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EU Launches 2010 European Year: Stop Poverty Now!

The European Commission and the Spanish Presidency of the EU will launch the 2010 European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion. Under the slogan "Stop Poverty Now!" the campaign aims to put the fight against poverty – which directly affects one in six Europeans – centre stage across the EU during 2010. European Commission President José Manuel Durão Barroso and Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero will inaugurate the Year at a launch event to be held tomorrow in Madrid. Almost 80 million Europeans – or 17% of people across the EU – currently live below the poverty threshold. This alarming fact has found a strong echo in public opinion, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey on attitudes to poverty. The vast majority of Europeans (73%) consider poverty to be a widespread problem in their country, with 89% calling for urgent action by their government to tackle the problem.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/36>

Artists and Scientists Together to Explore Climate Change

In the aftermath of climate change talks in Copenhagen, on 25 and 26 January 2010 the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and partners are bringing to Brussels global experts from the worlds of science, policy and the arts to find creative solutions to one of the most urgent issues the world faces today.

The Brussels TippingPoint 2-day event is organised in partnership with the British Council, EUNI C, Kaaithheater, and TippingPoint and takes place just a few days before the deadline for all international parties to deliver their individual CO₂ emissions targets in order to reach a global deal in Mexico later this year. It is also a moment for Europe to re-establish its leadership role in tackling climate change.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/10/4>

€18 Million EU Support for the Promotion of Dairy Products

The European Commission has approved 13 programmes in 11 Member States to promote milk and milk products in the European Union. The total budget of the programmes, running for a period of three years, is € 35.8 million of which the EU contributes € 17.9 million. This was one of a set of measures proposed by the Commission in July 2009 to address the difficult market situation faced by the dairy sector). The Commission committed itself to adopt an additional round of dairy product promotion programmes on the internal market.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/34>

What Next for Biodiversity Protection in the EU?

This week the European Commission marked the opening of the International Year of Biodiversity with a paper setting out future options for biodiversity policy. Despite past efforts, species extinctions are continuing at alarming rates, and a new vision is required to halt these losses. The Communication sets out a vision and outlines four possible targets to reach it, with different levels of ambition. The aim is to launch and facilitate a debate between Member States with a view to developing a post-2010 biodiversity policy framework for the EU before the end of the year. New targets are needed, as the current EU and global biodiversity targets expire after 2010.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/32>

EU Funds Effective Translation Tool

The MOLTO ('Multilingual on-line translation') project, which has received over EUR 2.3 million under the 'Information and communication technologies' Theme of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7) to develop such reliable translation tool, aims to offer the European effective tools facilitating high-quality translation of texts between multiple languages is pivotal to this.

The MOLTO project partners said the languages will function as separate and varied modules in the tool. The five-strong consortium, which is being coordinated by the University of Gothenburg in Sweden, will develop prototypes that cover most of the EU's 23 official languages. The MOLTO project seeks to provide the same access to knowledge on the Internet for all EU citizens.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9503>

Commission to Boost Humanitarian Effort to €30 Million in Haiti

After the catastrophic earthquake that has devastated Haiti, the European Commission and its department of Humanitarian Aid have launched a new aid decision to provide assistance to victims.

The Commission is launching a further humanitarian aid decision for €19 million to provide more urgent assistance to victims of the earthquake in Haiti. This comes on top of the €3 million in fast-track funding announced on Wednesday 13 January and the €8 million re-allocated from its existing humanitarian budget for Haiti. All of these funds are channelled through implementing partners (UN agencies, the Red Cross and non-governmental organisations). EU Member States have so far announced €92 million in humanitarian funding.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9484>

EU Researchers Investigate Extreme Weather Effects on Transport

How extreme weather impacts the EU transportation system is a question that weighs heavily on the minds of policymakers and the general public. Enter the EWENT ('Extreme weather impacts on European networks of transport') project which aims to identify and define these extreme weather phenomena and their effects. Coordinated by the VTT Technical Research Centre of Finland, EWENT ('Extreme weather impacts on European networks of transport') will develop relevant scenarios to estimate the consequences of hazardous extreme weather events. The project will also estimate the cost effects of traffic disruptions on infrastructure, operations and third parties such as supply chain impacts, material damages and human casualties, and will assess measures and alternatives to mitigate, control and monitor negative impacts on both people and goods in the short and long terms.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9477>

Special Report Concerning Vocational Training Actions for Women

The European Court of Auditors has analysed whether vocational training actions for women co-financed by the European Social Fund during the 2000-2006 programme period were appropriately selected and adequately monitored.

Vocational training actions for women - the main specific ESF-funded means of promoting equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market - accounted for an estimated 3 billion euro during the 2000-2006 periods. These measures complement programmes or actions that the Member States may implement without EU co-financing. For the 2007-2013 programme periods, the budget for specific actions has decreased significantly, as more emphasis has been placed on what is known as gender mainstreaming.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=ECA/10/6>

Over 315 Million EUR of Additional Guarantees for EU Small Business Financing

The European Investment Fund (EIF) is prolonging its existing guarantee agreements with European banks, microfinance providers and guarantee institutions, resulting in an extra 315 million EUR of guarantees covering SMEs' financing through the EU Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). The EIF's decision to extend agreements with these financial institutions is based on a healthy demand in the markets from small businesses. Financial institutions listed below, which benefit from these recent extensions, are active in Belgium, France, Germany, Slovenia and Spain. Since September 2009, these six financial institutions have already granted or guaranteed more than 45,000 loans worth over 2 billion EUR to SMEs and micro-enterprises.

http://www.eif.europa.eu/guarantees/news/2010_CIP_guarantees_EU_SME_financing.htm

Consultation: Potentially Unfair Commercial Practices in the Finance Sector

Building on the work undertaken by the Commission as part of the sector inquiry into retail banking and the results of the public consultation on the Green Paper on the Retail Financial Services in which tying was identified by financial services users as a key barrier to the integration of EU retail financial services markets, the Commission announced its intention to study tying and other potentially unfair practices in the field of retail financial services to measure their impact and to understand why they are used. Against this background, the Commission had commissioned an external study on Tying and other potentially unfair commercial practices in the retail financial services sector.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2010/tying_en.htm

Consultation: Air Passenger Rights

The Air Passenger Rights Regulation, the Liability of Air Carriers Regulation, and the Passengers with Reduced Mobility Regulation are aimed at protecting passengers travelling by air. Some of the most important rules concern the obligations of air carriers in the event of denied boarding and of cancellation or long delay of flights, their liability for lost, delayed, or damaged baggage and the rights of passengers with reduced mobility.

The air transport industry has evolved considerably over the last years. Five years after the Air Passenger Rights Regulation became fully applicable it is time to take stock of what has been achieved and what can still be improved on air passenger rights.

The aim of the consultation is to gather stakeholders' opinions on the existing problems and preferred solutions in order to assess the quality and effectiveness of the implementation and enforcement of Air Passengers' Rights legislation.

http://ec.europa.eu/transport/passengers/consultations/2010_03_01_apr_legislation_en.htm

If you have any queries about the EU Alert bulletin, or would like some more information about any of the topics in this edition, please contact Enterprise Europe West Midlands on 0121 455 0268

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