



Euro News

The UK Network of Euro Info Centres
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Questions and Answers

Question:

We are interested in extending our product range and are looking to import children's clothes from producers outside the EU. Are there any specific safety requirements for children's clothes that we need to be aware of?

Answer:

Firstly, the children's clothes must comply with the General Product Safety Regulations which place a general duty on all suppliers of consumer goods, including clothing, to supply goods that are safe in normal and reasonably foreseeable use. Safety takes into account factors such as the product's characteristics, instructions and warnings and the categories of consumers at serious risk when using the product, in particular children. You can be fined up to £5,000 for supplying an unsafe product and/or face imprisonment of up to three months.

Secondly, hoods on children's raincoats, overcoats, anoraks and other garments suitable as outerwear including tracksuit tops must not be designed to be secured by means of a cord according to the Children's Clothing (Hood Cords) Regulations. If the chest measure of the garment is less than 44 cm or about 17 inches, the garment must not be fitted with a hood cord. The purpose of these Regulations is to prevent injury and possible strangulation and non-compliance can result in prosecution and a maximum fine of £5,000.

Thirdly, all nightwear, except pyjamas, babies' garments and cotton terry towelling bath robes, must comply with the flammability test (BS 5722) set down by the Nightwear (Safety) Regulations. Pyjamas and cotton terry towelling bath robes that do not comply with the flammability test must bear a label saying 'KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE' in red letters. Pyjamas and cotton terry towelling bath robes that comply with the flammability test must bear a label saying 'LOW FLAMMABILITY TO BS 5722' in black or 'KEEP AWAY FROM FIRE' in red, or both texts. Babies' garments

Questions and Answers

do not have to pass the flammability test but must be labelled in the same way as pyjamas and cotton terry towelling bath robes.

To ensure that the children's clothes you import are deemed safe, you should contact your local Trading Standards Office for assistance.

Expanding your activities abroad

The Birmingham EIC encourages partner matching for business expansion.



Are you thinking about expanding your international business activities? Then look no further than Stimutran-SME, which is a EU funded project involving the UK, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany. The European Information Centre based at Birmingham Chamber of Commerce is a partner in the project. The aim of Stimutran is to take companies out to specific partner-matching events held at trade fairs and events in the UK, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Germany. Use the database on the Stimutran website to add your profile and you are ready to participate in the EIC's partner-matching events. Your profile will be matched with other company profiles before the event in order to pre-arrange one-to-one meetings at the event of your choice.



The first partner-matching event will take place at BioTrinity on 27/28 March 2007 in Oxford, which will focus on the biotechnology and healthcare industry. By registering your profile on the Stimutran website your company will have access to a package of services that will assist you to meet with the right companies. More than 250 medical and healthcare companies will be in attendance. You can use Stimutran to request a meeting with a potential partner company, which includes European companies.

Simply log onto the Stimutran website and add your company profile at the following address:

<http://www.stimutran-sme.com/>

For further assistance and advice please call the European Information Centre on 0121 454 6171.

AEO coming into force

The authorised economic operator status is due to come into force on 1 January 2008. Find out if it affects you and how you need to prepare.



Image: © European Community, 2007

A new regulation aimed at increased security for shipments entering and leaving the EU and providing greater facilitation for compliant operators has recently been adopted. One of the main elements of the new regulation is the creation of the authorised economic operator (AEO) concept which will enter into force on 1 January 2008. Member States will be able to grant AEO status to any economic operator, i.e. a company that meets common criteria relating to its control systems, financial solvency and compliance records. The AEO status granted by one Member State will be recognised by the other Member States.

There will be no legal obligation on businesses to become an AEO but established AEOs are likely to put pressure on their providers and partners to become AEOs as the more there are in a supply chain, the more secure the chain as all the links comply with the same requirements.

