



Euro News

The UK Network of Euro Info Centres

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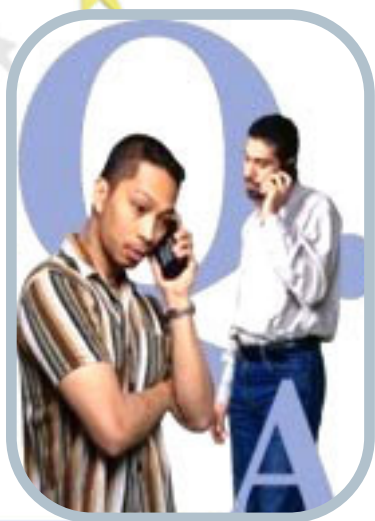
Questions and Answers

Question:

What do I have to include on the label of my textile products?

Answer:

Directive 96/74 lays down the mandatory requirements for labelling of textile and clothing products throughout the EU. It ensures that consumers are informed about the fibre composition of textile products in a uniformed way. All other labels for textiles are applied voluntary; care labels for example are part of an EU-wide voluntary scheme. Size labelling on the other hand is a confusing and continuing issue in the EU. Origin labelling is also an issue: there is no EU legislation in this area which makes it mandatory although national origin marking could be seen as restricting the free movement of goods within the EU.



Bradford EIC provides eco-friendly help

Environmental consultancy eco3 realised at a very early stage that tracking developments in European legislation and policy was going to be vital to their business.



The firm specialises in providing advice and support to other companies and organisations on eco-design and producer responsibility, helping them to re-design their products to take account of environmental drivers, such as legislation on waste electrical and electronic equipment, and resource-efficiency improvements. With a client list including a range of well-known private and public sector organisations, it is really important that eco3 keeps up-to-date. This is why they turned to the West Yorkshire Euro Info Centre for help.

'Keeping on top of the latest developments on EU Directives is essential for us,' says Mark Shayler, the MD of eco3, 'but we are very busy and don't always have the time. That's why the EIC's European Update Service is so useful. The service ensures that we don't miss any vital developments and that we are able to offer our clients an effective service.'

The firm briefed EIC staff on the policy areas and issues they wished to track. Using this brief, the EIC team scan their information sources on a daily basis and alert eco3 as and when any new developments occur. They can also help eco3 with any requests for further information or specific questions that arise when dealing with their clients.

'It's great to have the EIC team working with us,' explains Mark. 'They have been really helpful and I would recommend their service to anyone'.

Bradford EIC provides eco-friendly help

Further information

Contact: Jenny Lawson or Jill Kenning at:

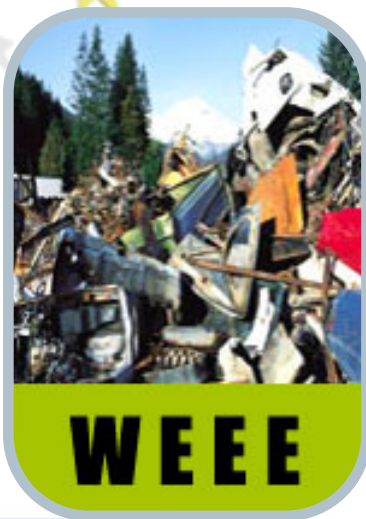
The Bradford Design Exchange, 34 Peckover Street, Bradford
BD1 5BD

Tel: 01274 434262; Fax: 01274 432136

E-mail: eic@bradford.gov.uk



A WEEE Delay



During 2005 the UK sought to introduce legislation on electrical and electronic equipment in relation to its composition and the levels to which it should be recycled. The origin of this legislation lies in the EC Directives relating to waste electrical and electronic equipment (WEEE) and to the Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) in WEEE.

The DTI has recently announced a review of proposals for implementing the WEEE Directive in the UK. This decision reflects the continuing concerns expressed by businesses and stakeholders. The Government wishes to maximise the environmental benefits associated with the Directive whilst minimising the cost to business.

The review will be followed by a full consultation exercise in the Spring before the main provisions of the Directive are transposed into UK law.

The deferral of the WEEE Directive implementation will have implications for local authorities. The DTI will meet any costs to local authorities of arranging the treatments required for any televisions and PC monitors containing cathode ray tubes and fluorescent lamps which they collect separately (rendering these 'hazardous') and sent to a hazardous waste landfill, in advance of the WEEE regulations introducing producer responsibility for these costs.

