



Euro News

The UK Network of Euro Info Centres

Issue 6 : July / August

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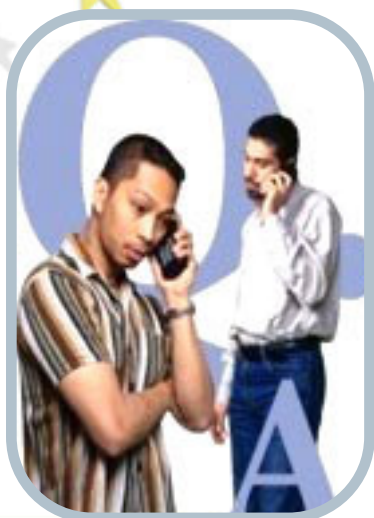
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Questions and Answers

Question:

A UK company wishes to bid for a tender put out by a public authority in Slovenia. The tender notice and description of the tender are published in Slovenian. Does the tender have to be published in English as well as Slovenian?



Answer:

All public tenders exceeding specific contract values must be published in the Supplement to the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU/OJEC) and published throughout the EU. The minimum contract value is £99,695. The Official Journal is updated every day and a brief description of all tenders can be found in all 20 official languages of the EU (<http://ted.publications.eu.int/official/>). However, under EU law, member states are under no obligation to publish the full text of the tender notice in any language other than their own. Companies applying for the non-UK tenders often have to bid for it in the local language.

Questions and Answers

Question:

In January 2005, a UK businessman successfully applied for a public procurement tender to supply textiles. By sourcing the textiles in China the businessman won the tender with a competitive price. However, in March 2005 the European Commission imposed a provisional anti-dumping duty on imports of textiles from China. Who has to pay the difference in price, the businessman or the awarding authority?

Answer:

The importer of the textiles from China has to pay the anti-dumping duty. There is no compensation for the importer from the European Commission or the UK authorities. The provisional anti-dumping duty lasts six months, after which the European Commission will decide whether to extend the duty or cancel it.

For the answer to questions such as these, which were answered by the London EIC, contact your local EIC who will be pleased to help.

Choo Vee Parolas Esperanto?

Which means 'Any Esperanto speakers out there?'

Nathalie Granier at Euro Info Centre North West manages the regional EIC Business Opportunities service, publishing offers and requests for business partners on a weekly basis via the Euro Info Centres' dedicated network.



One recent offer from a Slovenian maker of innovative wooden garden furniture caught the eye of a regular client in Blackpool, who requested further information. Nathalie forwarded their enquiry straightaway, only to find out that the Slovenian SME owner speaks just Slovenian and Esperanto

Undeterred by this minor barrier to EU trade, Nathalie and her Slovenian counterpart at Euro Info Centre Maribor, Dijana Bestjanic, arranged for the manufacturer's information to be translated into English, and for an interlocutor to smooth the way for further discussions.

The UK company were so impressed with the versatile product presented to them that they are now looking into how they can work in partnership with the supplier to sell the furniture extensively throughout the UK, and maybe beyond...

Remember - your local EIC can help out with a range of problems and queries, not just technical and legal, but language related as well.

EURES

EURES (European Employment Services) is a cooperation network that brings together the European Commission and the Public Employment Services of the countries belonging to the EEA (European Economic Area), along with other bodies that are involved in employment matters. The organisations cooperate to facilitate and promote the mobility of workers within the EEA.



What's on offer?

EURES offers an international jobs database that lists thousands of vacancies that are readily available across Europe. The Jobcentre Plus network advertises a selection of British vacancies on this database which can be accessed through the EURES website at:

<http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures>

The site also contains information on living and working conditions for each EEA country. You can find information on labour markets, accommodation, comparability of qualifications, and many other topics. Another useful feature of the site is the direct links it provides to the websites of the different public employment services of the EEA, including Jobcentre Plus. This site features guidance and advice for jobseekers, and a selection of British vacancies. You can access it at:

www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk

EURES also offers a network of around 500 EURESadvisers, located throughout the European Economic Area. EURESadvisers are trained European employment specialists who provide information, guidance and placement services to both jobseekers and employers. The contact details of your nearest EURESadviser can be obtained from your local employment office, or from Europe Direct.

