



Euro News

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Questions and Answers

Question:

What are Incoterms?

Answer:

Incoterms are the official International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) rules for the interpretation of the most commonly used terms for delivery of goods in international trade. Reference to Incoterms in a sales contract defines clearly the parties' respective obligations and reduces the risk of legal complications.

The rules were first published in 1936 and were known as Incoterms 1936. They have since regularly been updated and the most current version is Incoterms 2000. Parties intending to incorporate Incoterms into their contract of sale should clearly specify which edition of Incoterms they are applying, for example Incoterms 2000.

Incoterms were grouped into four different categories in 1990 to make them easier to understand.

- Group E terms - seller only makes goods available to the buyer at seller's own premises
- Group F terms - seller delivers goods to a carrier appointed by the buyer
- Group C terms - seller has to contract for carriage, but without assuming risk for loss or damage to goods or additional cost that may occur during carriage
- Group D terms - seller bears all costs and risks needed to bring the goods to place of destination.

For example, the Incoterm 2000 FAS means 'Free Alongside Ship'. Placing FAS on a sales contract means that the buyer and the seller can expect certain things of each other: for example, the seller must give sufficient notice to the buyer that the goods have been delivered alongside a nominated vessel for transportation.

Questions and Answers

It is important to note that the terms are only legally binding if it is clear that both buyer and seller are aware of the term being included in a contract between them. Contracting parties who wish to have the possibility of having any dispute referred to ICC Arbitration must state this clearly in their contract. Use of an Incoterm in a contract does not by itself constitute an agreement to resort to ICC arbitration.

The EURES Job Tour



EURES is a partnership between the Public Employment Services of all European Union countries, plus Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland, which promotes mobility of labour, helps employers recruit from other countries and offers advice, guidance and assistance to jobseekers wishing to live and work in another European country.

2006 is the European Year of Workers' Mobility, aimed at raising awareness and increased understanding of the benefits of working abroad or in a new occupation. The South East EURES team is organising a UK jobs tour, Broaden Your Horizons. This tour will visit the Edinburgh City Job Centre, 11-13 South St Andrews Street, on 2 October 2006.

The tour aims to:

- Inform UK jobseekers about opportunities abroad
- Inform UK jobseekers about living and working conditions in other European countries
- Inform UK jobseekers about opportunities in other parts of the UK
- Raise awareness of stakeholders, partners and employers about mobility issues.

Countries represented at the event will include Ireland, the Netherlands, Cyprus, France, Germany, Spain and Portugal.

For further information access www.eures.org

The 'CrossBo' Project

Graham Wilson of the NorthEast Euro Info Centre, CrossBo Project Steering Group and Project Partner, explains what 'Crossbo' is all about.



Short for 'cross-border' this project was one of six projects approved under the auspices of the Pan European Business Cooperation Scheme. The others being:

- B2Fair
- EU Matching
- Arca Nova
- Europe Auto Parts
- Eurada

The project's key objectives were to:

1. Exploit new business opportunities with enlargement
2. Develop business co-operation between SMEs from the Candidate Countries and the European Union
3. Prepare SMEs from the European Union for Enlargement, and SMEs from the Candidate Countries for the internal market.

To achieve these aims the CrossBo partnership of some 19 organisations from 15 countries participated in a series of business matchmaking events. The final event Ind Tech 11 takes place in Stockholm this October.

SMEs from around Europe have to date taken part in a matchmaking event for the Wood sector in Warnemünde, Germany, Ind Tech Interprise for the metal sector in Stockholm, and a virtual event Reverse Auction in March 2006. The project has been operational for two years now.

The 'CrossBo' Project

Although the project is not yet concluded several hundred SMEs from all over Europe have participated in hundreds of business meetings that would not otherwise have been possible. It is estimated that some 30 per cent of companies signed some sort of contract following the Interprise events making such events a valuable part of an SME's International toolkit.

Further information on the project can be found at <http://www.euroinfo.se/CrossBo/>

Boosting Growth and Jobs

Between 2007 and 2013, some 350 000 SMEs will receive EU support to invest in all forms of innovation and growth. On 1 June 2006, the European Parliament adopted the first 'Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme' (CIP).



Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen

Image: © European Community, 2005

The new programme will support actions to help enterprises and industry to innovate. It will also boost energy efficiency and renewable energy sources, environmental technologies and a better use of information and communication technology (ICT).

The final adoption in Council will follow shortly.

Jorgo Chatzimarkis, Rapporteur for the CIP of the EP committee on Industry, Research and Energy, said: 'Bringing CIP to take-off in a first reading agreement is the sunrise for innovation in Europe. CIP includes new ideas, less administrative burden, a broader scope of innovation and meanwhile manages to include the existing and well running programme parts.'

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy, said: 'The CIP brings together a range of European actions into a single comprehensive programme. The programme has a clear objective: increasing European competitiveness and innovation. This is a direct response to the call of the Lisbon mid-term review for simpler, more visible and more targeted EU action to boost growth and jobs.'

The CIP has the following objectives:

- to **foster the competitiveness of enterprises**, in particular SMEs
- to **promote all forms of innovation** including **eco-innovation**
- to accelerate the development of a sustainable, competitive, innovative and inclusive **Information Society**
- to promote **energy efficiency** and **new and renewable energy sources** in all sectors including transport.

Boosting Growth and Jobs

Whilst **eco-innovation** will be a transversal theme of the whole programme, CIP is composed of **three specific programmes**:

1. **Start up and growth of SMEs:** the 'Entrepreneurship and Innovation Programme' with a budget of €2.17 billion including €430 million to promote eco-innovation, will facilitate SMEs' access to finance, better integrate the existing networks of business support services (EuroInfoCentres and Innovation Relay Centres) and support innovation activities (INNOVA, Pro-Inno etc). More than €1 billion will be devoted to boosting the highly successful financial instruments managed by the European Investment Fund (EIF), which co-invest in venture capital funds (covering early stage and expansion stage), and provide co-guarantees on loans.

2. **Information and communication technologies:** the 'ICT Policy Support Programme', with a budget of €730 million, will contribute to competitiveness, growth and jobs through stimulating a wider adoption and more efficient take up and better use of ICT. In particular, it will include support for pilot actions using innovative ICT-based services of public interest; for the development of digital content and for enhancing the security of, and trust and confidence in, ICT and its applications.

3. **Increased use of renewable energy and reduced energy consumption** the 'Intelligent Energy-Europe Programme' with a budget of €730 million will support energy efficiency, new and renewable energy sources, and technological solution to reduce greenhouse gas emission cause by the transport sector.

Studies have shown the high added value in EU support for loan guarantees, with each euro from the EU budget resulting in a loan volume of €72. On average, every venture capital backed company maintains or creates more than 50 jobs. Success stories such as Skype Technologies SA have drawn attention to the impact of EU support for venture capital.

Grants in July / August 2006



GRANTfinder

The grant programmes from Brussels which are available to businesses for the months of July and August are mainly in the training and employment sector. Smaller companies should look at the Leonardo da Vinci programme to see what is available. There are currently four calls for proposals asking for applications for funding with the following deadlines:

1. Conferences and seminars to disseminate the results of projects (deadline 31 August)
2. Quality Assurance Projects (deadline 16 August)
3. Credit schemes for vocational education (deadline 31 August)
4. European Qualification Frameworks (deadline 18 August)

Each offers a contribution of 75 per cent of the project's cost with an indicative project size of about €100,000 with the exception of Quality Assurance Projects which have a €500,000 budget.

Another aspect of funding has come through the Commission's Transport programme with an opportunity to get into a €250,000 project in the field of road safety and transport logistics.

These are a few of the existing grant opportunities but there are some big ones in the pipeline such as JEREMIE. This will enable the EU Member States and regions to use part of their Structural Funds to obtain a set of financial instruments that are specifically designed to support micro and small and medium enterprises. It is an important financial initiative developed by the European Investment Bank and may change the shape of grants for small companies in the future.

Another programme that will be announced shortly is a call under the eContent programme to make digital information available to the European Digital Library.

Grants in July / August 2006

The big funding programme which is coming on-stream is the FP7 programme for funding for research and development but you will have to wait until 2007 before you know how the billions of euro will be distributed.

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.

