



**October 2005**

## **Question and Answer**

**Question:** What are the requirements of the Manual Handling Directive?

**Answer:** The Manual Handling Directive is implemented in the UK by the Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992. In the directive there are no specific limits on how much a person can lift, rather, it is focused on ensuring workers are protected against the risks involved in the manual handling of heavy loads. The directive deals with the obligations of the employer and with the organisational measures that should be taken to avoid risks to workers.

For further information on how the directive is implemented in the UK, see the Health and Safety Executive's leaflet on the website [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg143.pdf). It gives guidance on the limits that should be adhered to and examples of best practice.

## **Travel and Advertising Scam**

The Coventry, Warwickshire & Staffordshire Euro Info Centre (EIC) is issuing a warning to local businesses to beware of a scam involving a Spanish company that tricks firms into buying thousands of pounds worth of advertising space in a travel guide.

Businesses are warned not to sign and return any material from the 'European City Guide'

Under the scam, businesses are sent mail shots offering them advertising space in the directory and giving them the impression that entries are free. However, the small print means that firms that sign and return an enclosed form - even if simply correcting or adding to the details provided - are committed to paying more than £1,000 for entries into the directory.

A Spanish court shut down the guide, then based in Barcelona, and fined it the equivalent of £200,000 in 2003 for its deceitful advertising. The Spanish authorities had received thousands of complaints from companies about the guide, and to date the scam has affected over 35,000 businesses in more than 30 countries.

Regrettably the company is now operating from a new address in Valencia and the EIC is aware that a new wave of mail shots has been sent out to businesses.

The EIC is urging companies who have already parted with money to come forward. Its Project Officer Lorna O'Neill said: 'We are able to report the deceitful and

misleading tactics of the European City Guide directly to the European Commission on behalf of affected companies, who can remain anonymous if they wish. We can also provide businesses with pro forma complaint letters and contact details to send to the relevant authorities. The more businesses that come forward the more pressure we can put on the European Commission to improve legislation to protect businesses in the future.'

For more information or to report a case, please contact:

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## **European E-Marketplaces**

The North East Euro Info Centre has recently become the English National Contact Point for the eMarket Services project, which assists SMEs to understand and operate in e-marketplaces. EIC manager Graham Wilson explains why the project is particularly relevant for the EIC network SME clients.

As you might expect the short answer to finding out virtually everything there is to know on e-marketplaces is to visit the eMarket Services website at [www.emarketservices.com](http://www.emarketservices.com).

This initiative is a not-for-profit project, funded by the trade promotion organisations of Australia, Holland, Iceland, Italy, New Zealand, Norway, Spain, Sweden. Staff from these organisations work together to produce the services and exchange knowledge in electronic marketplaces. In addition, colleagues at the EU Commission/DG Enterprise are providing co-funding during 2004□05.

eMarket Services is now recognised as the official European Portal for information on e-marketplaces. With a growing network of National Contact Points, the portal strives to make it possible for companies in all EU Member States to get answers to their questions in their own language.

eMarket Services is not however an electronic marketplace. You cannot sell or buy products on the portal. Instead it provides knowledge and information about e-marketplaces in different industries all over the world. The mission is to make it easier for companies to use e-marketplaces for international business. The following services are offered free of charge on the portal to help companies:

- A directory of e-marketplaces around the world: SMEs can search in the database by industry and location for e-marketplaces that might be suitable for their business.
- Case studies on companies with practical experience of using e-marketplaces.
- Industry reports on the use of e-marketplaces in a particular industry.
- Basic information and reports on e-marketplaces and different e-business issues.
- A free newsletter with the latest cases and articles.

### **What exactly is an e-marketplace?**

E-marketplaces can be described as virtual online markets where buyers, suppliers, distributors and sellers find and exchange information, conduct trade and collaborate with each other via an aggregation of information portals, trading exchanges and collaboration tools. E-marketplaces can be e-commerce only (when they offer only transaction facilities) or e-business tools (when solutions for integration with other internal processes are provided).