Have you been caught by surprise by new pieces of EU legislation that directly affect your business? Do you have the time to monitor legislation on your own? Would you like someone to monitor it on your behalf?

If so contact the European Information Centre on 0121 455 0268 or eic@birminghamchamber.org.uk as the EU Legislation Alert service will keep your company fully up to date with EU legislation on your chosen topics.

TED Improvement

The Tenders Electronic Daily database (TED) is the online facility used to search for public contracts notices in Europe. It was recently improved with new facilities in order to make it more user-friendly whilst keeping all its previous functionalities. The main changes are:



- **Improved ergonomoy** Several ergonomic enhancements have been introduced so that users can access more easily relevant information by browsing and clicking.
- **Browse by list** You can now access notices by searching from predefined lists of criteria such as industry codes (Common Procurement Vocabulary codes), geographical location, type of procedure, etc. For instance, companies will now be able to search all new tenders notices published by public authorities in a particular region.
- **Notification of publication** Public authorities issuing the contract notices will now receive, on the same day that their notice is published in TED, a notification by email with the reference of their notice as published in the Official Journal Series and an active link to the notice in TED.

All improvements have also been added, when applicable, to the Official Journal Series CD-ROM.

The Publications Office welcomes comments on these improvements using the 'contact' form. In case of problems with the new TED site, users are invited to provide a problem report to the webmaster-ted-opoce@cec.eu.int.

If you still have problems searching for information on TED, then contact your local EIC who has trained staff on hand to help you with your enquiry: www.euro-info.org.uk

Towards 2010: The EU's approach to waste and energy

Cardiff EIC reviews the latest on waste and energy.

An 'holistic' approach

In the European Commission's Workplan for 2006 protection of the environment and proper management of natural resources are highlighted for ensuring higher but environmentally sustainable economic growth. In particular, the areas of energy and waste are now high on the Commission's agenda for change and it is evident that a new 'holistic' approach is being taken.

On average, every EU citizen produces 550kg of municipal waste per year and this is growing. Measures taken to manage waste are now being reviewed as the EU shifts its focus towards a significant reduction in the amount of rubbish being generated while emphasising that sending rubbish to landfill sites, which now accounts for 67% of our rubbish disposal, is no longer viable for the long term.

On 21 December 2005 the European Commissioner for the Environment Stavros Dimas put forward the Commission's new Thematic Strategy on Waste Prevention and Recycling, which forms part of the EU's Sixth Environment Action Plan.

'We have to modernise our approach to waste, we need new policies to prevent waste, and we must build a solid market for recycling,' said Mr Dimas. What this means in practical terms is a revision of the 1975 Waste Framework Directive and an obligation on Member States to recycle and develop a national waste prevention programme. The emphasis is on the need to develop the right mix of legislative, voluntary and economic instruments to achieve this objective. A primary goal is to decouple waste generation from economic activity.

Towards 2010: The EU's approach to waste and energy

Major policy strands and actions for waste

The three major strands of this policy are:

- waste prevention
- recycling and reuse
- improving final disposal and monitoring.

The strategy also proposes a series of actions for the next three years. For 2006 these are:

- reviewing targets for car recycling as laid out in the 2001 Directive on end of life vehicles
- a report on the implementation of the 1994 Packaging Waste Directive
- new guidelines as to when animal by-products should not be considered as waste
- guidelines on applying lifecycle thinking to managing biodegradable waste diverted from landfill.

The Energy Minister, Andrew Wicks, also announced in December 2005 that he had instigated an immediate review of proposals for implementing the 2002 Directive on Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) in the UK. This Directive should have been implemented in the UK in 2005 and this announcement reflects the concerns expressed by businesses leaders, and the government's commitment to the environmental benefits and keeping costs to business low. This deferral has obvious cost implications for Local Authorities who have received assurances from the DTI on practical assistance for meeting this new burden. An assistance programme to help SMEs comply with this new legislation will also be established.