The regulation also introduces a better risk information sharing mechanism for customs authorities and sets out uniform Community risk-selection criteria for controls. The risk management framework will come into force in early 2007. From 1 July 2009, it will become mandatory for traders to provide customs authorities with advance information on goods imported to or exported from the EU. Time limits will depend on the means of transport. Finally, an electronic export control system enabling exporters to receive proof of export immediately after their goods have left EU territory will also be introduced.

New prospects from Bulgaria and Romania

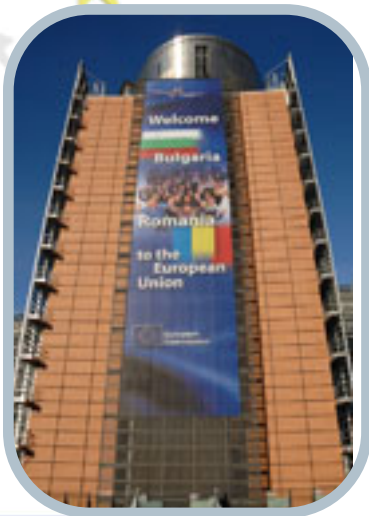


Image: © European Community, 2007.
The Berlaymont building.

Bulgaria and Romania joined the European Union on 1 January 2007 to create a single market of 27 member countries. What are the economic indicators in these new members and what are the prospects for British businesses? Luis Tovar reports from a recent London Chamber of Commerce seminar on the latest accession countries.

The economic profile

UK political and economic ties with Bulgaria have become stronger since the fall of communism. Bilateral trade has been growing continuously since 2001. UK exports of goods and services continue to rise and reached £318 million in 2005, a 41% increase on the previous year. The highest value UK exports are medicinal and pharmaceutical products, telecommunications equipment and electrical machinery.

Romania is the UK's 38th largest visible export market with exports worth £643.7 million in 2005. After Poland, it is the UK's largest consumer market in Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover the UK is one of the leading foreign investors in Romania with close to 3.5 billion euro of direct investment.

Good commercial relations are likely to strengthen further as result of Romania and Bulgaria's accession to the EU and their continuing economic growth. In the period 2000-05, Bulgaria's average growth was 5.0% per annum while Romania averaged 5.1%. Bulgaria's high performance has been the more consistent. Andrew Colquhoun, Director of Fitch Sovereign Group, asked the question: 'Is Bulgaria's growth based on sustainable convergence or dangerous overheating?' and plumped for the former, given the opinion that the country's outstanding GDP

New prospects from Bulgaria and Romania

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consisting of several yellow stars of varying sizes and orientations, some overlapping a light blue background that resembles the EU flag.

growth was led mostly by domestic consumption, which was unlikely to stall. He continued: 'Bulgaria's fiscal achievement has been remarkable since 1999. The authorities have stuck to plans that were regarded as unbelievably ambitious. With their currency firmly tied to the euro, fiscal policy is the main tool the Bulgarians have to cool their economy and they have now achieved this.'

Romania achieved a steady reduction in its fiscal deficit until mid-2006 despite the radical tax reforms of 2005 when a 'flat tax' of 16% was introduced on salaries and profits but, in 2006, the authorities announced steep spending increases mainly on infrastructure projects to benefit from EU funds. The deficit still remains moderate and there is little risk to the fiscal position but the timing of the spending increases adds to demand in an already fast-growing economy.

The rate given by FitchRating is currently the same for both countries - BBB - with the inherent expectation that the governments will meet their economic commitments. As an indication of this rating, Hungary and Poland are placed immediately above on BBB+ and Serbia and Ukraine are below on BB-.

There is no doubt that the accession of Romania and Bulgaria to the EU will mean modernisation and a better environment to do business. The European Commission is concerned about corruption, particularly in light of the increased amount of EU funds the countries' bureaucracies will now handle. As a result the Commission has toughened certain controls so both countries must now present regular reports on how corruption is being tackled. If the Commission is not satisfied, funds will be suspended.