An e-marketplace:

- Is open to several buyers and several sellers
- Has to focus on business to business (B2B) or Business to Government (B2G)
- Is a trading platform, where the e-marketplace itself does not sell or buy goods or services traded on the platform
- Has at least one trading function

E-Marketplaces have to offer one of the following trading functions:

- Auction
- Reverse auction
- Bulletin board
- Exchange (RFQ/RFP/RFB)
- Catalogue
- Catalogue with online order
- Fixed price/time limited
- Commodity exchange

It is not an e-marketplace if:

- It only offers information, like an industry directory or community, without trading functions
- It is a website of one company, selling its own products
- It is one seller acting as distributor, selling other companies' products
- It mainly focuses on trade to or between consumers
- It is solely a provider of e-commerce solutions

The principal reasons why e-marketplaces might be useful to SMEs are what you would expect: new sales opportunities, new supply opportunities, cost reductions, efficiency, new business contacts, etc.

The number of e-marketplaces currently operating globally is in the hundreds and covers many sectors so there could be European business opportunities available for your SME.

## **Libyan relations with Europe**

Libya is coming in from the cold. Here, Peter Matthews investigates Libyas new relations with Europe.

### **Recent developments**

Libya's economy has been stagnant for years with an unemployment rate of 30% and a poor infrastructure ranging from roads to public health. Its economic saving grace has been its oil and gas reserves that make up 90% of its export earnings. Now Washington has revoked all trade sanctions including oil first imposed in 1986. This is largely due to a change in attitude of Gadaffi to making available Libyan suspects for the Lockerbee trial and more recently volunteering to give up weapons of mass destruction. The European Commission, however, is going to take a bit longer in coming round to revoking sanctions due to the rising tide of illegal immigrants. Southern European countries estimate over 10,000 illegal entrants in Europe from North Africa last year and Italy reports 800 of them in one day. Brussels has announced that it will follow the US lead on trade if Tripoli demonstrates that it is putting in place effective measures to curb illegal migration. The EU will lift sanctions when a delegation is able to visit Libya and work on plans with them to stem the tide of illegal immigrants.

European exporters welcome the possibility of expansion in trade but regret the delay, as American business will be in the Libyan market first. Most existing European exports consist of electrical and mechanical machinery, automobiles, and steel and iron fabrications. This provides 'down stream' products for the energy sector. The other priority, apart from energy imports, is agricultural trade, which is a governmental priority. The Italians are also hoping to sell hi-tech boats, helicopters and binoculars to help in the search for fugitives in competition with American products. All Libya's imported goods have been strictly controlled for some years now, due to currency shortages but restrictions are being eased.

### **The MEDA programme**

During the time of sanctions much of Libya's international trade was channelled through Malta. Now things are changing for Malta, North Africa and Libya with the help of the European Commission. The instrument for this change will be the Commission's Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (MEDA) programme that provides economic and financial support for all other North African Arab countries. Libya's move towards expected partnership in the development of the MEDA programme will contribute towards the economic growth of the region and Europe's relationship with the Arab world.

MEDA is currently celebrating its 10<sup>th</sup> birthday. It was born in Barcelona in 1994 and is now called the Barcelona Process because it is evolving as a major foreign policy initiative of the European Union so fast. Its objectives are:

- to establish a Free Trade Area in North Africa,
- to deepen economic integration in the region, and

- to bring the partnership closer to the people.

MEDA has done quite well with these tasks up to now but Libya's absence has always been a regret for Brussels. The work plan for the partnership over the next five years is being worked on by EU ministers with the intention of creating jobs, raising living standards and sharing prosperity as a central objective for the partnership.

