



Euro News

The UK Network of Euro Info Centres
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Question:

Our company would like to sell products in other EU countries. What languages should the information on the labels be in?

Answer:

Labelling requirements depend on the product in question. The basic principle is that the label on a product should as a minimum always be in at least the official language(s) of the country where the product is marketed. Article 8 of the General Product Safety Directive (2001/95/EC) sets out the basic rules on language requirements when marketing and selling a product in the EU: '... be marked with suitable, clearly worded and easily comprehensible warnings, in the official languages of the Member State in which the product is marketed'.

The full text of the General Product Safety Directive can be found at <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32001L0095:EN:NOT>.

More extensive information on the use of languages, with links to the relevant European legislation, can be found on <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/lvb/l32036.htm>.

General information on the labelling of food and non-food products can be found <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/s16600.htm>.

Question:

In December the EU suspended the GSP privileges of Belarus. What does it cover?

Answer:

An International Labour Organisation's (ILO is part of the United Nations Network) report of June last year stipulated that Belarus consistently violates labour union rights. On several occasions both the EU and the ILO have urged the country to improve this

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situation. In July 2006 the European Commission proposed that the EU should withdraw its trade preferences from Belarus. On 20 December, the Council of Ministers agreed that if Belarus did not seriously improve trade unions' rights within the next semester, its GSP privileges would be temporarily withdrawn. Belarus' trade with the EU accounted for 12.3% of its exports in 2005.

The regulation states that the 'preferential arrangement for products originating in Belarus provided for in Regulation (EC) 980/2005 are withdrawn temporarily', i.e. all Belarusian products that currently qualify for reduced import duties will be affected. The full text of the Commission's regulation can be found on http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/com/2006/com2006_0764en01.pdf.

The regulation will enter into force six months after adoption unless the situation improves considerably.

Question:

What is the maximum number of hours an employee is allowed to work over a certain period?

Answer:

The rules on working hours of employees are set down in the Working Time Directive (2003/88/EC). This directive sets minimum standards for annual leave, working hours, rest periods and arrangements for night workers in the European Union. The number of working hours is calculated over a period of 17 weeks. That means that employees can be asked to work for 48 hours for a certain number of weeks and less in other weeks as long as the average of the 17 weeks does not exceed 48 hours.

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More information can be found on <http://europa.eu/scadplus/leg/en/cha/c10418.htm> and on <http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/employment-legislation/working-time-regs/index.html>.

However, in the UK implementation of this directive, a 48 hours opt-out rule was introduced. This controversial rule implies that an adult employee can agree to work longer hours by signing an agreement with his employer. Such an agreement can be signed for a limited or an indefinite period of time. The employer cannot force employees to sign an opt-out agreement. Young workers are not allowed to work for more than eight hours a day and 40 hours a week and can therefore not sign an opt-out agreement. Workers can cancel an opt-out agreement at any time as long as they respect the notice period agreed upon.

More information on the UK opt-out article can be found on http://www.dti.gov.uk/employment/employment-legislation/employment-guidance/page28978.html#working_time_limits

SME Update

There have been several items of particular interest to SMEs that have occurred over the summer months.



Image: © European Community, 2007

EU cuts red tape at record speed: Small businesses save time and money

Public limited liability companies will no longer have to order costly expert reports in cases of mergers and divisions, unless there is a demand for such reports among shareholders. After a three-month fast track procedure, the European Parliament accepted a Commission proposal to remove unnecessary burdens on small businesses. The proposal is one of a package of ten 'fast track actions' presented by the Commission only a few months ago to cut red tape and now awaits agreement by the Member States.

The proposal potentially applies to over 600,000 public limited liability companies across Europe, and in particular to those owned by a limited number of shareholders. The current obligation was meant to inform shareholders of the draft terms of mergers or divisions but it is considered needless paperwork when shareholders have no interest in the costly reports. The proposal also ensures that if shareholders still see a need for expert reports, they will continue receiving them.

For more information visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/better_regulation/index_en.htm

European Small Claims Procedure finalised

The European Small Claims Procedure was adopted by council on 13 June and is due to enter force in January 2009. This procedure aims to simplify, speed up and reduce the costs of litigation concerning small claims and will be available as an alternative to existing national procedures. The procedure will apply in civil and commercial matters for claims €2000 or less. It simplifies claims through the introduction of standard forms and

time limits for both the parties involved in the claim and the courts. Parties will not be obliged to be represented by a lawyer or another legal professional and the provision of a financial security shall not be required.