Europe Direct

Europe Direct is a European Commission service, which can provide you with information about your rights and opportunities in the European Union. Europe Direct offers a dialogue, so that you can ask questions, receive advice, and give feedback about your experiences. They have produced a series of free guides and factsheets on a number of European topics, from studying abroad to buying goods and services in the single market. You can order these guides and factsheets by phone or access electronic versions on the Europe Direct website at: <http://citizens.eu.int>

To contact Europe Direct by phone ring the freephone number (listed below) for the country you are in.

Austria	0660 6811
Belgium	0800 92038 (Flanders) 0800 92039 (Wallonia)
Denmark	8001 0201
Finland	08001 13191
France	0800 90 9700
Germany	0130 85 04 00
Greece	00800 321 2254
Ireland	1 800 553 188
Italy	1 67 876 166
Luxembourg	0800 2550
Netherlands	0800 8051
Portugal	0800 222 001
Spain	900 983 198
Sweden	020 794 949
United Kingdom	0800 581 591

Jobcentres

Jobcentre Plus has a network of over 1,000 Jobcentres throughout Great Britain that you can use in your search for work. To find the address of your nearest Jobcentre, look in the telephone directory under Jobcentres, or check the Jobcentre Plus website at www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk.

Jobcentres are easy to use and you will not be charged a fee to use their services.

The jobs displayed include full-time, part-time, permanent and temporary vacancies in the local and adjoining areas and nationally. If you find anything suitable, the Jobcentre staff will be able to tell you how to apply - possibly by giving you an application form or arranging an interview.

Jobcentre vacancies can also be accessed by telephone through Jobseeker Direct on 0845 6060 234. Selected vacancies can be found on the EURES (<http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures>) and Jobcentre Plus websites.

A free service

No charge is made for the services provided through EURES which include:

- A named EURES adviser who will advise and help with your domestic and international recruitment
- Display of your vacancies throughout Europe on Jobcentre Plus website www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk and the EURES internet site <http://europa.eu.int/jobs/eures>

- Pre-selection and sifting of applications, and account management of your vacancies and recruitment needs
- Practical recruitment arrangements and interview facilities
- Video conference facilities enabling you to pre-interview candidates
- Advice and guidance on employing EEA citizens.

Happy customers

The following employers have used the service and give their comments.

Robert Gillespie, Scotland's Hotel, Pitlochry, General Manager:
'I find the EURES service is an excellent medium for finding skilled staff. This is now my third season using the service. I can honestly say it is the most efficient and professional organisation that I currently use, thanks to everyone.'

James McBennett, Clonmore Farms, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone:
'We are now moving in to our second year using EURES as an employment base for recruiting. At the moment we have 11 people working here, sourced through EURES and have employed a total of 26 people over this two-year period. This has proved very successful for the type of business we operate in.'

'One of the main benefits of recruiting staff through EURES is that we, as the employer have very little to do as regards advertising and making the initial contact with the prospective employee. This saves us the time and money and is certainly appreciated.'

'All in all, we really appreciate the work being done on sourcing staff by EURES and long may it continue to all involved.'

Brenda Casey, Littlecote House Hotel, Assistant Manager:

'Without the help of European Employment Service, it would have been virtually impossible to continue to provide such a good service as we do to our customers. The standard of staff we receive from you is of the best calibre - trustworthy, very smart and extremely well mannered; also very reliable and eager to please. All in all, excellent.'

The Cost Of Cultural Misunderstanding - Or How To Lose Money In Europe

Michael Bonde of M Bonde Consulting Ltd looks at the issue of improving cross-cultural communication after a company's takeover in several diverse countries.



Seeking help

'Can you help us?' was the question I was asked when a business contact called me in August last year. He said: 'Our people do not communicate and we are losing heaps of money all over Europe'.

The person, who called me, was the European HR Manager of a Norwegian-owned international transportation and logistics company that I will call 'Translog'. Translog has its headquarters in Norway and had purchased offices in Germany, France, England, the US, Hong Kong and Malaysia. In total Translog employs more than 500 people. A few years ago Translog took over a number of international partners to create a bigger and more efficient company where global service combined with local know-how were to be the main competitive advantage. Prior to the merger, the Norwegian management had assumed that the process would be fast and easy as they already knew and worked with most managers from the subsidiary companies. As things turned out they were wrong.

Mergers and a shared culture... or not?