Please contact your local Euro Info Centre for more information on these programmes. A one-page summary of the programmes generated from Grantfinder will be sent to you free of charge.

You haven't missed the boat - for the London Games

Mette Lorentzen, Euro Info Centre, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry, explains how you can get involved in the run-up to and delivery of the London Games - it's not too late.



The preparation, delivery and legacy of the London Games present fantastic opportunities for all businesses, small or large, in London and across the UK to promote their products and services, find new business partners, compete for new contracts and break into new markets. Most if not all sectors are likely to benefit from the Games, either as direct contract holders or as sub-contractors, or from the 'spill-over' from the Games.

All contracts issued by the Olympic Delivery Authority (ODA) and the London Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (LOCOG) that have a value that exceeds the EU thresholds for public sector contracts must be published in the Official Journal of the EU (also known as 'OJEU' or 'OJEC'). This is available online on <http://ted.europa.eu/>. The contracts will also be advertised on www.london2012.com and in relevant trade magazines.

The EU thresholds are:

- Services and supplies: £93,738
- Works: £3,611,319.

Infrastructure, transport and construction contracts will be issued and let by the ODA and contracts for services to deliver and stage the London Games will be issued and let by LOCOG. The ODA is expected to start procuring major construction contracts from 2007 and LOCOG is expected to start procuring services to run the Games and install temporary facilities from 2009, so there is still time to ensure that you are ready when they start coming out.

You haven't missed the boat - for the London Games

Contracts already awarded

A small number of contracts have already been awarded. J Murphy and Sons Ltd will be constructing 12 kilometres of tunnels to replace the overhead power lines that cross the Lea Valley and the EDAW Consortium working with Arup and Atkins will be responsible for the design of the Olympic Park. In June the ODA announced that Berwin Leighton Paisner, Clifford Chance, DLA Piper Rudnick Gray Cary, Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer and Pinsent Masons will make up its Legal Panel. The Panel will advise the ODA in areas such as procurement, contract negotiation, planning, infrastructure, transport, utilities and human resources.

The shortlist for the Delivery Partner responsible for managing the programme to build the Olympic Park was announced in May and the final appointment is expected in the summer. The four short-listed companies/consortia are:

- Bechtel
- CLM (CH2M Hill International, Laing O'Rourke, Mace)
- G3 (AMEC, Balfour Beatty, Jacobs)
- Legacy (Bovis Lend Lease, Capita Symonds, Kellogg Brown & Root).

Procurement principles

Draft Procurement Principles for the ODA have been drawn up and the final version is expected to be published later this year. The objectives of the Procurement Principles are to ensure that:

- Sustainability lies at the heart of the delivery of the London Games
- Facilities meet the highest standards of design quality and are of lasting use
- Local people are given every opportunity to benefit from new jobs and training opportunities before and after the London Games

You haven't missed the boat - for the London Games

- The London Games are the most environmentally friendly ever
- The London Games bring lasting economic, social and environmental benefits to London through regeneration and the creation of a lasting legacy.

In addition, all contractors must also be able to provide clear equality and diversity policies.

It is important for any business interested in becoming involved with the opportunities the London Games will offer to keep the above procurement principles in mind when bidding directly for contracts with the ODA or when seeking opportunities within these contracts' supply chains.

Opportunities for SMEs

As most of the contracts that will be issued by the ODA and LOCOG will be worth millions of pounds, the main opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses are likely to be as sub-contractors to the main suppliers or somewhere in the supply chains that will surround these contracts. So far the ODA has also published the names of successful companies in the news section on www.london2012.com.

If you do not wish to or are not in a position to bid directly for tenders issued by the ODA or LOCOG, contract award notices of companies who have won these contracts must be published in the Official Journal of the EU 60 days after the award of the contract. These notices normally contain the contact details of the successful company and the value of the contract. Certain information can be withheld for commercial reasons. So far the ODA has also published the names of successful companies in the news section on www.london2012.com.

Basically, bidding for a London Games contract will be no different from bidding for any other public sector contract apart

You haven't missed the boat - for the London Games

from remembering to keep the above outlined Procurement Principles in mind when writing your bid.

