of mobility

On 20-21 February the European Commission launched at a major conference the European Year of Workers' Mobility. This follows the report published by the Commission on 08/02/06 which demonstrates that workers' mobility from the EU new member states to EU15 has been in most countries quantitatively less important than foreseen, and has had positive effects in general. A related development is a new website advertising jobs throughout the EU.

The website can be found at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/workersmobility2006/index_en.htm

EU / Customs: Commission announces plans to streamline customs services

In a meeting with MEPs in the International Trade Committee, Taxation and Customs Union commissioner Laszlo Kovacs established a timeframe for the implementation of the *e-customs* system, designed to introduce IT in the trading bureaucracy in order to allow trader to carry out formalities and pay border duties over the internet. According to Mr. Kovacs, the system will be fully operational by 2012, although the first changes will be introduced in 2009.

See the following link for more information regarding the *e-customs* initiative:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/taxation_customs/customs/policy_customs_initiative/index_en.htm issues/e-

EU / Banking : Commission releases paper on single payments area

On 15 February, the Commission published a consultative paper requesting input from industry regarding a single European payments area (SEPA). The initiative aims to improve the ease of supranational financial transactions through credit transfer and direct debit schemes and a single cards framework, to be in place by 2008. Although the system is to be market-led and self-regulated, the Commission asserts its willingness to impose regulation if industry is slow to act.

To see the consultative paper, please go to:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/payments/docs/sepa/sepa-2006_02_13.pdf

EU / Health and Safety : Parliament approves EU directive on optical radiation

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On 14 February 2006, the Parliament approved the deal reached in conciliation on the proposal for an directive on optical radiation, the latest of four directives intended to protect workers from various 'physical agents'. The Council has accepted the Parliament's demand that the legislation should exclude natural sources of optical radiation, like the sun. The MEPs have pushed for the Commission to produce a guide to enable smaller firms to come to terms with the technical aspects of the directive.

To see access the official documents, please go to:

<http://www.europarl.eu.int/oeil/FindByProcnum.do?lang=2&procnum=COD/1992/0449B>

PUBLICATIONS

OECD: 'Going for Growth'

In its second 'Going for Growth' report, the OECD welcomes the introduction of laws designed to reduce business restrictions and limit competition in many countries. However, there has been less progress in reducing unemployment levels.

To see the summary of the OECD report, please go to:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/4/60/36054358.pdf>

For more information and to purchase the report, please go to:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?sf1=identifiers&st1=9264035737>

OECD: 'Corporate Governance of Non-Listed Companies in Emerging Markets'

An overview of the major issues regarding the creation of good corporate government of non-listed companies.

For more information and to purchase this publication, please go to:

<http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?sf1=identifiers&st1=9264035737>

eMarket Services: 'The eMarket Services Handbook'

A handbook providing information on how to use e-markets and supplier directories.

To be accessed for free at the following link:

http://www.emarketservices.com/templates/Page____888.aspx

CONSULTATIONS

Future patent policy

The Commission has launched a consultation designed to identify ways in which an EU-wide system of protection through patent policy can be devised to take account of stakeholders' needs. Although the Lisbon European Council in March 2000 envisaged a Community Patent to be available by the end of 2001, the proposal has been blocked consistently. The main obstacle has been concern that the costs of enforcing patents and translating them into several EU languages would be too high. The consultation is open to all interested stakeholders, whether representing industry or individuals.

Closes 31 March 2006

The online form can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/indprop/patent/consultation_en.htm

Company law and corporate governance

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The Commission has launched a public consultation in order to assess future priorities for the Action Plan on 'Modernising Company Law and Enhancing Corporate Governance in the EU'. All interested parties are asked to reply. The consultation will be followed by a report summarizing the answers received.

The online reply form can be found at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/company/consultation/index_en.htm

Closes 31 March 2006

COMING UP

EU Institutions: Important Dates

10 March 06	Employment and Social Affairs Council
13-16 March 06	European Parliament Plenary Session (Strasbourg)
13 March 06	Competitiveness Council of Ministers
14 March 06	ECOFIN Council of Ministers
23-24 March 06	European Summit, Brussels
3-6 April 06	European Parliament Plenary Session (Strasbourg)

SME related Events

22-24 February 2006 IECER 2006 The Interdisciplinary European Conference on Entrepreneurship Research, Regensburg, Germany – organised by the University of Regensburg: <http://www.iecer.de/>

7 March 2006 Small Business I Europe Fifth Annual Event – “Is globalization an opportunity or a threat to Europe’s Social Cohesion?” – Brussels - More information: info@smallbusinesseurope.org

8 March 2006 Civil Society Dialogue – ad hoc meeting on trade and competitiveness; organized by the European Commission; venue: Charlemagne Conference Centre, Brussels; more info: <http://trade-info.cec.eu.int/civilsoc/meetdetails.cfm?meet=11136>

8 March 2006 IPRs and SMEs- A Barrier to Innovation or an Engine for Growth?; organized by the Stockholm Network; venue: Hotel Renaissance, Brussels; More info and registration: <http://www.stockholm-network.org/conferences/events/upcoming.php>

15 March 2006 ‘Mobility Without Borders’; organized by FSF/ITPS/NUTEK; Brussels; for more info, please contact helena.ericsson@fsf.se

16-17 March 2006 4th European Business Summit – Building a Europe of Excellence – Turning knowledge into growth, Brussels. More info: www.ebsummit.org

21 March 2006 Brussels - “MAP Project 2.7/2004 - Stigma of failure and early warning tools” - Venue: Charlemagne Building - Conference organised by the Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General. More information: <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/events/events.htm>

23-25 March 2006 Federation of Small Businesses, UK - Annual Conference – More info: www.fsb.org.uk/conference2006.

28 March 2006 Conference on insolvency and a fresh start; venue: Charlemagne Conference Centre; organized by DG Enterprise and Industry, European Commission; more info and

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registration:http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/failure_bankruptcy/conference.htm

2-3 May 2006 ESBA Annual Event, Brussels – More information to come soon on www.esba-europe.org

11-13 May 2006 14th Nordic Conference on Small Business Research; Stockholm, Sweden; for more info, please contact helena.ericsson@fsf.se

18 May 2006 ‘Integrating Innovation and Entrepreneurship Policy – how to do it!'; for more info please contact helena.ericsson@fsf.se

30-31 May 2006 Workshop on Venture Capital Policy; Lund, Sweden; for more info, please contact helena.ericsson@fsf.se

13-14 June 2006 Vienna - “Conference on the European Charter for Small Enterprises”
Conference organised by the Enterprise and Industry DG - More information will be soon available
DG Enterprise webpage.

To subscribe / unsubscribe: email secretariat@esba-europe.org

ESBA Brussels Office - 54 rue Vautier - B-1050 Brussels

Tel: +32-2-639 62 31 - Fax: +32-2-644 90 17 - E-mail: secretariat@esba-europe.org

Web: <http://www.esba-europe.org>