The MEDA programme is the main funding instrument for the Member States of the Union but more particularly the 12 Arab members that include Algeria, Cyprus, Egypt, Malta, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia. Turkey is a special case and will participate in MEDA matters but also has programmes and budgets of its own as an applicant to join the European Union. Funding for MEDA projects in the regions technical programme last year amounted to 54.7 million euros.

This money will support business projects, education and aspects of infrastructure such as roads and railways, telecommunications, etc. The next five-year work programme which is mentioned above has been negotiated in Rabat by EU ministers and the Arab partners. They welcomed the progress made in improvement in business development, particularly for small business, but did however note that further progress needed to be made in the field of the environment. They also felt that the elimination of unnecessary regulation and administration for businesses would help in the liberalisation of trade and business.

The other matter highlighted by ministers was the low level of Foreign Direct Investment, or FDI as the economists call it, being attracted by the Arab Member States of the partnership. It was recommended that laws and regulations covering FDI and investments generally should be reviewed to simplify opportunities for foreign investors.

### **Official observer**

MEDA objectives and funding will have a great interest for Libya as she has been appointed as official observer at its meetings and discussions. Tripoli is becoming better informed on what Brussels is thinking with regard to policy for the North African region as her representatives attend meetings and discussions. The implication is that Libya is being groomed to be a member in the EUROMED partnership and the Commission's attitude to Libya becomes more receptive. A straw in the wind of Europe's softening attitude is an announcement by European Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner of grants to Libya of a million euros to help with the treatment of HIV/Aids in Benghazi. Other programmes helping to ease the illegal immigration problem are discussions in cooperation with Malta and the Southern European countries.

Libya's real solution to her economic problems however is to help improve trading links and encourage investment in its economy with Europe's help. This will encourage her citizens to stay at home and build their own country's economy in common with the rest of the region. For this reason it is expected that Libya will become a partner in MEDA shortly.

### **What can be expected?**

So what can Libya expect from the EU's coffers? The existing shares of the MEDA budget are shown in the attached table. Each country has a certain amount of money allocated to it to finance a carefully worked out national plan. This plan will contain actions for projects in health care, electronic commerce, tourism and culture, business

development, education and other matters. What is not yet clear is how much money Libya will get as its share of the MEDA budget but there is a tradition for newcomers to any of the EU programmes to get a generous slice of the budget. An Extraordinary Meeting of Heads of States is planned to take place in Barcelona at the end of November and big decisions are expected there.

### **MEDA funding allocated to signatories**

Country / Euros (m)

**Algeria / 55**

Egypt / 16

**Jordan / 56**

Lebanon / 19

**Morocco / 156**

Syria / 55

**Tunisia / 24**

West Bank and Gaza / 73

**Inter-regional co-operation / 125**

Libya / ?

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 into Eastern Europe, Northern and Sub Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

### **Trading problems report**

The Euro Info Centres in London and the East of England recently published a report on the problems experienced by their business clients when trading with or in other EU Member States. The report presents the company cases that the EICs solved and relayed back to the European Commission during 2004 in order to inform the Institutions of the problems still arising in the Internal Market, whether these were linked to EU legislation or barriers to trade created by competitors. The findings are also compared with the cases reported in 2003, highlighting the differences.

The main points from the report are as follows:

- The number of cases reported by businesses in the region dropped by 21% in 2004 compared to 2003.
- 72% of cases were reported by small and medium sized companies (less than 250 employees). Almost 50% of reported cases come from companies with 1-9 employees or from self-employed people.
- The main country with which UK businesses reported having problems trading with/in is France.
- All the countries in which the number of cases decreased between 2003 and 2004 are old Member States, while all the increases are from either new Member States which joined the EU in May 2004 or are current candidates to EU membership.
- The source of the problem identified by the EICs is that companies are not able to have access to information to solve their problems directly (over 70% of all reported cases).

- Over 40% of the reported cases are about buying and selling products. There are also 68% more problems relating to the provision of services in European countries compared to 2003.
- The manufacturing (machinery and equipment sector) and the services sectors still represent the main sectors where problems were occurring in 2004.