New prospects from Bulgaria and Romania

In general Romania and Bulgaria are required to adopt European legislation so, for example, British companies will be able to do business under the European legal umbrella.

Integration

EU funds are critical to the success of integration of Bulgaria and Romania into the Community and spending plans are well advanced. Bulgaria has announced the following investments:

- 1.3 billion euro will be spent on regional development including public buildings, industrial zones, infrastructure, roads, broadband and ecotourism.
- 1.8 billion euro is earmarked for transport, mainly road and rail infrastructure.
- Environmental developments will take up 1.9 billion euro of which 71% will be spent on waste water projects.

Romania will receive over 19 billion euro of EU funds until 2013 to be spent on similar projects. For both countries projects over 200,000 euro must be tendered and published in the Official Journal of the European Union, anything below is subject to national rules.

Partnerships are critical

Speakers at the seminar made it clear that when doing business with these two countries it was usually critical to form partnerships or a similar kind of collaboration with local companies. As Daniel Gibbs, Development Manager of North Bar Training, put it: 'You need to work with people who know the country. If I had set up my company on my own, I would be wasting my time.'

Services Directive update

The European Parliament and the Council approved the text of Services Directive which aims to facilitate the provision of services in another Member State. The new Directive was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 27 December 2006

(http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2006/l_376/l_37620061227en00360068.pdf) and has to be implemented into national laws across the European Union by 28 December 2009 at the latest.

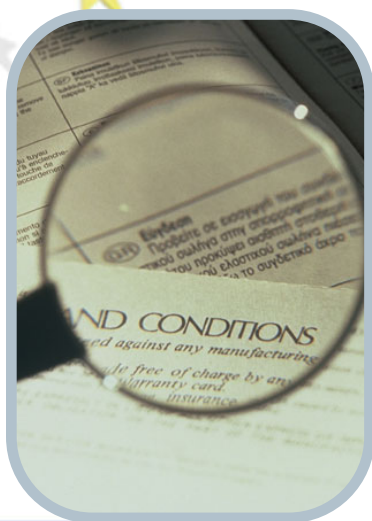


Image: © European Community, 2007.

The balance between cross-border competition and social protection seems to have been achieved. The importance of the service sector regarding employment is crucial - about 70% of all jobs in the European Union are related to this sector. It is estimated that this agreement will be worth up to £5 billion a year to the UK economy and create up to 135,000 jobs. Trade Minister Ian McCartney said: 'It is good news for both UK businesses and UK consumers. We will now have a Europe where businesses and entrepreneurs can tap into new markets without facing a mountain of unnecessary rules and regulations.'

According to the text, Member States are required to respect the right of the services provider to supply services in its Member State. A number of bureaucratic restrictions and obstacles will be banned. However, the freedom to provide services in another Member State can be limited in the name of public security, environmental protection and public health.

What services are covered by the Directive?

The scope of the Directive was limited by the European Parliament and the approved text covers fewer services than the original one.

Services Directive update

Services covered are as follows but this list is not exclusive:

- business services (management consultancy, advertising, facilities management, office management, recruitment agencies, commercial agents)
- consumer services (those in the field of tourism, leisure services, amusement parks)
- services provided both to businesses and to consumers (legal and fiscal advice, real estate services, construction, distributive traders, car rental, organisation of trade fairs).

Services not covered are:

- non-economic services of general interest
- financial services, such as banking
- electronic communications, services and networks
- services of temporary work agencies
- healthcare services
- audiovisual services
- gambling activities
- social services
- private security services
- services provided by notaries and bailiffs.

In addition, the Directive does not affect labour law, taxation and social security.

What are the main points of the Directive?

- Each Member State will have to set up a single contact point on-line for all necessary information and applications. This 'one-stop-shop' website should enable service providers to complete all necessary formalities in order to access the national market.