Useful websites to keep you up-to-date

www.london2012.org/en/gettinginvolved/Business/

www.lda.gov.uk/server/show/nav.001002001001

www.londonbusinessopportunities.co.uk/

www.lda.gov.uk/upload/pdf/LDA_Business_Update_Nov05.pdf

Thinking of Relocating to Limousin?

More than 10,000 UK nationals have moved, either permanently or part time, to the Limousin since low-cost flights to Limoges Airport began operating six years ago. There are now about 40 flights a week from Limoges to various UK destinations and since the A20 motorway was completed less than a decade ago, the coast is now a five- to seven-hour drive away.



Consequently, this once slightly outmoded rural backwater in the centre of France has now become one of the prime destinations for UK citizens with holiday or relocation projects. Once abandoned villages are now full of houses being renovated (by Brits, but also by French owners who have realised that their forgotten family property is actually worth maintaining!). UK registered cars are parked in almost every village; you can even buy Marmite at local supermarkets!

These arrivals have had a significant impact on the local economy: the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry reckons that the new arrivals contributed around €180 million to the local economy in 2005. So obviously, locals as well as the authorities have done a fair amount to make it easier for their new neighbours to integrate. Not all, however, is quite as rosy as seems.

The sheer number of new inhabitants is beginning to strain relations in some places. Soaring property prices make it harder for young locals to enter the property market, the inability of some 'relocaters' to learn French causes impatience and disappointment, and blatant scrounging off the French social security system are just a few of the complaints.

In parallel to this is the fact that we are now beginning to encounter the first failures. Failures that often have sad consequences: schooling problems for the children, split marriages, selling up the dream house and going back to the UK. What makes this worse is that a number of these cases could

Thinking of Relocating to Limousin?

have been avoided if the initial project had been given a bit more thought or if the 'relocaters' had prepared their move by finding out a bit more about life where they were planning to move to!

Anticipating these problems and indicating solutions or alternatives is precisely what the partners who set up 'Right from the start' offer potential 'relocaters'!

Patrice Martin, who is French, moved to the Limousin in 1988 after living in a number of French regions. As a marketing consultant he has worked with hundreds of entrepreneurs, helping them develop or launch new projects. He also teaches marketing at the University of Limoges. Martin Forst is British and has lived outside the UK for most of his life. Since he moved to the Limousin in 1990 he has managed the European and international department of a local business support organisation. In 2001 he was elected to the City Council of Limoges. Together, they offer a good combination of professional expertise and personal experience to guide future residents, entrepreneurs or long-term visitors to the Limousin.

Their seminars 'Right from the start' aim to give the keys to setting up a successful project while spending a pleasant time in the company of fellow 'relocaters', Patrice and Martin as well as a selection of their contacts.

The seminars take place in a carefully selected hotel - full of character but up to modern standards - in a small village not too far from Limoges, the A20 and the airport.

Over three days, 'Right from the start' proposes to cover the questions people ask themselves, or should ask themselves, before launching a new life project in a foreign country:

- Day one looks at different aspects of setting up in the Limousin: social security, health care, schooling, French

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administrative procedures - basically all the do's and don'ts you need to know to set up a home there and make it work for your family!

- Day two examines the different employment options in the Limousin. What are the opportunities and requirements for vocational training, paid employment, setting up ones own business and what sort of grants or support procedures are available.
- Day three deals with the particularities of French property law and practice as well as looking at some of the types of property available in the region.

Each of these days is divided between in-house information sessions in the morning and related visits and interviews in the afternoon.

A more detailed programme is available on www.relocate-limousin.com.

Here, however, are just a few of the questions 'Right from the start' proposes to answer:

- Are you too thinking of relocating to France? Are you wondering how to go about it? Are you still wondering whether just to buy a holiday home, transfer your business or even set up a new business and start a new life?
- How do I get there? Which towns can I fly to directly from Limoges? Who lives in the area? Which are the main towns? How does the Limousin compare with other European, or British regions? How are settlers from outside perceived? How far are my friends in the Dordogne? Will I be able to take part in local activities? How will my children fit in to the local school?

Thinking of Relocating to Limousin?

- What shape is the local economy in? What do people here do for a living? Which are the areas in which I could set up my own business? How would I set about it? Are there any public grants or loans I would be entitled to? Is French red tape really as bad as it is made out to be? What interesting local products are there to buy and export?