You can request a copy of the report by contacting London or St Albans at [info@hertseic.co.uk](mailto:info@hertseic.co.uk) or [europe@londonchamber.co.uk](mailto:europe@londonchamber.co.uk)

## **2006 – The European year of workers' mobility**

The Commission has named 2006 the 'European Year for workers' mobility'. This year is aimed at raising awareness and increasing the understanding of the benefits of both working abroad and in a new occupation.

### **The importance of workers' mobility**

Mobility has been stressed as a factor contributing to the strengthening of the infrastructure of labour markets in Europe and is one of the necessary vectors for the establishment of a genuine European labour Market. Thus the European Commission has made major efforts to enhance a higher mobility of workers, including:

- The launch in 2002 of an action plan on skills and mobility (due to expire at the end of 2005)
- The setting up of EURES (European Employment services), a vast network of 650 advisers entrusted with the task of providing targeted information and personally tailored assistance to workers and their families. This network, consulted by more than 500 000 people every month, enables any worker to gain direct access to several thousand job offers. (As from 2005, all citizens will be able to access through EURES all job offers published by the public employment services, ie between 1 and 1.5 million job offers at any given moment.)
- The European health insurance card which was launched in June 2004 in 13 Member States and is expected to be distributed in the other Member States and EFTA by the end of 2005.

### **Few work abroad**

However, current facts and figures show clearly that very few Europeans work abroad:

- The percentage of Europeans residing in an EU country other than their country of origin has consistently remained around 1.5% for the last 30 years.
- In nine EU countries, 40% of workers have remained in the same job for over 10 years.

According to the Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, Vladimir `pidla 'There are still legal, administrative, and linguistic obstacles to worker mobility, coupled with a lack of knowledge about available information and assistance, and many workers remain unconvinced about the

advantages of working in another country and/or sector. This is what we have to address.'

### **Objectives of the European year**

Given the legislative initiatives foreseen for the end of the year 2005 or early 2006 the Commission has decided to make 2006 the European Year for Workers' Mobility with a budget of 6 million euros. Organised in the form of a Commission pilot project, this year will offer the target groups a vast exchange and discussion platform on the issues surrounding mobility in the context of the Lisbon strategy.

The European Year has three objectives:

- To raise awareness among all players of workers' rights in the area of freedom of movements for persons.
- To develop the exchange of good practices on mobility.
- To expand the knowledge base (studies and surveys) on mobility flows in Europe.

To this end a major programme of activities has been planned.

### **The role of EICs**

The role of EICs in the campaign could consist in:

- Taking part in the calls for proposals (for projects related to the organisation of events and/or for pilot projects).
- Helping to identify a good practice for the '2006 European Year of Workers' Mobility Award'.
- Contributing to the identification of mobile workers for the proposed book and CD-ROM.
- Participating in job fairs to be organised in September 2006.
- Promotion of the European Year and its objectives through mailings and newsletters.

### **More information**

For more information on the European Year 2006, see: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/news/2005/jun/eymob\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/news/2005/jun/eymob_en.html)

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The action plan for skills and mobility is available at: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/skills\\_mobility/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/skills_mobility/index_en.htm)

### **Consultations**

Stakeholder consultation on the Directive on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment.

Companies can now respond to a consultation covering a possible amendment to the annex of Directive 2002/95 (the 'RoHS' Directive).

## **Background**

According to Article 4 (1) of Directive 2002/95 new electrical and electronic equipment put on the marketplace does not contain lead, mercury, cadmium, hexavalent chromium, PBB or PBDE. The annex to the Directive lists a limited number of applications of lead, mercury, cadmium and hexavalent chromium, which are exempted from the requirements of Article 4 (1).

## **The stakeholder consultation**

Directive 2002/95 states that the Commission must consult the relevant stakeholders before making amendments to the annex. The Commission services will provide an account of the information received, and the Technical Adaptation Committee of the Directive 2002/95 will be provided with the results of the consultation. However this action is only one part of the decision-making process.