Translog's top management consisted of one English manager, two Americans, one Dane and three Norwegians. At their first quarterly meeting in 2004, they started looking into why the

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company had not yet delivered the better results the merger should have created. As things were, Translog was losing money and market position in most of its markets.

In the process they looked at market trends, global competition, the organisational structure, etc. It was not until the end that they looked at clients' impressions of them. It emerged that their clients did not find that the level of service had increased or that the company had become more competitive since the merger. To the customers it seemed as they were dealing with a different company in each country and that there was no or only little cooperation between the different Translog offices. Clients later told us that employees from one country would openly blame their colleagues in the other countries for mistakes and openly complain about their colleagues' incompetence.

These observations helped Translog see that they were facing much bigger problems than they had assumed. It seemed that especially amongst people on the shop floor there was no sense of belonging to the same company. Instead most employees only felt responsible for the local facility where they initially had been employed. Because of this there were a number of recurring problems. One of these was that small problems like misplaced orders or missed deadlines were escalated up in the hierarchy for no other reason than the employees from the different countries did not communicate. The feeling of not belonging to the same company also meant that almost nobody used the experience, know-how and knowledge possessed by employees in other countries. In addition to this most employees also shared the opinion that the Norwegian management - who in their opinion did not understand how things ought to be done - simply should leave them to do business the way they knew best. All in all the problems meant that the merger mainly existed on paper and that no competitive advantage was actually achieved.

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A new direction

Having realised what the lack of direction and shared corporate identity meant for the company, the management designed a new means for 'completing the merger'. They agreed that Translog needed a tool or strategy that would ensure everybody in the organisation worked for the same goals and moved in the same direction. In other words they decided to develop a new tradition of value-based leadership throughout the company.

The idea was to introduce a set of shared values to ensure everybody would proactively avoid problems or, if problems arose, use these values to solve arguments and discussions. The five values chosen were diversity, responsibility, flexibility, integrity and innovation.

To integrate the new corporate values fast and efficiently, it was decided to introduce them in two steps. The first step would be to communicate them to all employees using posters, pocket cards, power point presentations, screen savers, etc. The second step was for each regional manager to conduct round-table discussions with employees. How the values should be integrated in the daily work and what they meant to the individual's job and his environment were discussed at these meetings. The implementation of the values took a total of four months after which it, true to Norwegian tradition, was evaluated.

The result of it came as a surprise to the management as the whole exercise had not changed things for the better. Amongst the findings of the evaluation were:

- Even after the presentations, posters, screen savers and round table discussions, most employees did not see integrating the values as an important part of their job

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- Most employees thought the talks about the management values were a waste of time because they were not practically applicable to their jobs
- In many countries employees complained to each other but not to their managers. The French questioned everything and came up with no new solutions. The English did not see why the Norwegians wanted to change the traditional management style and the Hong Kong Chinese said yes to everything and changed nothing.

The Norwegians did not know what to do.

This was when Translog contacted us and M Bonde Consulting Ltd enters the story. Over the next few months our work included numerous meetings, interviews and questionnaire analyses from most of the key employees in the company.

Why it all made great sense... in Norway

The first thing we started examining were the values selected by Translog. As things turned out this was a fairly simple task as the values were selected at the managers' meeting in the first quarter where the Dane, the three Norwegians and the two Americans had quickly decided that a sense of personal responsibility and initiative was what was missing in most employees. The values they decided on were chosen based on the following statement:

'Translog's employee values shall encourage personal responsibility and a high degree of individual freedom to make the right decisions (responsibility and flexibility). Our employees shall be encouraged to show initiative and solve problems when they see

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them (innovation). Also, all employees shall be service minded and good colleagues (integrity) working and communicating efficiently together across borders (diversity).'

If you stop for a moment and think about the statement and the values, you will find that both express virtues from Nordic and North American cultures - and not much else. The focus is on personal empowerment and responsibility, on flat hierarchies and egalitarian values and on direct communication. Do you see that working in Hong Kong? Well, neither did we! The second equally important factor was that the management style that two years earlier had been introduced to the entire organisation was based on Norwegian management traditions. While this at times can be a good idea, in this case it had not been.

The problems that we found can be broken down as follows:


1. A lack of cross-cultural understanding in the management team
2. A Nordic management style that did not work outside the Nordic countries
3. The values only meant something to Nordic and American employees
4. An actual implementation of the values had never taken place.