Services Directive update

- A Member State may require additional insurance and financial guarantees from service providers even if such an obligation does not exist in the Member State of establishment.
- The authorisations are deemed to have been granted in the absence of a response from the competent authorities.
- A new electronic database will be created to facilitate exchange of information among Member States.

SME news update

Managing an SME means you have to be a 'jack of all trades'. Here we help you keep up to date with issues that affect your business.



Image: © European Community, 2007

Helping EU officials understand SME needs

How can EU officials' understanding of SMEs be improved? The 'Enterprise Experience Programme' developed by Eurochambres in co-operation with the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission and two other business support organisations sets out to do this.

The overall objective of the programme, which will run until 2009, is to provide a reality-check for EU officials working on enterprise policy and thereby improve policy making. Under the programme, SMEs across the EU will welcome an EU official into their business for a week, 'exposing' him or her to business life and the challenges that SMEs face on a daily basis.

For more information on the programme, visit www.eurochambres.eu/activities/EnterpriseExperience.shtml or contact Ms Typhaine Beaupérin at Eurochambres on tel +32 2 282 08 58 or e-mail beauperin@eurochambres.eu if you would like to invite an EU official into your business.

Supporting risk capital investment in SMEs

New guidelines - Guidelines on State Aid to Promote Risk Capital Investments in SMEs - adopted by the European Commission now help to determine when state aid to support risk capital investment in SMEs is compatible with EC Treaty state aid rules (article 87). Member States are now given the necessary flexibility to boost SMEs' access to risk capital. The guidelines cover risk capital measures for investment in SMEs in their early stages (seed, start-up and expansion), where funding is provided

SME news update

jointly by the state and private investors.

The following new measures were adopted:

- The investment threshold is increased by 50% and is now €1.5 million per SME over a period of 12 months.
- A new 'light assessment' on the basis of economic impact is foreseen.
- New assessment criteria which ensure that state funding will leverage private investment, target market failures and be proportionate were included in the guidelines.

More information can be found on:

ec.europa.eu/comm/competition/state_aid/others/risk_capital_guidelines_en.pdf

SMEs in the UK's West Midlands benefit

The European Commission has endorsed under EC Treaty state aid rules aid of €4.4 million (£3 million) to Investbx, an innovative platform for raising capital for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the West Midlands. Investbx will provide extensive information to investors and assist expanding SMEs to raise equity in the range of €0.7 to €2.9 million (£0.5 to £2 million), which the market currently fails to provide. This is the first case investigated using the in-depth economic assessment set out in the new Guidelines on State Aid to Promote Risk Capital Investments in SMEs.

Meet up in March

In view of increasing international competition and the globalisation of business, it is becoming increasingly important for SMEs to build strategic partnerships for ideal solutions in the value-added chain. To further this aim a Business Meeting

SME news update

'Contact' event running 14-16 March 2007 has been arranged.

If you are interested and need more information, contact Ms Christina Goldbergk, Euro Info Centre Leipzig, on 0049 (0)341 12671323 or goldbergk@leipzig.ihk.de

Or access: www.contact-businessforum.com

Helping SMEs to access finance in the European Union

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are a major source of jobs, entrepreneurial skills and innovation as well as economic and social cohesion in the EU. There are some 23 million SMEs in the European Union (EU), accounting for over 99% of all enterprises and contributing up to 80% of employment in some industrial sectors, such as textiles, construction or furniture. The EIB Group facilitates SMEs access to finance through four different instruments, which cover the spectrum of resources necessary for the development of SMEs in an evolving economy:

- EIB global loans
- EIF venture capital activities
- EIF SME portfolio guarantees,

and finally a new initiative, JEREMIE - Joint European Resources for Micro to Medium Enterprises - which will enable the blending of these three instruments, coupled with Community funds, is currently under development.

For further information access: www.eif.europa.eu/jeremie/

A future small company statute?