Companies can take part in this stakeholder consultation by sending their comments by 28 October 2005 at the latest by email to: [ENV-RoHS@cec.eu.int](mailto:ENV-RoHS@cec.eu.int) or by post to:

### **European Commission**

DG Environment, Unit G4 - Consultation Directive 2002/95  
B-1049, Brussels, Belgium.

For more information on this stakeholder consultation please refer to:  
[http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/rohs\\_3\\_consult.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/environment/waste/rohs_3_consult.htm)

## **State aid: Commission launches public consultation on measures to improve state aid for innovation**

The European Commission is launching consultations on improvements to EU state aid rules as regards projects encouraging innovation, inviting comments from stakeholders before adopting final measures. The suggested improvements include rules for aid that funds innovation, criteria to help public authorities to target aid more effectively, clarifying the rules to increase legal certainty and simplification of the regulatory framework.

The proposals for innovation aid cover six broad areas:

- innovative start-ups;
- risk capital;
- the integration of innovation into existing rules on state aid for research and development (R&D);
- innovation intermediaries;
- training and mobility between university research personnel and SMEs; and
- poles of excellence for projects of common European interest.

Competition Commissioner Neelie Kroes said: 'Even though effective competition is the best tool to strengthen innovation and competitiveness in Europe, state aid can also play a very useful supporting role. In this consultation document, the Commission sets out for the first time its concrete ideas on ways to support innovation

via state aid. It is also the first concrete implementation of the refined economic approach outlined in the State Aid Action Plan.'

With the re-launch of the Lisbon Strategy in February 2005, the Barroso Commission has emphasised the need for Member States to create more and better jobs in a more dynamic, innovative and attractive Europe. This is essential to strengthen the European economy while preserving and nurturing the European social and environmental model. In this context, innovation is crucial, and although the situation varies across Member States and across sectors; the EU as a whole does not currently generate sufficient innovation to create enough growth and employment.

The Communication on State Aid for Innovation invites comments on a series of concrete measures for which state aid could be authorised by the Commission through ex-ante rules and criteria. On the basis of the consultation, new provisions will be integrated into the existing state aid rules. These provisions will not only give Member States who apply them more speedy approval of state aid for innovation but also help them target public money more effectively.

The Commission makes clear in the consultation that state aid is not the response to all Europe's competitiveness or innovation problems. For business to embark on a more innovative path it requires, first and foremost, effective competition. Competition creates natural incentives for companies to come up with new ideas and new products; it makes them adapt to change; and sanctions those that stay put or lag behind. Ensuring competition as a driver of innovation is therefore at least as essential as government support.

In line with the refined economic approach laid down in the June 2005 State Aid Action Plan, the Communication on State Aid for Innovation sets out a clear methodology for the elaboration of state aid measures for innovation activities.

The principles are that state aid can be authorised when:

1. the aid instrument targets a well-defined market failure
2. state aid is the most appropriate policy instrument (which is not always the case sometimes, structural policies or regulatory action may be more appropriate)
3. the aid has an incentive effect on innovation and is proportionate to the defined objective, and
4. distortions of competition are limited.

In the Communication, the Commission identifies a series of market failures that may hamper optimal levels of innovation and looks at how state aid can contribute to changing the incentives to innovate.

On that basis, the Communication proposes to authorise aid for two types of innovation-related activities;

- a) activities that support risk-taking and experimentation to help bridge the gap between research and the market, and
- b) activities which improve the general business environment.