Problems and costs

While our work included multiple problem areas and a thorough analysis of the seven cultures, here we will mention a few of the problems related to the English part of the business.

The lack of cross-cultural understanding in the management team meant that the non-English managers did not always

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understand the English MD. An example of this is that the English manager's more diplomatic communication style was often misunderstood by the Nordic and German managers who generally would only listen for direct and confrontational communication. Also, the Nordic managers, who did not have any experience in managing English workers, could not understand why the English did not approach them directly if they did not agree with the decisions that were made - as would have happened in the less hierarchical Nordic countries.

The differences in management style also meant that there were very different expectations of the roles of managers and employees. The English managers for example saw meeting economic and production goals as their main responsibility, whereas the Norwegians saw leading employees in the same direction as being their most prominent task, leaving the responsibility of meeting sales targets to the employees. However, these differences had never been discussed because both sides did not expect any cultural differences in this area.

When the reason for this was analysed, we found that the differences in communication styles meant that the English had chosen not to bring up the problem while the Norwegians had thought it was not important since the English did not bring it up. This was commented on by one of the Norwegian managers who during an interview said: 'We were speaking the same language (English)... but we certainly did not have the same understanding of what we discussed'.

The values selected by the Norwegian management were another example of how the management had different expectations of the individuals in the organisation. The values were all concerned with delegation of personal responsibility and less on management, which goes against the English, French and Asian traditions. Also the focus on developing a feeling of responsibility for the organisation as a whole rather than for

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specific job functions is not particularly English. In reality, the only idea that was fully shared across the board was the idea about a high level of innovation and initiative amongst all employees.

The final problem Translog faced was that the management values had never actually been implemented in the organisation. True, the values had been presented and discussed but Translog had not actively created any incentives for applying the values in the organisation's work processes.

The direct effect was that Translog lost clients while having to let good employees go as well. This was often caused by the fact that the English employees did not know how to react to the few directions they got from their management. Because of this, they would feel they could not meet the expectations of their managers, which meant many employees became frustrated and the service levels went down. This frustration led to several employees leaving Translog resulting in new employees having to be recruited and the overall productivity went down even further.

At the same time the Norwegian managers, who did not understand the problems the English employees were facing, tried pushing the implementation of the values. This meant the problems just got worse and the company lost out to competition. And all the while Translog lost more money.

Finding a solution...

Our first step in our effort to help Translog overcome their problems was to demystify the cultural issues and to make the problems easier to identify and practical to work with. In order to do this, we analysed their situations using our UCM™ model (Understanding/Competence/Mindset) and suggested a solution

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based on the following initiatives:

First, we offered our assistance with identifying new culturally adaptable values. Since many of the problems were caused by culturally incompatible values, a new set of values carrying the same meaning in all the cultures Translog worked in was developed.

Secondly, we offered customised training in the areas of cross-cultural communication for all levels of Translog management, Multinational Team Building for all international teams and finally cultural awareness training for all Translog employees dealing with other cultures.

In addition to this, we also suggested an implementation of a new change strategy. The new change strategy built on the idea that working with the cultural management values would result in bonuses while not including the cultural aspects would incur different sorts of sanctions. Based on this, we suggested a system of new value-based culturally adapted performance appraisals, recruitment strategies and other fundamental work processes.

Now please take a minute...

And ask yourself these three questions:

1. Working internationally, do I know enough about cultural differences to avoid losing money like the Norwegian company did?
2. Do I know enough to connect and make a positive difference with colleagues and clients who are not English?
3. Can I afford to be wrong about this?

If you feel you cannot comfortably answer 'yes' to these three questions, please feel free to contact us with whatever questions

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you might have. You are, of course, also more than welcome to attend our open seminars.

M Bonde Consulting Ltd
empower your people

On Saturday 20 August 2005, M Bonde Consulting invites you to partake in the half-day seminar **Success - skills for your international career**. If you sign up before 27 July or if you quote LCC in your registration, you can save £15 and attend the seminar for just £49. For more information, please contact us on 020 8509 2195 or visit www.mbondeconsulting.co.uk.

M Bonde Consulting Ltd is London based with a strong focus on English-European relationships. The company works within a group of international consultants and coaches and provides services in 10 European languages. The primary services are cross-cultural consultancy, Multinational Team Building, Cultural Awareness Training and Communication Training. M Bonde consulting also develops the interactive cultural training 'Culture Class UK'. Please visit www.cultureclass.net for more information.