A European Private Company Statute would help Europe's small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) do business across

SME news update

borders, according to a report from the Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee. The idea is that an SME would only have to register in the country where its head office is located, rather than in each EU Member State. The report requires the endorsement of at least 393 MEPs (absolute majority) for it to become a formal request from the European Parliament to the European Commission to draw up a legislative proposal.

Grants in February 2007

This monthly listing of grant opportunities includes an increased number of early warnings of calls for proposals for funding which have yet to be announced to give you time to prepare your grant text and documentation. Your chances for success certainly improve with good preparation and planning.



GRANTfinder

Executive training programme in Japan for EU executives who wish to succeed in the Japanese market. Candidates should have at least two years' experience of higher education or five years as a business executive. The programme includes three months' tuition on Japanese culture and six months of advanced language training. There is also a three-month internship in a Japanese-based company. Applications must be in by 15 May 2007 under the 2007-08 programme.

Executive training programme in Korea has the same terms as that above with a similar deadline for application.

Intelligent Energy - Europe II programme is about to be launched and has funding for energy projects that are not research oriented. The first calls for this programme will be published in the spring so be prepared. The programmes will be:

- Save - The improvement of energy efficiency and rational use of resources
- Altner - New and renewable energy resources
- Steer - Energy in transport.

Companies and universities in all Member States and candidates such as Croatia and Turkey can apply.

LIFE PLUS - NGO funding is a new programme that has the following priority areas:

- Climate change
- Nature and biodiversity

Grants in February 2007

- Environment and health
- Natural resources and waste

The budget is 8.2 million euro and the funding can be as much as 70% of the project cost. The application needs at least three partners in different Member States and the deadline is 28 February 2007.

Regional Development Programme in London has been launched for the 33 London boroughs with a budget of £3.6 million as a part of the European Social Fund. Your London borough wants to support training and employment projects and projects that impact on child poverty. Contact you local authority now.

Experts to evaluate/select research and technical development proposals are required by the Commission to deal with the programmes after the launch of the FP7 programme which we will report on in detail soon.

ICT policy support is about to be launched under the following programmes

- eTEN
- Modinus
- eContent

All Member States and candidate countries can bid along with EEA countries.

Industrial relations and social dialogue promotion at cross industry and sectorial level supports consultations and meetings to develop pan-European expertise using two programmes:

- Support for European social dialogue
- Improving expertise in the field of industrial relations

Grants in February 2007

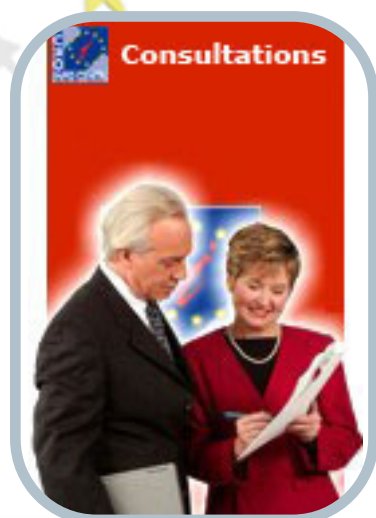
The deadline for applications is 1 May 2007.

Peter Matthews worked for the European Commission and now advises on how to complete applications for Grantfinder projects. He also specialises in global trade and investment funding support and soft loans from the EU to Eastern Europe, Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

Contact the London Euro Info Centre if you are interested in any of the above or if you are interested in the Euro Info Centre carrying out a special search for funding entitlement for your organisation. See www.londonchamber.co.uk

Consultations

Here we provide a selection of current consultations that are of interest to SMEs.



Public consultation on Cosmetics Directive

The European Commission announced its intention to simplify the Cosmetics Directive that sets the legal framework to ensure the safety of cosmetic products placed on the EU market. In the past 30 years this Directive has been amended 48 times. This has rendered many provisions unclear or brought them into the wrong context. In order to determine in which way the Directive should be simplified, the European Commission launched a public consultation.