The Communication then presents six concrete measures to support innovation via state aid:

1. support for the creation and growth of innovative start-ups (through tax exemptions and subsidies)
2. additional flexibility for state aid to risk capital

3. expanding the scope of current state aid rules for Research and Development and authorising state aid for SMEs engaged in innovation activities (such as commercially-usable prototypes, technological design or feasibility studies)
4. subsidies for SMEs to buy services from innovation intermediaries
5. subsidies for SMEs to recruit highly qualified researchers and engineers and to benefit from exchange of personnel with universities and large companies
6. supporting the development of poles of excellence through collaboration, clustering, and projects of common European interest.

The full text of the Communication is available on:

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/state\\_aid/others/action\\_plan/](http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/state_aid/others/action_plan/)

Comments should be sent with the reference 'Consultation State aid for Innovation' by email to [STATEAIDGREFFE@CEC.EU.INT](mailto:STATEAIDGREFFE@CEC.EU.INT)

or by post to: DG Competition, State Aid Greffe, SPA 3, office 6/5, B-1049 Brussels, Belgium. The deadline is yet to be announced.

### **Possible European Institute of Technology (EIT)**

The Commission launched a public consultation on raising the issue of a possible European Institute of Technology (EIT) which would aim at maximising the EU knowledge potential. This consultation will close on 15 November 2005.

The EIT should encourage the development of a 'knowledge ecosystem' linking research, innovation and the dissemination of knowledge. If the concept is favourably received, it could begin operation in the academic year 2009-10.

The discussion paper, on-line questionnaire and all other useful information are available from the following DG Education and Culture Web page

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/eit/index\\_en.html](http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/eit/index_en.html)

## **Information Round-up**

### **350 million Euros to major trans-European transport network projects**

The Commission has allocated 356 million euros (£243 million) for studies and construction work for the trans-European transport network (TEN-T) projects, with the priority projects set to receive almost 85% of this amount. More than 70% has been allocated to railway projects and 20% to intelligent and innovative transport systems, such as railway interoperability systems.

A second group of projects worth almost a further 150 million euros (£102.4 million) will receive funding in the next few weeks. In addition, further decisions will be taken in the autumn on the financing of TEN projects in the ten new Member States and other TEN-T projects - totalling almost 100 million euros (£682,750) - in the framework of the call for proposals on the TEN-T annual budget.

### **New website**

Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry has recently launched a new revamped website on [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/index_en.htm)

On DG Enterprise and Industry's website you can:

- find information relating to a number of industry sectors, eg textile and mechanical instruments. Go to 'Industry Index' and click on your industry sector to find information on the sector and the legislation covering it
- access current (and closed) consultations on issues that are relevant to business - the link 'Have Your Say' takes you to these consultations
- locate tenders issued by DG Enterprise and Industry
- find information on DG Enterprise and Industry grants
- order free publications produced by DG Enterprise and Industry on subjects such as innovation, SME financing and entrepreneurship
- sign up to the DG's free e-mail alert service via 'Enterprise Europe Online'
- access information on the DG's networks, the Euro Info Centre network, the Innovation Relay Centre network and the European BIC Network

### **WEEE and ROHS - a challenge for UK industry**

**23rd November 2005**

**8.00 - 11.00am**

#### **Birmingham Chamber of Commerce**

Birmingham European Information Centre is organising an event on the forthcoming Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and Restriction of Hazardous Substances (RoHS) Regulations. These Regulations will place legal requirements on producers and other parties to recover and recycle electrical and electronic equipment at the end of its life and will restrict the use of certain materials in the manufacture of new products. The event will outline the requirements of the legislation, consider where RoHS restricted materials may currently be found and assess the issues related to the move to lead-free electronics assembly. It is expected that the UK Regulations will have been published by November 2005.

The speakers will be Leigh Holloway and Mark Shayler from Eco3 Ltd. Eco3 Ltd is a specialist eco design and producer consultancy offering solutions for compliance with the packaging regulations, ELV, WEEE and RoHS.

