



Business Support on Your Doorstep

EU Alert

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Application of Community Law

The European Commission has presented its Annual Report on monitoring the Application of Community Law (2008). The report analyses how the implementation, management and enforcement of European Union law contribute to the process of legislative changes. It highlights the extensive nature of the problem of the late transposition by Member States of directives into their law and suggests an inter-institutional dialogue on the causes and possible ways of reducing this problem. It emphasizes the importance of attention being paid to implementation planning and enforcement mechanisms in the development of new legislation, it draws attention to the variety of management and enforcement tools available to ensure the correct application of European Union law.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1934>

Implementation of Small Business Act

The European Commission reports good progress in the implementation of the Small Business Act (SBA) in 2009. The consensus on the SBA and the adoption of an Action plan to better assist SMEs in coping with the economic and financial crises has triggered impressive progress on the EU level as well as in the Member States. A broad range of measures have been taken to implement the Leitmotiv of the SBA - the "Think Small First" principle.

Vice-President Günter Verheugen, Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, said: "We must fully exploit the growth potential of European SMEs to create a sufficient number of new and high qualified jobs. Unlocking SME potential has been a key political priority of this Commission. Policies at all levels must encourage entrepreneurial risk taking and provide for the best possible framework conditions for SMEs."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1933>

Maximum Recruitment and Retirement Ages

Setting a maximum recruitment age of 30 for certain fire-fighters and a retirement age of 68 for panel dentists is permissible. Those age limits do not constitute prohibited discrimination on grounds of age in the case of firemen who are directly involved in fighting fires and, in the case of dentists, only if the limit is an appropriate and consistent response to an objective of protection of health or employment policy. Directive 2000/78 1 prohibits discrimination on grounds of age in the field of employment and occupation. However, the directive does not preclude national measures which are necessary for the protection of health. It also allows the national legislature to provide, in certain cases, that a difference of treatment, although based on age or a characteristic related to age, is not discrimination and is not therefore prohibited.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CJE/10/1>

Security of Gas Supply in Light of the Current Winter Situation in Europe

In its first meeting in 2010, the Gas Coordination Group, under the chairmanship of the Commission, has focused on the assessment of the situation on security of gas supply in the EU-27 and countries of the Energy Community and discussed priorities for the work of the Group in 2010.

Considering the severe winter conditions prevailing in some Member States, the Gas Coordination Group, comprising Member States and the European organisations representing the gas industry, regulators and the consumers, assessed today the situation in the EU-27 and Energy Community contracting parties regarding gas demand and supply, storage levels and gas imports from third countries. In the light of the exceptional situation in some countries due to specific weather and Import conditions the Commission noted that storage levels in the EU are above last year's levels and welcomed the ability of the European gas industry to ensure continuous gas supplies to all consumers.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/13>

European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement

European neighbourhood policy and enlargement: How will the Commission ensure that local and regional authorities in the countries concerned are not sidelined?

On 12 January, the European Parliament's AFET committee will hold a hearing with the Commissioner-designate for Enlargement and European Neighbourhood Policy, Štefan Füle. While Mr Füle has already stated his willingness to cooperate with the MEPs, if he wants the reforms being driven by the EU to take root in the regions and local areas of the partner countries, he will also have to factor in the sub-national authorities. The CoR would propose several measures which the commissioner-designate could take to ensure this.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=COR/10/3>

Euro Coin Counterfeiting in 2009

In 2009, the number of counterfeit euro coins removed from circulation was 172 100, down from 195 900 the year before. This second consecutive decrease confirms the action to render euro coins safer for users. Although encouraging, there is no room for complacency and efforts to remove counterfeits from circulation should be maintained and intensified. A Commission proposal presented in 2009 and currently being discussed in Parliament and Council aims to further improve the fight against euro coin counterfeiting. The number of counterfeit euro coins removed from circulation in 2009 decreased by 12% compared with the year before. The evolution per denomination, however, is contrasted. Where the number of 2-euro counterfeits decreased by almost 18%, the numbers for 50-cent and 1-euro continued to increase, by 9% and 8%, respectively. The 2-euro denomination remains by far the most counterfeited euro coin, representing almost 3 out of every 4 counterfeit euro coins.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/10/2>

Statement by President Mario Sepi: Earthquake in Haiti

As President of the European Economic and Social Committee, I would like, on behalf of all the Committee's members, to express my sympathy to the victims of the earthquake in Haiti. We are well aware that a mere statement will not give Haitian civil society the support it needs at this time. However, as President of the Committee that is responsible for expressing the feelings of European civil society, I am calling on all institutions and all European civil society organisations to demonstrate active solidarity.

The European Economic and Social Committee welcomes the European Commission's prompt action to assist Haiti to deal with this humanitarian emergency and calls on the other European institutions and all the Member States to make a significant and sustained commitment towards the reconstruction and development of that country.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/10/2>

EU Innovation a Must

On 14 January 2010, the European Economic and Social Committee and the European Commission's Seville-based Institute for Prospective Technological Studies will be holding a public hearing on the key aspects of the EU innovation policy and its concrete implementation in the region of Andalucía, Spain.

This hearing ties in with work on an EESC opinion on the review of EU innovation policy requested by the European Commission. "The success of the innovation strategy that the Commission is preparing will depend primarily on the Commission's real political will to implement the policy through concrete actions, and to measure their impact and acceptance by civil society. This hearing will help us examine these issues", said Henri Malosse, rapporteur for the opinion and President of the EESC Employers' Group.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=CES/10/1>

Ombudsman Opens Public Consultation on Commission's Late Payment Problems

The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has invited individuals, companies, NGOs, associations and other interested persons to participate in a public consultation concerning the European Commission's late payment problems. Since 1995, the Ombudsman has conducted 63 investigations concerning late payments by the Commission. In addition, he has opened three investigations on his own initiative into measures taken by the Commission to improve the situation. The current, ongoing investigation started in February 2009.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=EO/10/1>

Consultation: Strategic Nanotechnology Action Plan

Nanotechnologies hold great potential in areas as diverse as health, energy production and efficiency, transport and manufacturing. The Commission is considering a new Action Plan for Nanotechnology, addressing the technological and societal challenges of the next five years and strengthening the research and innovation efforts, with increased emphasis on sustainable development, competitiveness, health, safety and environmental issues.

The objective of this public consultation is to invite views on the needs in nanotechnology in the next five years, as perceived by experts active in the field and by the public at large.

http://ec.europa.eu/research/consultations/snap/consultation_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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