Stakeholders are invited to comment on three main issues:

- How can administrative costs be reduced?
- How can aspects of self-assessment and responsibility of the manufacturer be strengthened?
- How can the high level of safety in cosmetics be maintained without unnecessary red tape?

Any comments and information on this public consultation should be submitted by mail, fax or e-mail by Friday evening, 16 March 2007 at the latest.

The text of the public consultation and necessary contact details can be found on the following website:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/cosmetics/doc/simpl_consult_doc_en.pdf.

Public consultation on the European Trade Defence Instruments

The Commission has adopted a Green Paper to launch reflection on the application of the EU Trade Defence Instruments in light of emerging new realities in the global economic context. This reflection process forms part of the Commission's new Global Europe strategy for European competitiveness.

The deadline for comments is 31 March 2007 and these are invited from all stakeholders in the EU dealing with EU Trade Defence Instruments on the questions raised in the Green Paper. Besides EU Member States, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee this includes for example producers, consumers and users, exporters, importers, the legal community, academics or any other person interested in this field. Third-country governments are also invited to respond to this Green Paper.

Stakeholders are invited to use the questionnaire to reply and replies can be sent by e-mail to reach the Commission by 31 March 2007. Comments received will be made available on-line unless a specific request for confidentiality is made, in which case only an indication of the contributor will be given.

Following this public debate the Commission will communicate the results and, if appropriate, propose further action.

More information, including the Green Paper and the questionnaire, is available on:

http://ec.europa.eu/trade/issues/respectrules/anti_dumping/co_mu061206_en.htm

Update of Units of Measurement Directive

Council Directive 80/181/EEC of 20 December 1979 covers the use of units of measurement. This Directive was last updated in 1999, and the Commission is now seeking views on a further update of the Directive.

The closing date for this consultation is 1 March 2007.

More information is available from

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/prepack/unitmeas/uni_ms_en.htm

Modernising Labour Law to meet the challenges of the 21st century

The European Commission has launched a broad public debate on the need to review current labour law systems so that they are in step with the modern world of work. With four out of ten EU workers now on non-standard contracts or self-employed, reality is rapidly outpacing regulation in the European workplace. The discussion paper (Green Paper on 'Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21st century') will ask Member States, employers and workers' representatives how labour law at EU and national level can help the job market become more flexible while improving security for workers (the 'flexicurity' approach).

The closing date for this consultation is 31 March 2007.

More information is available from

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/labour_law/green_paper_en.htm

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EU tax and customs... at your fingertips

'Where can I find the customs duties applicable to shoes imported from China? What are the VAT rates in Spain? What is the level of alcohol taxation in Member States? How to obtain a VAT refund when leaving the EU?'

If you are confronted with similar questions, the Commission's tax and customs website at http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/index_en.htm could make your life easier.

This website provides businesses with online databases to check trade policy measures applying to goods imported in the EU or to verify the VAT identification number of their business partners, with practical information on VAT rates in the Member States, as well as information on excise duty rates applicable in the EU.

In addition, an e-mail news service enables entrepreneurs to be informed of new tax and customs policy and other initiatives. To subscribe to this e-mail alert that is up to the minute, informative, brief and free of charge, simply go to http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/common/newsflash/index_en.htm.

If you wish to receive a leaflet about this new service or if you have an enquiry relating to EU tax and customs, please contact your local Euro Info Centre.

Some 30,000 chemical substances affected by new EU legislation

According to new EU legislation, companies will have to register all chemicals produced or imported above a total quantity of 1 tonne per year. The objective of this legislation is to protect public health and the environment from the risks of chemical

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substances. The new legislation will affect about 30,000 substances.

The so-called REACH legislation (Registration, Evaluation and Authorisation of Chemicals), replacing the current fragmented 40 pieces of legislation, is due to enter into force progressively from June 2007. As the legislation comes in the form of a regulation, it will have direct effect and does not need to be transposed into UK legislation first. This legislation aims to improve the protection of human health and the environment and is designed to enhance the innovative powers of the European chemical industry, without affecting its competitiveness. In addition, REACH also gives greater responsibility to the industry to provide safety information and to manage the risks that come with these substances.