To book on to the event please contact the Events Department at Birmingham Chamber of Commerce, e-mail: [events@birminghamchamber.org.uk](mailto:events@birminghamchamber.org.uk) or telephone: 0121 607 1772. Alternatively you can book online at [www.birmingham-chamber.com/events.asp](http://www.birmingham-chamber.com/events.asp)

The cost is £50.00 + VAT (£58.75) to members of Birmingham Chamber of Commerce or £60.00 + VAT (£70.50) to non-members.

#### **MRAs and CABs**

Does your company wish to export to Australia, Canada, the United States, Japan, New Zealand or Switzerland? Then you should know about Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) and Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs).

A new set of web pages covering activities under MRAs is now on-line to facilitate international trade via mutual acceptance of test reports, certificates and marks of conformity for the following manufactured products (covered by the 'new approach directives'):

- Machinery
- Personal protective equipment
- Toys

- Medical devices
- Gas appliances and boilers (hot water boilers)
- Pressure vessels
- Equipment and protective systems intended for use in potentially explosive atmospheres
- Electrical equipment
- Measuring instruments and pre-packages
- Motor vehicles
- Agricultural and forestry tractors
- Good Laboratory Practice (GLP)
- Medicinal products, Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP), inspection batch and certification.

Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) have the objective of promoting trade in goods between the European Union and third countries by facilitating market access. They are bilateral agreements and aim to benefit industry by providing easier access to conformity assessment procedures.

MRAs lay down the conditions under which the EU and the third country concerned will accept test reports, certificates and marks of conformity issued by the conformity assessment bodies (CABs) of the other party to the agreement, in conformity with the legislation of the other party.

MRAs include the finalisation of relevant lists of designated laboratories, inspection bodies and conformity assessment bodies in both the EU and the third country. Links to existing lists are provided on the website.

Additionally the European Commission has also developed an online information system (NANDO-IS) which will enable you to find the European notified bodies as well as third country bodies designated under these formal agreements responsible for carrying out the conformity assessment procedures referred to in the applicable New Approach directives (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/nando-is/home/index.cfm>)

For further information, visit the website of the DG Enterprise of the European Commission: [http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/international/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/international/index_en.htm)</strong>

## **Bidding Effectively with the EU**

**15<sup>th</sup> February 2006**

### **Birmingham Chamber of Commerce & Industry**

Companies are being offered a unique opportunity to learn more about bidding effectively for the European Union's annual 10 billion euros aid programme.

This one-day workshop presented by Schuman Associates will promote successful bidding/tendering techniques for aid-funded contracts. The workshop will offer an excellent insight into boosting participating companies' chances of winning aid-funded business, focusing on subjects including tender preparation techniques and essential marketing activities.

The workshop will be of particular use to those responsible for developing their company's international export strategy. The event will provide detailed practical advice and will be of great help to companies in addressing a difficult process. Delegates will also discover the worldwide opportunities available through EU external aid funding, which in total are worth some 10 billion euros annually.

The workshop is designed to demystify the European Union external aid programmes and to offer practical advice and assistance on how to win business through making well prepared bids.

Topics will include:

- Up-to-date advice about current tendering procedures, with a handbook packed with information to take away for future reference
- Insiders' hints and tips including how projects are evaluated
- A practical exercise on a mock tender
- Up-to-date advice about current programmes, PHARE, TACIS, EDF etc.

The workshop will also examine the processes required to tender for projects ranging from providing infrastructure (such as highways) power plants, irrigation systems to rural development projects, to training services, tourism, capacity building (transferring professional expertise) private sector development and SME support. The participation fee for this event is £55.00 + VAT (£64.63) per delegate for members of the Midlands World Trade Forum or £65.00 + VAT (£76.38) for non-members. To register your interest for this event please contact Claire Gamage on 0121 607 1759 or email [c.gamage@birminghamchamber.org.uk](mailto:c.gamage@birminghamchamber.org.uk)

**For further information please contact the European Information Centre on 0121 455 0268 or email: [eic@birminghamchamber.org.uk](mailto:eic@birminghamchamber.org.uk)**