A judgment under the European Small Claims Procedure will be recognised and enforced in another member state automatically and without any possibility of opposing its recognition.

Source: smallbusinesseurope

Models to reduce the disproportionate regulatory burden on SMEs

In comparison with larger companies small businesses bear a disproportionate regulatory burden. Whilst a big company spends one euro per employee because of a regulatory duty, a medium sized enterprise might have to spend around four euros and a small business even up to ten euros. A recently published report drafted by the European Commission in co-operation with experts from Member States presents a variety of measures that can be taken to alleviate the regulatory burden on small businesses. Among the analysed "Models for the reduction of the disproportionate regulatory burden on SMEs" are, for example:

- total or partial exemptions
- simplified obligations
- longer adjustment periods
- special information
- one stop shops and
- the privileged treatment of small enterprises by administrations.

The report contains more than 30 concrete examples of how these models work in practice in different areas such as

taxation, labour law, business start-ups etc. It provides material for administrators and policy makers who want to improve the regulatory environment for small businesses but is also addressed to businesses and their organisations that want to know what is available in other countries to support small enterprises.

The full report can be found here

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/regmod/index.htm

Single Euro Payment Area

The European banking industry has launched the Single Euro Payment Area (SEPA) which is designed to make European cross border payments by credit card, debit card and direct debit easier. It will remove European borders and make 'Europe' one domestic area for payments, meaning that businesses no longer need to open a bank account in every single country where they want to do business and will lead to enhanced competition between providers of payment services. The SEPA project is part of the harmonisation of the European Internal Market of payments systems and was initially designed for the euro area only, but will now also be extended to the other EU member states. Norway, Iceland, Liechtenstein and Switzerland have also voluntarily agreed to implement SEPA.

From 1 January 2008 SEPA will become reality and SMEs can profit from more efficiency and cost reductions in payments when trading in the euro area.

More information can be found at

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/payments/sepa/index_en.htm

Guidance on EU Funding

A new information package is available for SMEs entitled "New Funds, Better Rules: Overview of new financial rules and funding opportunities 2007-2013."

The document acts as a practical guide to EU funding, and is aimed at potential beneficiaries such as SMEs who are new to the field of European funding. Not only does the guide provide summary information on the newly simplified financial rules, it also provides practical examples of funding opportunities for a range of applicants.

The guide sets out the new rules making EU funding easier to access for SMEs. It also details new methods to increase both accountability and transparency, including the new requirement to publish details of successful beneficiaries of EU money in each of the Member States, in third countries and international organisations.

A step by step guide on how to obtain information on funding opportunities is included in the information pack, in addition to a number of guidance sheets, providing routes to funding for small companies, NGOs, young people, researchers, farmers and public bodies. The pack concludes with a breakdown of the amounts available for each group over the period 2007-2013.

At present, the guide is available in PDF format only. If you would like to receive a copy of the information pack, please send your details to louise.fisher@scotent.co.uk . A hard copy of the pack will also be available shortly. If you would prefer to receive a hard copy of the pack, please send your postal details to the email address above.

SME feedback

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 European Information Centre wants to hear about it.

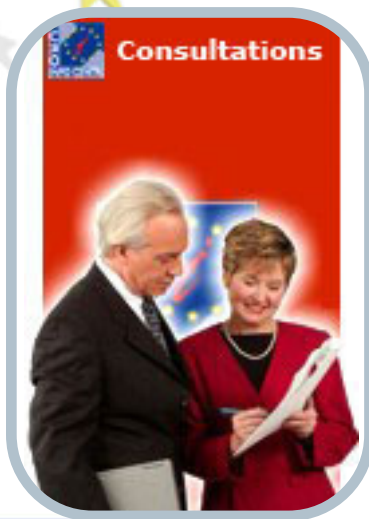
The SME Feedback initiative is designed to improve feedback from businesses, consumers and citizens so that information can be collected for use in the EU's policy making process. The initiative will be used to evaluate existing EU policies and open consultations on new initiatives.

The European Information 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 contact the EIC at eic@birmingham-chamber.org.uk or call 0121 455 0268.