The registration process, managed by a new Chemical Agency based in Helsinki, will have to be completed by 2018.

Main points of this legislation are as follows:

- Burden of proof regarding testing and evaluation of the risks of chemicals is transferred from the authorities to companies.
- For the most dangerous substances, producers will have to submit a substitution plan to replace them with safer alternatives. If no alternative exists, a research plan aimed at finding one will have to be presented.
- A new information duty has been agreed. The distribution chain and consumers must be informed of the presence of any chemicals in an amount greater than 0.1% of the total product weight.

Defra has appointed the HSE to operate the UK's helpdesk for REACH. The helpdesk provides assistance to businesses in their

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preparation for REACH. The REACH helpdesk can be contacted on ukreachca@hse.gsi.gov.uk or on 0845 408 9575.

For more information on REACH, visit the following websites:

<http://ecb.jrc.it/REACH/>

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/reach/index_en.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/chemicals/reach/reach_intro.htm

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/reach/docs/reach/reach_in_brief_revised_061212.pdf

The European Court rejects gender pay challenge

The European Court of Justice (ECJ) has ruled that employers can pay women less than their male colleagues if their length of service is shorter because they have taken career breaks to raise children. The employers do not have to justify pay structures based on length of service unless a worker can provide evidence that they are being discriminated against.

The ECJ rejected a claim by Ms Bernadette Cadman, who argued that her employer, the Health and Safety Executive, was unjustified in paying her male colleagues of the same rank more simply because they had worked for longer. Ms Cadman sued the HSE in 2001 after finding out her salary was several thousands pounds lower than her male colleagues. An employment tribunal had ruled in her favour but was overturned on appeal and the case was referred to the ECJ.

The ECJ ruled that employers wishing to reward workers for their experience because it makes them better at their job can use length of service as a criterion in setting pay. The ruling should

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not bring about any radical change to workplace practices as the judgement will not give employers a free hand to discriminate against working mothers and neither will it open the floodgates to equal pay claims.

WEEE in force from 1 July 2007

Manufacturers, importers and distributors of electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) - for example household appliances, TV, lighting, IT and telecoms equipment, leisure and sport equipment and toys - will have to meet new environmental requirements regarding this equipment when it becomes a waste.

Following a governmental consultation, these new regulations implement the WEEE Directive in the UK with a considerable delay. The WEEE Directive aims at reducing waste arising from EEE by making producers of this equipment financially responsible for the safe disposal, recovery and treatment of the waste of such equipment. Distributors will have the choice between joining the Distributor Take-back Scheme (DTS) or offering customers in-store take-back. This will enable consumers to dispose of their electrical waste free of charge at designated places.

Deadlines

- 15 March 2007: Producers have to register with approved producer compliance scheme.
- 1 April 2007: Producers must ensure all EEE placed on the market after this date is appropriately marked (with the crossed out wheelie bin, date code and producer mark) and that information is made available to treatment facilities.

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- 1 July 2007: Start of full producer compliance scheme obligations. A take-back systems for household WEEE has to be established.

A summary of the WEEE legislation can be accessed at:
<http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l21210.htm>

EU WEEE Frequently Asked Questions can be accessed at:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/pdf/faq_weee.pdf

Working with the GLA

Any company interested in working with the Greater London Authority (GLA) should make www.london.gov.uk/gla/tenders/ one of its favourites sites as the GLA publishes all its tender notices on this page. Notices are very likely to be published here before being published in the Official Journal of the European Union. The GLA's 'Selling to GLA' which gives an overview of the GLA's procurement policies can also be downloaded from this page.