Modern society has grown dependent on energy for transport, heating and lighting and 80% of the energy that the EU consumes is from fossil fuels such as oil, gas and coal. Current

Towards 2010: The EU's approach to waste and energy

EU dependence on outside sources of energy stands at 50% and this looks set to rise to 70% by 2030. This means that the EU needs to safeguard its long-term energy supply from possible shortages of supply and higher prices. Using less fossil fuel and more intelligently is one of the ways that the EU can reduce pollution and reverse global warming. The new approach is a combination of energy savings by more efficient use of energy, the use of alternatives/renewables and more international co-operation.

Major policy strands and action for energy

The main strands for energy policy are:

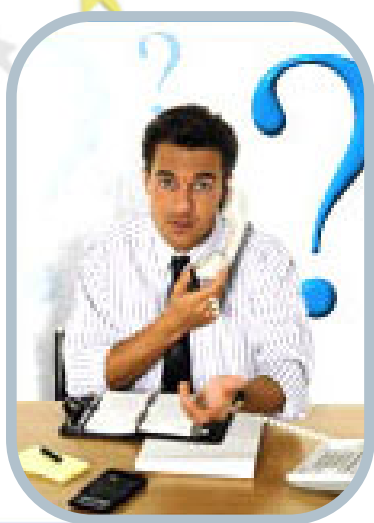
- essential imports
- changing the fuel mix
- caring for the environment
- saving energy and efficient use
- energy intelligence
- single energy market

Further information

More information on these policies can be found at:

- <http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/strategy.htm>
- http://europa.eu.int/pol/ener/overview_en.htm
- <http://dti.gov.uk>

Anti-Dumping Duty - is it fair and reasonable?



Mike Hodge discusses the likelihood of an increase in the scope and coverage of anti-dumping duties.

Anti-dumping duties are a complicated matter and much of the inquiry work is shrouded in mystery and many pages of details. In my view, as the normal rates of Customs duty continue to diminish, it seems highly likely that there will be an increase in the scope and coverage of anti-dumping duties.

It is likely too that as the EU Commission's 'take' on duty dramatically decreases, the duty coffers have to be kept at their previous level for budgetary purposes. The more anti-dumping duty levied means more tax is collected. At the end of the day, it is the EU citizens who pay these additional duties by way of increased prices so it is just another form of taxation. In recent months, there have been a couple of cases which, I think, demonstrate that the Commission's anti-dumping investigations leave a great deal to be desired and all importers should take a bit of time to make sure that they have had a system of communication in place that will ring loud alarm bells should there be an indication that investigations are about to start on products they import.

The policy behind anti-dumping duty

By digging around I found the following definition for anti-dumping duties: 'Customs Duties imposed on imports from specific countries in addition to the normal or preferential duty. Such duties can be introduced where the export price is below the normal value, provided such imports cause or threaten to cause material injury to Community producers of like products.'

The principal EU legislation on anti-dumping duty is contained in Council Regulation 384/96 which is now nearly ten years old. It has been frequently tinkered with and is urgently in need of a re-

Anti-Dumping Duty - is it fair and reasonable?

write.

As the rest of this article might demonstrate, the EU Commission is perhaps happy to leave this piece of outdated legislation exactly as it is because the confusion maybe plays into the Commission's hands.

A much better place to look is on the UK DTI website (www.dti.gov.uk/ewt/antidumping.htm) which takes you to a whole section on anti-dumping duty and what this particular trade defence instrument is designed to achieve. In very basic terms, if an EU trade association complains and provides evidence that an imported product is being sold at a dumped price (ie sold for export at less than their normal domestic value), then an investigation will be undertaken by the EU Commission to establish the facts of the complaint. Once the commission has published its Notice of Initiation of an anti-dumping proceeding (in Volume C of the Official Journal), there is only a 30-day period for interested parties to submit a written request to be involved in the hearing.

If the initial nine-month investigation proves the complainant's case, provisional anti-dumping duties are put in place and these, after an interval of six months become definitive. Unless anything world shattering happens these anti-dumping duties will then remain in place for five years and nothing can be done about them. That is why it is so important for importers to be right up to speed on the products being investigated because, once the die is cast, there is no going back.

A recent investigation

One particular recent investigation is worth recording so that the reader can see the areas of risk to them. In May 2004, the Commission received a complaint from a European association by the name of AIUFFASS representing a major proportion of EU

Anti-Dumping Duty - is it fair and reasonable?

manufacturers that make 'certain finished polyester filament apparel fabrics'.