The Limousin is potentially a great place in which to start a new project but like all other places in the world, it has its own particularities and, often unwritten, rules. Planning, a bit of common sense and a basic knowledge of local conditions, attitudes and organisation are therefore preconditions for a successful project.

Enlargement Update



EU talks with Turkey and Croatia move forward

Following the start of the accession negotiations between the EU and Croatia as well as between the EU and Turkey in October 2005, the first of the 35 chapters of the negotiations on science and research has been opened and provisionally closed for both countries.

Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn commented on this event, calling it a 'major step forward' while urging Turkey to fulfil the commitments it took last July and to implement a Protocol, extending the Association Agreement between the European Union and Turkey to all new EU Member States, including Cyprus. Failing that could affect the progress in its membership talks, he added.

The speed of accession talks with both countries will be determined by their ability to fulfil the accession criteria. As far as Turkey is concerned this will be a lengthy and sometimes difficult process that may last at least a decade.

An EU progress report on Turkey and Croatia's progress in meeting the accession criteria is due in October or November 2006.

Slovenia to adopt the euro in 2007

Slovenia will become the 13th EU Member State to adopt the euro as of 1 January 2007, following approval of a Commission proposal by EU heads of states and governments at the margin of the European Council on 16 June.

'It is an important symbol because for the very first time, a new Member State will be joining the euro zone,' Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel said.

Economic and Financial Affairs Ministers gathered in June to examine Lithuania and Slovenia's convergence reports and to determine when they will be ready to join the euro area.

Enlargement Update

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 stars are set against a light blue background that also features a large, faint Euro symbol.

Following the release of the reports on 16 May, the Commission proposed that Slovenia adopt the euro on 1 January 2007, since it has achieved a high degree of sustainable economic convergence with the other Member States and fulfils all other conditions.

As for Lithuania, the Commission concluded that it is not yet ready to join the euro area, since its inflation rate is above the reference value and is likely to remain so in the months ahead.

Bulgaria and Romania receive a conditional yes

Concluding weeks of suspense regarding the accession dates for the two Balkan states, the Commission announced on 16 May that EU entry for both countries was feasible in January 2007, provided that they address a number of outstanding reform-related issues. Meanwhile, a postponement of accession until 2008 also remains an option.

According to Commission President Barroso and Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn, who spoke before the European Parliament in Strasbourg on 16 May, the Commission will review the two candidate states' progress no later than in early October 2006. On that basis, the Commission will then consider whether the originally scheduled January 2007 accession date can be maintained. In the event of accession in 2007, the October report will also specify any areas where safeguards or other remedial measures may be needed upon accession.

EU Legislation Alert

For any company doing business in Europe, one of the most challenging tasks is to keep abreast of new EU legislation, policy and other developments. Whether the subject relates to the environment, employment, health and safety or general trading issues most companies simply do not have the time to monitor new legislation.



Through a tailored EU Legislation Alert service the European Information Centre will send companies details of any new legislation on their selected topics by email. The EIC will provide a list of topics, and companies can choose those that are most relevant.

The cost for this service is £80.00 + VAT per annum to Birmingham Chamber and MWTF members, and £100.00 + VAT to non-members.

Contact the EIC on 0121 455 0268 or [email eic@birmingham-chamber.org.uk](mailto:eic@birmingham-chamber.org.uk) to request an application form.

Consultations

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



New EU consultation on regulating hydrogen powered motor vehicles

The European Commission launched in early July a stakeholder consultation in the field of the automotive industry. This consultation concerns a preliminary draft proposal for a regulation on hydrogen powered motor vehicles. This consultation seeks to gather the views of all interested parties and to receive feedback prior to the finalisation of the proposal.

Hydrogen is seen as a clean energy cleaner as it does not create carbon emissions.

Stakeholders are invited to provide comments on the issues covered by the proposal. In particular, they should comment on whether the preliminary draft proposal would impose any undue burden on manufacturers or suppliers compared to the benefit in terms of safe operation of vehicles.

The deadline for submissions is 15 September 2006.