Consultations

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



Towards a sustainable industrial policy

In the near future, climate change and security of energy supply need to be tackled by rapidly moving towards a low carbon and energy efficient economy at a global level. The European Union (EU), by setting ambitious targets in Greenhouse Gas reduction, renewable energy and energy efficiency, shows a clear commitment to advance towards a low carbon, energy efficient economy. An industrial policy initiative is needed to specifically promote innovation and the deployment of European low carbon, energy efficient technologies, products and services, and to create market conditions that help industry to adapt and enhance its competitiveness. The basic objective is to turn potential challenges for the EU industry into opportunities to lead the transition towards a low carbon economy.

The Mid-term Review of the Industrial Policy calls for actions so that the industrial policy contributes to sustainability and more sustainable production and consumption patterns. It is clear that the economic competitiveness of the EU will, to a large extent, be based on its energy and resource efficiency, and its capability to develop appropriate technological solutions. Key to future jobs, growth and wealth as well as to environmental protection will be efficient eco-innovations and resource and material efficiency.

The Commission will contribute to this political momentum by presenting early 2008 Action Plans on Sustainable Industrial Policy and on Sustainable Consumption and Production. Its aims are improving the way we produce, the design of products available on the market and the way we consume. A background document describes the options that could be considered at EU level to achieve these aims.

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Of course in such an endeavour, the stakeholder's engagement is crucial. The Commission is launching a public consultation to gather feedback from the public, the consumers, companies and organisations on barriers and possible actions to be considered. Interested parties are invited to participate to the on-line consultation. You can also send written contributions to EC-SCP-SIP-SURVEY@ec.europa.eu

Responses to the questions are asked for by 23 September 2007.

The answers will provide background for the impact assessments of the action plans, both in terms of analysis of the problems and for the identification of the most important options.

For more information:

European Commission
Enterprise and Industry Directorate-General
Unit B4 - Sustainable Development, Climate Change and Competitiveness
B-1049 Brussels
Belgium
Fax: +32 2 29 86924

Questionnaire on the regulatory environment for Radio and Telecommunications Terminal Equipment in the European Union

This questionnaire aims at providing information to the Commission services for the Second Progress Report to the European Parliament and the Council on the operation of the R&TTE Directive 1999/5/EC (periodical report foreseen in Article 17). The First Progress Report was adopted on 22 April 2004, upon which Council conclusions were adopted.

This consultation will be closed on 30 September 2007.

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Links between this consultation and legislation other than the R&TTE Directive

The observable effect of some R&TTE provisions is in fact the combined result of both R&TTED provisions and those of other EU legislation. While the ultimate goal remains to "review the operation of this (R&TTE) Directive" as stated by Article 17, such a review will take into account the surrounding EU legislation, which itself is evolving.

An innovation-friendly single market for RTTE equipment needs to be undertaken in close collaboration with other EC activities, notably the regulatory framework for Electronic Communications Networks and Services (ECS framework), as well as radio spectrum policy (Spectrum Policy). This ECS framework is itself currently under a review started in 2006 (ECS public consultation in 2006) and amendments to this framework are expected to be proposed to the Parliament and Council towards the end of this year.

For instance, the effect of some R&TTED provisions on putting radio equipment into service is substantially dependent on EU legislation covering the right to use spectrum, i.e. the "technical implementation measures" of the Radio Spectrum Decision. Similarly, the legal regime of "telecommunication terminal equipment" is currently split between R&TTED and the Universal Service Directive.

This is why some questions and explanatory text in this consultation refer to other directives or measures, and also to some aspects of EU spectrum policies. The results of this consultation will be analysed by all the Commission's services in charge of the above mentioned legislation, while the ensuing 2nd R&TTE Report will focus on R&TTE application.

To whom is this questionnaire addressed?

The questions are designed for companies, organisations, professionals, etc. having a good knowledge and practice of the

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R&TTE Directive, of the national provisions transposing it and of the New Approach in general. Some knowledge of the electronic communications directives and of certain issues currently debated in the framework of their current revision is needed for answering certain questions. Context explanations have been drafted from that perspective. It is recommended that respondents explain the reasons underpinning the opinions expressed in their responses.

The questionnaire can be found at the following weblink:
<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=RTTEReport>

Public consultation on outline proposals for a new Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Advanced Safety Features and Tyres

Introduction

The Commission services have produced a consultation document on outline proposals for a new Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council on Advanced Safety Features and Tyres.