The initiation specifically mentioned apparel fabrics and the notice went on to state that the product allegedly being dumped was woven fabric of synthetic filament yarn, etc - and that it was used for apparel applications. Five combined nomenclature codes were provided which identified the goods to the Tariff.


The upshot was that on 15 March 2005 in Regulation 426/05, provisional anti-dumping duties were imposed - again on 'certain finished polyester filament fabrics' originating in China. The Commission's investigation, it would seem, had upheld AIUFFASS' complaint and had decided to charge provisional anti-dumping duties ranging between 20% and 30%, ad valorem. From the details in the regulation, it would seem that about 20 to 30 suppliers in China had responded to the investigation and, in these cases, the extra duty was from 20% to 40%. All other companies (ie most of them) exporting these products were subject to the 85.3% rate.

All fabrics now susceptible to duty increases

Then, in September 2005, another regulation was published (1487/2005) which converted the provisional anti-dumping duties to definitive - and they are now not set up for review until 2010. The interesting point now, is that the word 'apparel' has been dropped from the final regulation. At the outset it was, effectively, the Community's association for producers of apparel fabric that complained that their industry was being harmed. The final regulation decided to sweep all fabric into the duty increases. These particular fabrics are used, extensively, in the home furnishing business - the design and specification means that the fabric cannot be used for apparel.

The Commission, with (it seems to me) an eye to the main

Anti-Dumping Duty - is it fair and reasonable?

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chance, has included all products in the net. This fabric, whether it is for apparel or home furnishing, falls within the same tariff heading. There is no distinction - indeed the regulation records that 'one interested party, importing polyester fabrics for umbrellas, argued also that the use of the textile they import is different and not suitable for the clothing industry due to a difference in weight'. The recital in the regulation reports that these fabrics are used in furniture and home decoration. However, the Commission merely brushes the arguments aside, taking the view that all finished polyester filament fabrics are the same and therefore all are liable to the decreed anti-dumping duty. and, for good measure, they have added another three tariff headings to the list.

The fact that all these fabrics are in the same heading does not mean that anti-dumping duty should be levied across the board. It would, for example, be perfectly possible to insert an end-use provision into the tariff whereby those importers using the fabric for other than apparel purposes could avoid the additional charge. It happens elsewhere in the world of commerce. This, I suggest, demonstrates only too vividly the dangers for importers who are not keeping closely in touch with developments in anti-dumping duty.

The issue of footwear

Importers of Chinese merchandise will have been severely hampered by the non-textile import licence regime that ran from 1995 to the end of 2004. The licence restrictions were lifted on 1 January 2005 but, almost immediately, the European Confederation of Footwear Industry lodged a complaint about Chinese dumping. The Commission published the Notice of Initiation of the anti-dumping proceedings in Official Journal C159 on 30 June 2005.

Fifty footwear commodity codes are included in the investigation;

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I gather that the Commission's questionnaire to Chinese manufacturers ran to 68 pages of closely typed pages with a massive amount of information demanded. All this had to be provided within 37 days of the announcement of the investigation. A totally unreasonable and unacceptable deadline.

The cynics among us may possibly say that, now the import licences have been removed, the Commission has seen an easy way to collect a great deal more duty on footwear. The EU consumer will pay.

The author is director of international Customs consultancy Mike Hodge Associates and can be contacted at e-mail: mike@mikehidge.co.uk or on tel: 01582 760244.

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Consultations

Your input on Community Excise Legislation

The European Commission has launched an online consultation for views from the public and business on reforming Community excise legislation.



The consultation is based on a document (see below) that seeks information on the current legal framework (Directive 92/12/EEC) and various aspects of the forthcoming reform. It gives information on the need to review Community excise legislation to provide the necessary legal basis for the Excise Movement and Control System (EMCS). The document also gives an overview of other modifications which could be considered in the context of the review process with a view to align the text of Directive 92/12/EEC with modern standards.

This paper is mainly of interest to stakeholders in the production, trade and movement of excise products to which Directive 92/12/EEC applies (alcohol and alcoholic beverages; manufactured tobacco products; energy products). This concerns among others (federations of) producers of excise products, and (federations of) companies involved in the distribution of excise products, such as warehouse keepers, transport companies and guaranteeing organisations.