To find out more about this consultation, please visit:

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/automotive/pagesbackground/hydrogen/consultation/call.htm>

Consultations coming up

Deadline: 3 August 2006

Implementing the new Electromagnetic Compatibility Directive in the UK

Deadline: 9 August 2006

Revision of the community legislation on the access to the road

Consultations

transport market and on the admission to the occupation of road transport operator

Deadline: 11 August 2006

Dispute Resolution Procedures - Employment Act 2002

Deadline: 21 August 2006

Reducing CO2 emissions from light-duty vehicles

Deadline: 31 August 2006

European Transparency Initiative

Deadline: 17 September 2006

Radio Frequency Identification Technology (RFID)

Deadline: 4 October 2006

Representative Actions in Consumer Protection Legislation

Deadline: 22 September 2006

Increasing the holiday entitlement - an initial consultation

Deadline: October 2006

Plans to boost competition among telecoms operators and build a single market for services that use radio spectrum

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Finland's EU Presidency: July-December 2006

Finland's six-month EU Presidency will begin on 1 July 2006, and Finland will replace Austria as head of the European Union.

Finland believes that public confidence in the European Union can be improved through concrete achievements in areas where the EU can clearly be more effective than the Member States acting separately. During its Presidency Finland will concentrate on the challenges of globalisation, improving competitiveness, an ageing population, climate change and security.

In the Finnish Prime Minister's speech addressed to Parliament on 21 June 2006, Matti Vanhanen stated that Finland's first priority will be the future of the European Union: that is to say the Constitutional Treaty as well as the enlargement discussion in general.

The second crucial area during Finland's Presidency is the 'competitiveness of the Union and its Member States as well as their performance in global competition. For Finland, this is a national as well as a Presidency mission'. In particular, Finland will promote:

- Strengthening the internal market (especially in relation to services and energy). The remaining obstacles in the internal market must be removed to see its full benefit on the economy.
- Innovation: measures such as standards, public procurement, steps to make markets function more effectively, greater mobility of research resources and closer cooperation between universities and business have to be taken to encourage innovation. The most important decision to be taken during Finland's Presidency in the field of research and innovation policy will be the decision on the EU's Seven

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Research Framework Programme (2007-13). Finland's objective is to bring the negotiations on all aspects of the Framework Programme to a successful conclusion so that the Programme can start at the beginning of 2007.

- Increases in labour productivity (e.g. by improving the quality of working life); and development of an EU energy policy.

Finally, Finland will work on better regulation, i.e. the quality of legislation. It will cooperate closely with the Commission and the goal is for legislation to take into account its impact on relevant stakeholders. The Commission will also look into whether legislation is needed in the first place.

The presidency site is available at <http://www.eu2006.fi>

Survey reveals EU association's taste for communications

Trade associations now all use internet sites as prevailing communication tools. But phone calls and meetings remain essential to keeping up personal contacts, as EurActiv's 2006 survey of European federations shows.

Websites (94.5 per cent) and e-mails (99.5 per cent) have now become widespread communication channels for trade associations. Keeping a website properly updated would now appear to be even more crucial than producing press releases with only 65 per cent rating the latter as 'important' or 'very important'. By comparison, an updated website is considered 'important' or 'very important' for 82 per cent of respondents.

But the human factor continues to be the determinant with 91 per cent saying meetings are 'important' or 'very important' to them. Seminars and conferences where personal contacts are made are also popular - 81 per cent rating them highly - just ahead of phone calls (79 per cent).

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The survey was presented earlier this year at the 2006 EuroConference in Brussels. It was prepared in collaboration with Kellen Europe, an association management firm. For further information on the survey please refer to www.euractiv.com.

EU and UK in joint drive to cut red tape for SMEs

The European Commission and the UK government launched, on 8 June, a joint initiative to examine the impact of EU legislation on small businesses in a bid to cut red tape. Business intermediaries and companies in key sectors such as manufacturing, retailing, and the food industry took part in a round table and workshop, in collaboration with the Department of Trade and Industry's Small Business Service (SBS), to mark the 'SME Day'.