'Your Voice In Europe' Seeks Your Feedback

Your Voice in Europe, the website set up by the European Commission to get feedback from businesses and citizens on European policies and legislation, has recently published a new consultation paper and is inviting businesses to send their views on the very important issue of better regulatory environment for companies.



The European Commission is committed to improving the regulatory environment within which businesses operate and to help them compete successfully in global markets. Major efforts have already been launched to improve the regulatory environment as part of the so-called Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs. Consultation procedures have been strengthened, major new proposals for legislation are now subject to impact assessment, and existing legislation is being evaluated on its effectiveness. In mid-March, the Commission announced further steps in its Communication on 'Better Regulation for Growth and Jobs'. This includes the launch of a major new simplification programme by October 2005.

In order to ensure that the programme responds to real concerns, the European Commission is keen to hear from businesses and other interested parties which rules need to be simplified because they stand in the way of sustainable growth, deter business investment or hinder job creation. Each individual opinion fed back to the European Commission will be compiled and examined in the Commission's 'Red Tape Observatory' and will also be examined by the responsible Commission services. You can fill in the questionnaire which will only take to minutes of your time on the website of Your Voice in Europe: <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/forms/dispatch?form=418&lang=EN>.

The closing date is 31 December 2005.

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B2Fair



Companies throughout Europe from the advanced engineering and metal Industries are being offered the opportunity to make business contacts and seal deals at Elmia Subcontractor, Sweden, on 8-11 November 2005, the leading trade fair in Scandinavia for the sector. The Euro Info Centre invites companies to make the most of their visit by participating in the match-making event B2FAIR (businesses to fairs), providing visitors to the fair with a unique opportunity to meet with all the companies that participate in the match-making, both exhibitors and visitors from many European countries. Busy export sales and marketing managers can include pre-arranged, face-to-face meetings in organised meeting rooms with interpreters to really take advantage of this ideal arena for creating business contacts.

The Elmia Subcontractor fair attracts approximately 1,200 exhibitors from 25 countries and among the 16,000 visitors you are sure to find decision makers from the most successful companies in Northern Europe. For further information about Elmia Subcontractor please visit www.elmia.se/subcontractor.

The Euro Info Centres in most European countries will bring around 250 visitors and exhibitors to the fair giving companies from the advanced engineering and metal sectors the opportunity to have pre-booked meetings with all these registered companies. British companies that sign up for B2Fair will be supported by the Euro Info Centre and will benefit from a package including a needs analysis, publishing of company information in the catalogue, automatic searching for partners and matching against company details on the B2Fair database.

Guenter Verheugen, Vice-President of The European Commission responsible for enterprise and industry shows his support for the project: 'I welcome B2FAIR as an occasion for participating

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companies to establish new and potentially advantageous business contacts, strategic alliances and future partnerships that are imperative to become or remain competitive and successful on markets worldwide'.

Jonas Ekeröth and the rest of the project management for Elmia Subcontractor are looking forward to many productive contacts between companies from old and new EU countries alike: 'We've always endeavoured to create an arena for the entire industry's development, and part of this has been to constantly seek out new ways for exhibitors and visitors to meet. That's why we're so pleased to be working with Euro Info Center in connection with B2FAIR'.

This service is also available at the HI Industry trade fair in Denmark, Scandinavia's biggest industrial fair bringing together suppliers from the whole spectrum. From raw materials and machines to automation, technical solutions, logistics and know-how, all at one single fair - at one single time. Further information can be found at www.hiindustrimessen.dk

By registering with the B2Fair matchmaking service companies can take advantage of a whole range of services to make their visit to the trade fair successful. Registration for B2Fair costs only 75 euro. Companies will need to arrange their own travel and accommodation.

For further information about Elmia Subcontractor please visit www.elmia.se/subcontractor. For further details check out the webpage of the project www.b2fair.com and click on Elmia Subcontractor. Interested parties should contact either Kirstin Hagan, Euro Info Centre, Highland Opportunity, Inverness, tel: 01463 715 400, e-mail eic@euro-info.co.uk; or Tim Luft, Coventry University Enterprises Ltd, tel: 02476 236 107, e-mail t.luft@coventry.ac.uk

UK European presidency - what will it mean for SMEs?