The purpose of consulting the public on this issue is to provide input to the discussion, gather relevant feedback and assist Commission services in developing their thinking on the subject.

This consultation is based on the document 'Review of Community Excise Legislation (Directive 92/12/EEC)'. The document does not necessarily reflect the views of the Commission nor does it mean that the Commission is committed to any official initiative in this area.

Consultations

Comments are invited by 30 April 2006 and submissions may be made in writing or by e-mail to:

Albert Hendriks, European Commission, Directorate General
Taxation and Customs Union, Administrative Cooperation and
fight against fiscal fraud, Office MO 59 5/ 20, B-1049, Brussels,
Belgium; e-mail: taxud-d4@cec.eu.int

A report summarising the outcome of the consultation will be published on this website. Please indicate whether for confidentiality reasons you do not wish to disclose the fact that a contribution has been submitted on your or your organisation's behalf.

Your views on future patent policy

The European Commission has launched a public consultation on how future action in patent policy to create an EU-wide system of protection can best take account of stakeholders' needs. While the Community Patent remains a priority, the Commission is also seeking views on what measures could be taken in the near future to improve the patent system in Europe. All interested stakeholders, including industry and individuals, are encouraged to reply: the closing date is **31 March 2006**.

Internal Market and Services Commissioner Charlie McCreevy said: 'Good intellectual property rules are essential: by stimulating innovation and leading to the successful development of new products, they help to generate growth and jobs. We want to maximise these benefits in Europe by making the single market for patents a reality. This is why I am asking businesses and individuals alike to give me their views on how we should move forward to achieve this. Meanwhile we will of course continue to strive for the Community Patent, which remains central to our policy.'

Consultations

The Commission is committed to boosting the competitiveness of EU industry and improving the framework conditions in which it operates. To this end, industrial property, which includes patents, has been identified as one of the seven major cross-sectoral policy initiatives in the Commission's new industrial policy put forward on 5 October 2005. As part of its commitment to Better Regulation, the Commission has launched this consultation to ensure that any new proposals in the area of EU patents policy reflect stakeholders' needs.

The consultation focuses on three major issues: the Community patent; how the current patent system in Europe could be improved; and possible areas for harmonisation. The Commission is also seeking views on what action could be taken while work on the Community patent is continuing, in particular within the framework of the existing European patent system, or by bringing national patent systems more closely in line with each other through either approximation of laws or mutual recognition of national patents. The legal framework for jurisdiction over patent disputes is an area of significant interest in this context.

The feedback obtained from stakeholders will form the basis of a hearing, which the Commission intends to organise in Brussels on 13 June 2006.

The questionnaire is available at:


http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/indprop/patent/consultation_en.htm

More information on the EU's industrial property policy is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/internal_market/indprop/index_en.htm

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'Home State Taxation' for SMEs

A 3D-style icon of a globe showing continents and oceans, enclosed in a rounded square frame. The globe is tilted and has a blue and green color scheme.

A voluntary scheme to allow European small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) compute their company tax profits according to the tax rules of their home state of the parent company or head office, has been presented by the European Commission as a possible solution to the compliance costs and other company tax difficulties faced by SMEs doing business across borders. Therefore a SME wishing to establish a subsidiary or branch in another member state would, as a result, be able to use tax rules and file tax returns in a country with which it is familiar.

The 'Home State Taxation' system would run for a five-year pilot phase. The Commission's 2004 European tax survey showed that cross-border activity leads to higher company tax and VAT compliance costs for companies and that costs are proportionately higher for SMEs than for large companies.

New EU chemical legislation

After two years of discussion and lobbying the European Council of Ministers has finally approved a new law on chemicals. The new REACH Directive requires companies to register all chemicals they manufacture or import, and to obtain authorisation for the most dangerous substances.

The REACH Directive will introduce a new European Chemicals Agency to be established in Helsinki, Finland. The purpose of the Agency will be to establish a database in order to manage the registration of substances. It will also help to evaluate and authorise substances.

Manufacturers and importers will have to gather detailed information about the substances that they produce or import in volumes over 1 tonne per year. The information must then be

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submitted to the European Chemicals Agency to prove that the substances can be safely used.