Scope and objectives

This consultation seeks to gather the views of all interested parties on the overall proposal for an integrated Regulation on the specific proposals concerning tyre noise and rolling resistance limits, and on the timing and feasibility issues concerning the introduction of advanced vehicle systems.

Background

The Regulation will introduce a number of measures to improve road safety and help contribute to our CO2 reduction targets. The main proposals would include the following:

- Electronic Stability Control to be a requirement on most new passenger and goods vehicles

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- New requirements for tyre rolling resistance, wet grip and noise.
- Vehicles to be equipped with Tyre Pressure Monitoring Systems (TPMS).

In addition, it is proposed to use this Regulation to replace most of the separate safety-related Directives that come under the vehicle type-approval Framework Directive. The intention is to replace the technical content of these Directives as far as possible with equivalent United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Regulations, in line with the recommendations by the CARS 21 group and the following Communications.

Call for consultation

Stakeholders are invited to provide comments on the issues outlined in the consultation document.

The consultation is subject to data privacy rules. A privacy policy statement specifies how your data will be used. The Commission will publish all comments received on its website. Those wishing to comment should therefore refrain from submitting information that is considered to be confidential.

If you would like to participate, please send your contribution (following the guidelines) to the following mail box: entr-vehicle-safety@ec.europa.eu

Submissions should be sent by 18 October 2007 at the latest.

Discrimination - does it matter?

In 2000, the European Union adopted legislation banning discrimination on the grounds of race, ethnic origin, disability, age, religion or belief and sexual orientation.

A recent survey has shown that while a number of Member

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States offer protection beyond the requirements of the Directives, in most, different groups have different levels of protection.

In order to ascertain whether or not this situation is acceptable, and if not, how best to tackle it, the European Commission invites you to participate in an online consultation by completing the following, anonymous, questionnaire

<http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/ipm/forms/dispatch?form=Discrimination&lang=EN>

Simplifying EU rules on company law, accounting and auditing

The European Commission has put forward measures which would simplify the business environment for EU companies in the areas of company law, accounting and auditing. The proposed measures, which are set out in a Communication, would remove or reduce a range of administrative requirements that are considered outdated or excessive. All interested parties are invited to comment on the proposals by mid-October 2007.

Proposed simplification measures

The Commission would like to know stakeholders' views on a range of possible simplification measures. The key measures under consideration are:

- repealing company law Directives that deal mainly with domestic situations (e.g. domestic mergers of companies, domestic divisions, capital of public limited companies and private single-member limited-liability companies) or removing certain information obligations in the company law Directives;
- simplifying disclosure requirements for companies and for branches;
- further reducing reporting and auditing requirements for small and medium-sized enterprises.

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On the basis of discussions with Member States, the European Parliament and stakeholders, the Commission will carry out full and comprehensive impact assessments, which will also take account of administrative costs.

The Communication is available at
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/company/simplification/index_en.htm

Comments can be sent directly to Markt-F2@ec.europa.eu.

For further information on the importance of reducing administrative burdens for EU businesses, visit:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/better_regulation/index_en.htm

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Food sector news

A new Regulation on Health and Nutrition Claims on labels has now entered into force. The new legislation aims at ensuring that any claim made on a label for a food product marketed in the EU is clear, accurate and substantiated. This legislation will protect the customer, but it is not necessarily done at the expenses of the businesses.

Under the Regulation some nutrition and health claims will be completely banned. These include:

- information in labelling, marketing or advertising about the nutritional or health benefits of foods which is not clear, accurate or substantiated
- claims referring to rates or amounts of weight loss
- claims referring to recommendations from individual doctors
- health claims on alcoholic beverages above 1.2% (except those referring to a reduction in alcohol or energy content).

From 1 July 2007, certain measures are immediately effective: e.g. the ban on labels for alcoholic beverages carrying claims, except those referring to a reduction in energy or alcohol content.

The Regulation should also have some benefits to offer companies in the food sector:

- it provides food producers and manufacturers with a clear and predictable environment, which allows greater legal security
- it prevents food operators from unfair competition from unscrupulous manufacturers using false or misleading claims
- it should support innovation, as manufacturers will be encouraged to develop food and drink products for which health and nutrition claims can genuinely be made.