Business opinion counts when it comes to evaluating the benefits and drawbacks of European legislation (enacted or at a proposal stage), and SMEs can now have an input into the process either through the Hertfordshire Euro Information Centre (EIC), or by participating directly in a new online consultation process - 'Your Voice in Europe'.

The UK took over the Presidency of the Council of the European Union on 1 July, and this runs through to 31 December 2005. The Council is the EU's most important decision-making body, with responsibility for approving European laws. One of the top priorities for the UK during its presidency will be better regulation, with the focus on improving the business environment of companies constantly affected by new legislative proposals, and improving their competitiveness.

The main objectives will be to look at impact assessments of legislation proposals to highlight their potential effects on SMEs, and whether current legislation could be simplified to help SMEs operate both within the European Union and worldwide.

The European Commission aims to carry out impact assessments for all new legislation, to make sure that new laws will not have unforeseen adverse effects on businesses. The UK Presidency will work with the Commission on the quality of its impact assessments, and will look at how these assessments are used by the Council. The aim is to use their findings to inform working groups right from the start of the legislative procedure, and also at the amendment stage of the legislative proposals.

In an effort to get information from the ground, the European Commission has also launched a website, 'Your Voice in Europe',

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to ensure that rules and regulatory proposals keep pace with the reality of rapid change, and better respond to businesses' needs. The website address is <http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/>

Businesses can choose a consultation in a particular area, such as 'Internal Market' and participate directly by sending comments or filling in online questionnaires. This dialogue improves transparency as well as regulatory effectiveness and efficiency. 'Your Voice in Europe' has been set up in the context of the Interactive Policy Making initiative, which aims to improve European governance, adding a new dimension to the policy-making process.

Another key aim of the UK presidency is to continue the work of simplifying existing legislation, which was started last year by the Irish and Dutch presidencies. The aim is to identify and simplify pieces of existing legislation that create unnecessary burdens for businesses. The UK presidency will progress the suggestions from the previous presidency and look at other legislation to see what further improvements could be made.

If SMEs have complex issues they wish to raise, their local Euro Information Centre would like to hear from them. The EIC participates actively as a privileged intermediary, working with the European Commission to report on problems that SMEs encounter with new or existing legislation. The EIC collects information from businesses concerning their problems relating to different EU policies and trading in Europe and reports them anonymously to the Commission via an online feedback database. This process helps to identify problems that businesses encounter, assesses their impact, monitors the implementation of the rules, and shapes new policies or improves existing ones. This will help the Commission respond more quickly and accurately to the demands of businesses, with a view to making EU policy-making more comprehensive and effective.

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Mathilde Murphy, Hertfordshire Euro Info Centre (EIC) manager, said 'The period of the UK European Presidency should result in simplified trading conditions for SMEs, and government officials here believe that the guidelines will help to meet their competitiveness-testing expectations. However, there are still some concerns amongst SMEs that the new guidelines will not result in watertight mechanisms for ensuring that new legislation doesn't work against them.

'We will be keeping a close watch on how the new guidelines are working once they are in operation and can help SMEs in the region to understand how changes in legislation will affect their business.'

Your local EIC offers a wide range of services including information on: grants; EU schemes and initiatives; EU legislation and policies; tenders and bidding. It can also simply help businesses find the right department and contact within the EU, and provide assistance on specific issues relating to trading in Europe.

For more information on European information services please contact your local Euro Info Centre.

Differences in holidays for workers in Europe

Agreed annual leave and public holidays vary hugely across the EU, from 44 days in Sweden to 28 days in Estonia, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia - a difference of over 50%, or more than three working weeks. The EU Working Time Directive lays down a 20-day minimum entitlement and this has been adopted by the great majority of EU member states. Denmark, Germany, Italy,

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Malta and the Netherlands also have a high number of leave days per year, while other notably low-leave countries include Belgium, Hungary, Ireland and Latvia. The average figure for the number of leave days and public holidays combined is 36 days in the old EU15 and Norway, while it is 30.8 days in the new member states.