The Road Safety Charter

Transport associations and companies in Europe are invited by the European Commission to sign up to the European Road Safety Charter. The objective is to encourage stakeholders to take necessary steps to help improve road safety in the EU. Upon signing the European Road Safety Charter, you will help to build knowledge and to exchange good practices on road safety in Europe while adding a European dimension to your actions. To find out more about this initiative, to see a list of the latest signatories and to sign up, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety/charter_en.htm.



European Road
Safety Charter

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New strategy on EU trade policy and competitiveness

A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consisting of several yellow and grey stars of varying sizes, arranged in a pattern that suggests the European Union flag.


The European Commission has adopted a new strategy to integrate trade policy into the EU's competitiveness and economic reform agenda. This has resulted in a policy review where the focus is on the opening up of new external trade markets and ensuring that European companies are able to compete fairly in foreign markets. Furthermore, it commits the EU to keeping its own markets open, arguing that in a global market, Europe needs to import to export. The EU cannot push for openness of foreign markets while retaining barriers of its own. The policy review suggests that an open market is not just a lowered tariff - rather it is a market in which European companies get a fair deal, with freedom to compete and legal protection when they do. The objective of the new strategy is to deliver growth and jobs for the benefit of EU citizens and companies.

This strategy is expected to strengthen the Lisbon objectives as well as the EU's initiatives within the World Trade Organization and bilateral trade and lead to a possible reform of the EU's anti-dumping instruments.

Commission proposes regular review of EU trademark fees

The European Commission has set out, in the form of a Communication, its vision for the long-term financing of the EU agency responsible for granting EU-wide trademark and design rights, namely the OHIM (Office for Harmonization in the Internal Market) located in Alicante, Spain. The Commission proposes the introduction of a regular and automatic review of trademark fees in order to ensure a reasonable balance in OHIM's budget. In the shorter term, this should mean lower trademark fees and a reduction in OHIM's surplus cash reserves.

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A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consisting of several yellow and grey stars of varying sizes, arranged in a pattern that suggests the European Union flag.

OHIM is a self-financing agency and is therefore not funded by the EU budget. The budget is required to show a balance between revenue and expenditure. The largest part of its income consists of services paid by businesses. As the number of trademark applications has steadily increased over the past years and is expected to continue doing so, it is to be expected that prices will decrease gradually. OHIM states that although it will be reducing its prices it will continue to guarantee a high quality service and good co-operation with the trademark offices in each of the Member States.

EUIsses

EUIsses (pronounced Ulysses) stands for EU Links & Information on Social Security. EUIsses is a multilingual web portal structured to give easy access to EU and national information on the social security rights and obligations of citizens on the move in Europe and consolidates national and European information sources.

To start with EUIsses will only give information on pensions. Later, it is planned to widen the information to cover the full range of social security sectors such as unemployment benefits, family benefits, health care, accidents at work and occupational diseases.

For more information access: <http://ec.europa.eu/eulisses>

A Pay-per-click Workshop with a Focus on International Markets

A pay-per-click workshop with a focus on international markets is being held on 7 March 2007 at Business Gateway Selkirk. The workshop is aimed at businesses that have taken steps, or are interested in taking steps, to promote their goods and services to specific overseas markets. Participants will learn how to use pay-per-click advertising, and how to drive targeted international

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traffic to their site. The workshop will also take into account language, ethics and translation.

This seminar is free of charge and limited to eight participants.

For further information please contact David McLean 01750 505016 / david.mclean@scotent.co.uk

Cross-border euro payments now significantly cheaper

EU rules on how banks should charge for cross-border euro payments have brought about significant savings for consumers, without leading to an increase in charges for domestic transfers, according to a European Commission report. A €100 cross-border transfer, which would have cost on average €24 before the rules were introduced, now costs on average €2.50. The rules have also provided banks with an incentive to develop and invest more in an EU-wide payments infrastructure, which in the longer term should help to reduce costs for all consumers.