The Directive will replace 40 existing legal acts and create a single system for all chemical substances.

Industry is very concerned that the Directive will impose heavy costs, but environmentalists are concerned that it is too weak. The Council of Ministers' version of the Directive differs to the text passed by MEPs in the European Parliament. It is therefore expected that the final decision on REACH will take place in autumn 2006, as discussions will have to take place between the European Parliament and the Council.

The Council relaxed the conditions set by parliament for authorisation of the most dangerous chemicals. MEPs had said that companies should be forced to replace dangerous chemicals with safe ones, where an alternative exists. The Council said that companies should simply be encouraged to seek safer alternatives.

Entry into force in each member state will then be expected to take place in spring 2007. Operational requirements under REACH will expect to start to be applied from 2008 onwards.

Opinions sought on future patent policy

Views are being sought on the patent system in Europe and what changes, if any, are needed to improve innovation and competitiveness, growth and employment in the knowledge-based economy. The public consultation is part of the Commission's commitment to better regulation to ensure that any new proposals reflect stakeholders' needs. Interested parties have until 31 March 2006 to reply.

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Internal market and services Commissioner Charlie McCreevy said: 'Good intellectual property rules are essential: by stimulating innovation and leading to the successful development of new products, they help to generate growth and jobs. We want to maximise these benefits in Europe by making the single market for patents a reality. This is why I am asking businesses and individuals alike to give me their views on how we should move forward to achieve this. Meanwhile we will of course continue to strive for the Community patent, which remains central to our policy.'

The consultation focuses on three major issues:

- how the current patent system in Europe could be improved;
- possible areas for harmonisation;
- what action could be taken while work on the Community patent is continuing, in particular within the framework of the existing European patent system, or by bringing national patent systems more closely in line with each other through either approximation of laws or mutual recognition of national patents.

The legal framework for jurisdiction over patent disputes is an area of significant interest.

The feedback obtained from stakeholders will form the basis of a hearing, which the Commission intends to organise in Brussels on 13 June 2006.

Parliament hearing on Posting of Workers Directive

A mini-hearing took place in the European Parliament's Employment & Social Affairs Committee on 26 January on the implementation of the Posting of Workers Directive. This directive was adopted in 1996 and a commission report on implementation will be adopted in March 2006. The committee

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is also writing an own-initiative report on implementation of the directive - the rapporteur is Elisabeth Schrödter (Germany, Greens).

The Posting of Workers Directive sets down certain terms and conditions of employment for workers posted temporarily by their employer to work in another member state. Member states may still apply minimum terms and conditions for workers posted to their country should they be more favourable than those in the state from which they are posted.

The hearing included presentations from the European Commission, UNICE, ETUC and UEAPME. Speakers at the hearing pointed to various problems with the directive, which are hampering proper implementation in the member states. Armindo Silva, Head of Unit for Labour Law and Work Organisation in DG Employment, pointed to discrepancies between member states in the maximum length of time that a worker is considered as a posted worker. He stated that clarity was needed regarding minimum wages, as member states have different rules on this. He also highlighted the problems in implementing the directive without an EU-wide definition of 'worker'.

All speakers agreed that a new directive was not necessary; rather, it is a question of better implementation and information on the provisions of the directive being made available to businesses.

This directive has come to the fore in the discussions on the Services Directive, the main aim of which is to liberalise the provision of services across EU borders. This means both making it easier for businesses to establish themselves in other EU member states, and making it easier for businesses, particularly small ones, to sell their services across borders. In many cases, this means sending workers to provide services in other EU

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member states, the conditions for which are set out in the Posting of Workers Directive.

The discussions on the Posting of Workers Directive should also be considered in the context of the Green Paper on Evolution of Labour Law, which DG Employment is in the process of drafting. The commission representative at the hearing pointed to issues such as 'pseudo self-employment' or economically dependent work as problematic within the Posting of Workers Directive and suggested that these could be dealt with in the green paper.

Source: smallbusiness|europe

New EU budget plan agreed

The EU budget was finally agreed after a tense two-day debate by the member states at the very end of the UK presidency. The UK agreed to give up £7 billion pounds of its rebate (amounting to 20%), while the overall budget has grown to €862.4 billion to help funding the development of the new member states. Margaret Thatcher won the rebate in 1984 when the UK was one of the poorest member states in the EU, but it is now one of the richest. Every member state had to pay for the rebate, which was regarded as unfair by many countries. But the UK had argued that the rebate was justified until the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy.