Commission proposes reform on internet licensing

An in-depth study on how copyright for musical works is licensed for use on the internet has been published by the European Commission. It concludes that the main obstacle to the growth of legitimate online content services in the EU is the difficulty securing attractive content for online exploitation. In particular, the present structures for cross-border collective management of music copyright - which were developed for the analogue environment - prevent music from fulfilling its unique potential as a driver for online content services. The Commission proposes options to remedy this situation as only music has the real potential to kick-start online content services in Europe in line with the Lisbon agenda. Internal market and services Commissioner Charlie McCreevy said: 'We have to improve the licensing of music copyright on the internet. The absence of pan-European copyright licenses makes it difficult for new European-based online services to take off. This is why we are proposing the creation of Europe-wide copyrights clearance. Central clearance is not about making content available on the cheap. It offers a model whereby Europe's creative community will get the lion's share in revenues achieved online'.

EU support for the promotion of agricultural products

Dairy UK and Scottish Dairy Marketing Company have been successful in securing EU funding to provide information and promote agricultural products in the EU. Under a Council regulation on information and promotion actions for agricultural products on the EU internal market, 26 programmes in 14 member states have been approved to receive financial support. Overall, the programmes cover organic products, olive oil, milk and cheese, ham, fruit and vegetables, plants and flowers, wine and protected denominations of origin or geographical indications (PDI/PGI). The EU finances 50% of the costs of these projects, the remainder being met by professional/inter-branch organisations which proposed them and/or the member state concerned.

'Tell us where to cut red-tape'

In a move to deliver on its promise to reduce red tape, the European Commission has launched a public on-line consultation to ask how the EU business environment can be improved and administrative burden be reduced. Companies and other interested parties are being encouraged to identify particularly burdensome rules and make suggestions as to how best to simplify them. Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso said: 'We are keen to hear which rules need to be simplified because they stand in the way of sustainable growth, deter business investment or hinder job creation. This Commission has already come a long way to improve the regulatory environment. We have strengthened the consultation procedures, new legal proposals have to be subject to a rigid impact assessment and we are screening existing proposals and laws for its effectiveness. But there is more concrete action to come in the next months'.

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The information gathered will be compiled and examined in the Commission's 'Red Tape Observatory' and responsible Commission services.

Companies can contribute via:

<http://europa.eu.int/yourvoice/forms/dispatch?form=418&lang=EN>

EU consumers willing to pay more for better animal welfare

European consumers are willing to pay more for animal welfare friendly food products, but want them to be easier to identify, according to an EU-wide opinion survey. The Eurobarometer survey about consumer attitudes on the welfare of farmed animals shows that 74% of consumers believe they can improve animal welfare through their shopping choices, and 57% are willing to pay more for animal welfare friendly food products. However, consumer choice is hampered by insufficiently clear food labelling: 32% of consumers said they could never identify such welfare-friendly food products.

EU health and consumer protection Commissioner Kyprianou said: 'European consumers clearly care about animal welfare and want to make informed purchasing choices. Yet they feel hampered by a lack of information on which products are produced in an animal welfare friendly way. The Commission now intends to study how this can be done through new initiatives on labelling. The results of the survey also support the Commission's recent proposal on the welfare of broiler chickens and will feed into our upcoming action plan on animal welfare'. A follow-up survey is planned to investigate consumer attitudes further and to extend the survey's scope to other European countries.

EU inflation rate down from last year

EU25 annual inflation was 1.9% in May 2005, down from 2.1% in April reports Eurostat, the Statistical Office of the European Communities. A year earlier the rate was 2.4%. In May 2005, the lowest annual rates were observed in Sweden (0.2%), Finland (0.6%), the Czech Republic (0.9%) and the Netherlands (1.1%), and the highest rates were recorded in Latvia (6.5%), Luxembourg (3.7%), Hungary (3.5%) and Greece (3.2%). The UK inflation rate in May 2005 was 1.9%.

EU and Switzerland move closer

Swiss citizens voted 54.6% in favour of their country joining the EU's Schengen and Dublin agreements on 5 June. The decision means that Switzerland, which is not a member of the EU, will open its borders and become part of Europe's passport free zone. The Swiss authorities will also share information with their EU colleagues on crime and asylum applications. The EU is Switzerland's most important trading partner with 60% of Swiss exports going to EU member states. The Swiss government has negotiated a series of complex bilateral agreements with Brussels in order to ensure Swiss access to Europe's markets. If Schengen and Dublin had been rejected, all the bilateral negotiations would have been at risk. The vote in favour reflects a growing realisation among many Swiss that some sort of deal with the EU is unavoidable. However, opinion polls in the country show a majority is still against joining the EU.

In September this year, the country will vote in a referendum on extending the agreement on the free movement of labour to the EU's ten new member states.