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The annex of the Regulation specifies the conditions under which claims are allowed or banned. Manufacturers putting new products on the market must respect these conditions and should check the text.

Products already labelled or on the market before January 2007 may remain on the market with the old labels until January 2010. During this time, Member States can submit new conditions for claims to be added to the Annex. From 2010, only nutritional claims included in the EU Annex will be allowed.

For more information on new regulation access:
Regulation (EC) No 1924/2006 on nutrition and health claims made on foods
[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006R1924R\(01\):EN:HTML](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CELEX:32006R1924R(01):EN:HTML)

Trade Fair: Wood Sector 2007: EU-Southern African Business Matchmaking Event

Date: 13-14 September

Place: Hilton Sandton, Johannesburg

Wood Sector 2007 provides businesses with the opportunity to make new contacts and develop cross border business relationships. More than 100 wood companies from different countries will meet to search for producers, products and joint venture partners. The event offers participants the opportunity to meet face-to face with potential business partners from countries such as: Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK, Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia.

Product groups in focus include:

- Furniture / Timber
- Construction sector wood products and services

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- Packing materials
- General wood based products
- Wood industry machinery, equipment, tools
- Industry support services, e.g. technology, design, R&D, treatment.

For more information on registration, company profiles, pre-booked meetings, event programme and extensive tourist programmes, visit the following website:

<http://www.northeasteic.com/page/woodevent2007.cfm>

Or contact:

Euro Info Centre - North East England Clare McKeague on 0191 490 9200

EU Roaming Regulation entered into force across all 27 Member States on 30 June

Using a mobile phone abroad becomes substantially cheaper this summer thanks to the EU's intervention. A new EU Regulation enables consumers to benefit from a 'Eurotariff' that sets a maximum limit for calls made (€0.49 excl. VAT) and received (€0.24 excl. VAT) when abroad. Operators are expected to compete below this consumer cap. The price caps will be further reduced in 2008 and 2009. The national regulatory authorities, together with the Commission, will closely monitor the transition to the new roaming rules to ensure no abuses take place. The EU Roaming Regulation also forces operators to keep all customers informed about roaming prices. The Regulation is applicable for three years and the Commission will review the Regulation within 18 months to determine whether or not to prolong the rules and whether it needs to intervene again to include SMS and data roaming.

A brief summary of the regulation is as follows:

- Mobile phone operators were obliged to offer a Eurotariff to all of their customers by 30 July 2007 at the latest.

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- Customers without an existing roaming package and who react immediately have benefited from a Eurotariff by 30 August 2007 latest.
- For those who do not react and who do not have an existing roaming package, the Eurotariff will apply automatically from 30 September 2007.
- Subscribers who already have a roaming package can also choose a Eurotariff and must inform their operator of this choice.

The European Commission's roaming website is available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/roaming>

European Chemicals Agency (ECHA)

The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) began operations and launched its website on 1 June 2007. The Agency, located in Helsinki, Finland will manage the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction processes for chemical substances to ensure consistency across the European Union. These REACH processes are designed to provide additional information on chemicals, to ensure their safe use, and to ensure competitiveness of the European industry. The new European chemicals legislation, REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and restrictions of Chemicals) entered into force on the same day.

Access: http://ec.europa.eu/echa/home_en.html

Cutting red tape for service sector while guaranteeing the protection of posted workers

The Commission presented on 13 June 2007 its assessment of national measures applied by Member States in the context of supervising the posting of workers, as well as the situation in terms of administrative cooperation. The aim is to remove unnecessary obstacles to the free provision of services within the internal market while continuing to ensure adequate protection for posted workers. This balanced approach is to be supported amongst others by a high level Committee of

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government experts, involving social partners, to facilitate the exchange of good practices. The Commission also proposes to reinforce administrative co-operation through the use of the Internal Market Information system (IMI). Furthermore, the Commission will launch, if necessary, infringement procedures to ensure conformity with Community law.

New Regulation to foster the further development of Europe's organic food sector

European Union agriculture ministers have reached political agreement on a new regulation on organic production and labelling, which will be simpler for both farmers and consumers. The new rules set out a complete set of objectives, principles and basic rules for organic production, and include a new permanent import regime and a more consistent control regime.