The event will help identify areas where the UK business environment for small firms can be improved and the results will be used to prioritise action by the UK government and the Commission. The EC's head of representation in the UK, Reijo Kemppinen, says that small businesses have been getting a raw deal for too long. 'Small firms are the best innovators and the best hope for jobs and growth. In fact, 99 per cent of all UK businesses employ fewer than 50 people. It is about time that we started to 'think small' and cut them some slack when it comes to unnecessary regulations', he added.

Action plan to reduce accidents in the EU

The European Commission, on 23 June 2006, adopted a Communication and Action Plan with the aim of reducing the burden of accidents and injuries, which are the fourth major cause of death in the EU, killing some 235,000 EU citizens each year. For further information go to <http://europa.eu/rapid>

Commission says economy is looking up

Economic growth in the euro area is finally returning to levels similar to those prior to 11 September 2001; but further developing the services market and investing in information

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technologies will be key to bolstering this growth.

Economic growth edged up to 1.9 per cent, in the first quarter of 2006 - its second highest level in the last five years, according to the Commission's latest quarterly report on the Euro area, published on 30 June 2006. Business and consumer confidence have also jumped to their highest levels since the beginning of 2001, strengthening domestic demand and setting the scene for increased investment expenditure in the second half of 2006.

The report posits that the economy's current momentum should be sufficient to withstand negative pressures resulting from high oil prices, recent turbulences in financial markets and the appreciation of the euro.

The full text of this article is available from Euractiv (www.euractiv.com).

Events

Tourism Mission

On 17-20 September 2006, Business Gateway International Lothian will lead a Trade Mission on the tourism sector to Poprad and Bratislava in Slovakia.

For further information, contact Wavell.magor@btinternet.com or call 0131 334 0520.

Export Procedures (Beginners)

This half-day course to be held at Business Gateway in Glenrothes, looks at the main elements of exporting as well as a practical look at the procedures and where possible problems can arise. The course lasts for three hours at a cost of £30 and takes place on 20 September 2006

For further information, contact jacqui.finlay@bgfife.co.uk or call

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01592 623 139

Export Documentation - the Paper Trail

Aberdeen and Grampian Chamber of Commerce will hold a one-day training course on export documentation, on 26 October 2006.

For further information on this course, please contact Brenda Hay on 01224 343900, or alternatively email brenda.hay@agcc.co.uk

Sustainable Energy Europe 2005-2008

The EU is currently involved in a major three-year project entitled 'Sustainable Energy Europe' This project will contribute to the achievement of EU energy policy goals and targets in the fields of renewable energy sources, energy efficiency, clean transport and alternative fuels.

The development of renewable energy - particularly energy from wind, water, solar power and biomass - is a central aim of the European Commission's energy policy. There are several reasons for this.

Renewable energy has an important role to play in reducing carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions - a major Community objective. Increasing the share of renewable energy in the energy balance enhances sustainability. It also helps to improve the security of energy supplies by reducing the Community's growing dependence on imported energy sources. Renewable energy sources are expected to be economically competitive with conventional energy sources in the medium to long term.

If you would like any further information on how your business can become involved with Sustainable Energy Europe, please contact louise.fisher@scotent.co.uk. Details of a Sustainable Energy Event, giving you advice on moving into the sustainable

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energy market, will be available in August.

Useful links

New and Renewable Energies

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/res/index_en.htm

Sustainable Development: EU Strategy, www.euractiv.com

Sustainable Europe 2005-2008, European Commission, www.sustenergy.org/

Interactive Policy Making (IPM)

Many people criticize the European Union for being inaccessible, creating too much red tape and complicated legislation and policies. If these problems apply to your business the Euro Info Centre wants to hear about it.

The Interactive Policy-Making initiative is designed to improve feedback from businesses, consumers and citizens so that information can be collected for use in the EU's policy making process. The initiative will be used to evaluate existing EU policies and open consultations on new initiatives.

The Euro Info Centre is looking for businesses to tell them about problems that have arisen in their experience of EU legislation, cross-border dealings, the euro, public tenders, doing business in other countries, etc.

Details of your problems will be fed back to the Commission (company details will be kept completely confidential). The feedback may not solve the problem overnight, but it will help the Commission identify problems and try to simplify EU rules. For further information on Interactive Policy Making initiative, please contact louise.fisher@scotent.co.uk