France in return agreed to review the budget in 2008-09, which could possibly lead to cuts in farm subsidies. France and Italy will also see an increase in their net contributions to the EU budget in line with UK contributions.

The Commission had sought a budget figure of 1.24% of the EU's Gross National Income but the final figure that was agreed by the European Council was 1.045%, which amounts to €862 billion from 2007-13.

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The UK rebate has been decreased by €10.5 billion. The new member states will receive €157 billion, farming and rural development €292 billion, justice and interior affairs €10.2 billion, foreign and humanitarian aid €50 billion - and administrative costs will total €50.3 billion.

The budget still has to be passed by the European Parliament, which did favour a higher overall budget.

Asia-Invest programme deadline

Asia-Invest is a European Union Initiative that aims to promote and support Euro-Asian business co-operation. The programme provides assistance to intermediary organisations to facilitate mutually beneficial partnerships between companies in Europe and Asia, as well as to strengthen the framework conditions to increase trade and investment flows between two regions.

The new call for proposals has just been launched under the Asia-Invest Programme. Entitled Call for Proposals 2005 (Part 2), it provides EUR 6.25 Million for grants to partnerships of European Union and Asian Business organisations, with one deadline: 30 MARCH 2006.

The application documents and guidelines for applicants 2005 (Part 2) are provided on the EuropeAid Co-operation Office website:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/cgi/frame12.pl> and on the Asia-Invest web site:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-invest/html2002/howtoapply.htm>

The calls for proposals 2005 (Part 2) provide grant support under the following components: Venture, Enterprise, Technical Assistance and Alliance. An information session was held at the European Commission in Brussels on 9 February 2006 and the

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FAQs have been updated on the website for further reference.

EU-China Partenariat 2006

9-10 November 2006, Chengdu, Sichuan Province

Preparations are well under way for the EU-China Partenariat 2006, organised by the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade (CCPIT) in partnership with the European Commission, and with the support of the Government of China. This major event will take place in Chengdu, Sichuan Province from 9-10 November 2006 and will aim to ensure that 500 small and medium-sized companies from China will meet 400 SMEs from the European Union, to identify opportunities for mutual trade and investment.

The event's main aim is to provide business opportunities and create partnerships between Chinese and European SMEs through one-to-one matchmaking activities under one roof over two days, in the following sectors:

Agro-Industry, Tourism, Healthcare and transport-related industry, Environmental goods and services, Machinery and Building Equipment, Construction and Engineering, ICT and software and Electronic Components.

For more details please see EVENTS:

<http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/europeaid/projects/asia-invest/html2002/events2002.htm>

The new phase of Asia-Invest brings new opportunities. It will:

- Increase awareness of business potential between Asia and Europe
- Facilitate opportunities for partnerships between SMEs
- Enhance Asian private sector development and its internationalisation

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- Reinforce institutional capacity and networking of business intermediaries
- Increase dialogue to improve the local business environment
- Strengthen mutual trade and investment flows

Annual progress report on growth and jobs

The annual progress report on the Lisbon strategy, the partnership between the EU and member states to achieve growth and more and better jobs, has been published by the European Commission. Designed to reinforce momentum and force the pace of delivery, the report has three elements:

- an analysis of the 25 new national reform programmes submitted by member states in October 2005;
- an identification of the strengths in different national programmes with a view to promoting the exchange of good ideas; and
- it highlights areas where there are shortcomings and proposes concrete action at EU and national level.

In addition, four priority action areas are also identified:

- investment in education, research and innovation;
- freeing up SMEs;
- employment policies to get people into work; and
- guaranteeing a secure and sustainable energy supply.

For each of these areas, the Commission's Spring report makes clear proposals for European leaders to commit to when they meet at the March European Council summit in Brussels and to be implemented by 2007. Commission President José Manuel Barroso said: 'My overall message is clear; it is time to move up a gear. The fact that there are 25 national reform programmes on the table speaks volumes about a new level of national commitment. Now the spotlight moves to delivery and member

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states must get in the driving seat and speed up reforms. They must find the political will to match words with deeds.'