The use of the EU organic logo will be mandatory, but it can be accompanied by national or private logos. The place where the products were farmed has to be indicated to inform consumers. Food will only be able to carry an organic logo if at least 95% of the ingredients are organic. But non-organic products will be entitled to indicate organic ingredients on the ingredients list only. The use of genetically modified organisms will remain prohibited. It will now be made explicit that the general limit of 0.9% for the accidental presence of authorised GMOs will also apply to organic products. There will be no changes in the list of authorised substances for organic farming.

The new rules also create the basis for adding rules on organic aquaculture, wine, seaweed and yeasts. In the second part of this revision exercise, and building on this new regulation, the existing strict detailed rules will be transferred from the old to the new Regulation.

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VAT reduced rates

The European Commission, in its Communication adopted today, considers that there is a real need for a simplification and rationalisation of the current VAT rates structure, in particular the reduced VAT rates. It believes that there is a place for more flexibility which would allow Member States to apply VAT reduced rates to local supplies. However, this flexibility needs to be balanced to ensure the proper functioning of the Internal Market and to avoid disproportionate compliance costs for business. To this extent, possible ways are put forward but no concrete proposal is made for new categories of products or services, given the need for prior political consideration by Member States. At the same time, the Commission proposes to extend, until the end of 2010, most of the derogations coming to an end soon.

Current legislation on VAT reduced rates (labour intensive sector):

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/taxation/vat/key_documents/legislation_recently_adopted/index_en.htm

VAT rates currently into force in the 27 Member States:

http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/resources/documents/taxation/vat/how_vat_works/rates/vat_rates_en.pdf

MEPs appeal for retrofitting of blind-spot mirrors on lorries

Members of the European Parliament's Committee on Transport have appealed for a faster introduction of the retrofitting of blind-spot mirrors to older lorries. In 2003 a directive was introduced that obliged new lorries to be fitted with these mirrors.

Each year 400 people across Europe are killed because lorry drivers fail to see cyclists and pedestrians when changing directions. In a reaction to a new proposed directive, the Transport Committee now appealed for blind-spot mirrors to be fitted on lorries registered since 2000. Research has shown that

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the fitting of mirrors on all lorries could save up to 1,200 lives across the continent as 2020.

According to one MEP, if this proposition is not accepted, it would take until 2023 to fit the current lorry fleet of five million (Bulgaria and Romania not included) with the mirrors, resulting in accident rates staying as high as they are. The Committee is not pleased with the current implementation period of two years and has proposed a final deadline of 30 June 2008. The debate on the directive will be continued in the plenary session of the European Parliament.

More information as well as the proposed text can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/transport/roadsafety/vehicles/blind_spot_mirrors_en.htm.

Professional indemnity insurance requirements

The European Commission has adopted a report which endorses the obligation under EU law of certain financial intermediaries to have Professional Indemnity Insurance (PII). PII is a professional liability insurance that covers sums to be paid by professionals to third parties for damages and negotiated settlements as compensation for losses resulting from acts of the professional in the course of their business. This obligation was designed to protect both businesses and consumers and is laid down in directive 2006/49/EC on capital adequacy of investment firms and credit institutions.

After two rounds of consultations, the Commission has decided that there is not enough evidence available at this point to consider this rule inappropriate. The directive has to be applied and implemented in the member states for at least one year before any valid conclusions can be drawn on the usefulness and relevance of this rule.

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EU-wide type approval of trucks and buses

Manufacturers of trucks, vans, buses, and trailers will no longer be required to obtain approval for the same vehicle in 27 different countries, before launching it on the market. This is a significant element in the recasting of the key legal instrument for the single market in motor vehicles, the Framework Directive on Car Type-Approval. The European Commission's proposal to extend the scope of the directive to trucks, vans, buses, and trailers has been approved by the European Parliament. Previously Community type-approval was restricted to passenger cars, motorbikes, mopeds and agricultural tractors.

EU manufacturers should find the new procedures reduce the administrative load, thus enhancing their competitiveness, and also improve vehicle safety. The new Framework Directive will now be examined by Member States.

More information on this topic can be found at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/O7/658&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Commission launches public consultation on new anti-discrimination measures

The European Commission has today launched an online consultation on combating discrimination in the Member States and at EU level. The public consultation will help the Commission plan new measures to tackle discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in areas beyond the job market. It comes as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All - which aims to raise people's awareness of their rights to equal treatment and promote a broad debate on the benefits of diversity to society - enters full swing.

"We want to hear the views of as many people as possible on how to take on discrimination effectively in areas such as healthcare, education and housing," said Vladimír Špidla,

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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, set against a light blue background with a large arrow pointing upwards and to the right.

Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities. "The EU already has some of the most extensive anti-discrimination laws in the world. But we want to make sure that protection against discrimination is focused where it is most needed and that the right balance is struck between everyone involved - be they individuals, employers, public authorities or associations."

A study of national anti-discrimination laws carried out for the Commission in 2006 concluded that all Member States have legal rules going beyond what is already required by European law - the Race Equality Directive and the Employment Equality Directive. However, there is a considerable variation in the type of rules in place and their scope. Higher protection tends to be granted against discrimination on the grounds of religion and sex, while discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, disability and age is less covered outside the field of employment.

A recent Eurobarometer survey (January 2007) showed that 64% of Europeans believe discrimination is widespread in their country and 51% think that not enough is being done to combat the problem.

The Commission has announced that it will put forward new initiatives in 2008 to prevent and combat discrimination outside the labour market based on gender, religion, belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Commission initiatives have to be accompanied by an Impact Assessment, which analyses the pros and cons of the various options available. The results of the public consultation will feed into this process.

The consultation is made up of a general online consultation, as well as a consultation targeted at business. It will run from July 4 to October 15 and will be accessible at the following address: http://ec.europa.eu/yourvoice/consultations/index_en.htm

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European Court rules on protected products

According to a court ruling of the European Court of Justice (ECJ) dated 19 April 2007 a reference in an advertisement to a type of product and not to a specific undertaking or product can be considered to be comparative advertising.

A Belgian brewer 'Landtsheer Emmanuel' produced a beer using some of the production methods used to make sparkling wines and marketed it as 'champagne beer' carrying several references associated to champagne. Champagne producer 'Veuve Clicquot' took legal action to prevent comparison with champagne and certain aspects of the case were eventually referred to the ECJ.

The case refers to the EU directive on comparative advertising 84/450/EC. The ECJ has ruled that an advertisement can count as comparative advertising, and therefore be bound by the Directive, even if it compares itself with an unnamed competitor or competitors. In addition it stated that comparative advertisement is only permitted if no unfair advantage is taken of the reputation of a trade mark or trade name of a competitor. The ECJ also ruled that the Directive does not ban comparative advertising of a product without designation of origin with a product that does have it.

More information can be found at.

<http://curia.europa.eu/en/actu/communiqués/cp07/aff/cp070030en.pdf>

Food and Drink Trade Mission to Spain (Alicante)

30 Sept - 3 Oct 2007

Targeting the expat market

Further information on this mission, led by Business Gateway International Lanarkshire, is available from Allan Fruish 01698 742000, or Robin Walden on 0141 951 3032

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Trade Mission to Portugal

12-15 November 2007

Mass Transport - Rail Sector

New investment in the Portuguese transport infrastructure has led to opportunities for Scottish companies in areas including signalling, construction, management, supply of equipment and rolling stock, financing, maintenance, conservation, security and IT systems. Additionally, there will be opportunities in ticketing, baggage and retail.

For further information please contact Annmarie McKendry
01698 742045 / Annmarie.mckendry@scotent.co.uk

Cross Bo II

Would you like to find a business partner in Sweden, Germany, Poland, Estonia, Spain, Norway, Lithuania, Latvia, the Czech Republic or Romania?

Does your company carry out the following activities:

- industrial technology,
- product development,
- machine tools,
- assembly,
- logistics,
- reliable production and maintenance.

If so, the next Cross Bo II pan-European matchmaking event may be what you are looking for!

On 18-19 October, around 120 companies from 12 European countries will attend the Interprise IND-TECH 2007 event, in Stockholm, Sweden, running parallel to the Scandinavian Technical Fair. The companies attending the event all wish to broaden their contact network, and to find new partners for

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cooperation and collaboration.

Companies register for the event and their details are entered into a catalogue which is circulated amongst participants prior to the fair. Registered companies can then arrange meetings with relevant companies to take place at the event.

Should you wish to find out more, or if you would like to register to attend the Interprise IND-TECH event, please contact Gabriella Kelemen on 01382 305525, or alternatively email gabriella.kelemen@scotent.co.uk