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New Legislation for Pan-European Supervision of Credit Rating Agencies

The European Parliament has adopted a report by the Budgetary Control Committee which asks the Commission and Member States to improve their efforts in the supervision of the use of European funds. Irregularities in EU spending fell from €1.024 billion in 2007 to €783.2 million in 2008, but the Commission and Member States still need to step up their efforts to monitor the way EU money is used: total losses for tax fraud reached a total amount of 250,000 million euros in the EU. Improvements are needed in the areas of VAT collection, which invoicing rules have recently been simplified, the workings of the EU anti-fraud office OLAF and the process whereby governments report irregularities to the European Commission.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9834>

Commission Rewards Europe's Best Green Businesses

After a meeting in Brussels lasting more than eleven hours, which finished in the early hours of Monday morning, the Economy and Finance Council (Ecofin) reached an agreement on a loan package of more than 500,000 million euros allocated to cover the needs of members with solvency problems and to defend the euro.

The European stabilisation mechanism includes an aid facility to balance of payments to a value of 60,000 million euros, with the Union's own resources as guarantee, plus 440,000 million in funds or guarantees supplied by the Eurozone member states, as well as a quantity from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the value of at least half of Europe's contribution. The agreed aid package will be added to the 110,000 million euros that has been assigned to the rescue of Greece, which the Europeans and the IMF will begin to pay out immediately. Thus, the contribution of the EU plus the IMF funds make a total amount over 750 000 million euros.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9833>

Parliament Claims for a Better Access to Jobs Market for Young People

Androulla Vassiliou, the Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth, will discuss progress by Member States in setting national targets to reduce the number of early school leavers and to increase the proportion of young people in tertiary or equivalent education when she joins Ministers at the Education, Youth and Culture Council in Brussels on 10-11 May 2010. The Council will deal with sport for the first time.

The education targets, which will take account of the different circumstances in each Member State, are expected to be adopted by the European Council on 17 June. They would contribute towards the education and training objectives of 'Europe 2020', the EU's new strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/417>

Looking for a Method to Measure Innovation

Agence Française de Développement (AFD), the European Investment Bank (EIB) and European Development Finance Institutions (EDFI) will establish a joint climate change fund after the signing of a memorandum of understanding for the Interact Climate Change.

AFD, EIB and EDFI members will sign a Memorandum of Understanding for the Interact Climate Change Fund (ICCF) at a meeting in Bruges on Friday. The Parties intend to establish an investment matching facility to invest in private sector climate change projects in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific, Asia and Latin America before the end of 2010. The institutions have extensive experience operating across developing countries and emerging markets and share a joint interest in financing climate change and climate efficiency projects with the aim of creating a portfolio of climate friendly private sector investments in target countries.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9828>

EU Cuts off Greenhouse Gas Emissions for Fifth Consecutive Year

The Commission has released the results of an opinion poll looking at how citizens perceive the quality of life in 75 major European cities. Although responses reveal wide disparities overall, transport, health and education services generally score well, opposite to availability of jobs and housing costs, which remain as dominant concerns

This "Perception survey on quality of life in European cities" was conducted in November 2009 to measure local perceptions in 75 cities in the EU, Croatia and Turkey. The European Commission (DG Regional Policy) has been using such surveys for several years to get a snapshot of people's opinions on a range of urban issues. Earlier surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2006.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9825>

More Competition in EU Telecoms But No Single Market

A new European Commission report shows that EU telecoms markets have become more competitive thanks to the Commission's guidance in the consultation and review process known as the 'Article 7 procedure', whereby national telecoms regulators inform the Commission in advance of their plans to regulate parts of their national telecoms markets. As a result, citizens and businesses enjoy greater choice of services and cheaper prices.

The Commission has issued a report that shows an improvement in the competition in EU Telecoms Market. However, the report also indicates that a single EU telecoms market is still far from reality. Problems include different national regulatory approaches to tackling competition issues, such as regulating access to fibre networks. The report also warns that regulatory uncertainty could hamper the roll out of investment-intensive infrastructure projects like Next Generation Access (NGA) networks.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9918>

EU Bathing Water Quality Remains High

Clean bathing waters are vital for key economic sectors such as tourism and for plant and animal life. The annual bathing water report presented by the European Commission and the European Environment Agency shows that 96 % of coastal bathing areas and 90 % of bathing sites in rivers and lakes complied with minimum standards in 2009. It also describes where to obtain detailed and up-to-date information on bathing sites.

Efforts to improve the quality of bathing waters should be seen in the context of Europe's efforts to achieve good ecological and environmental status in accordance with the EU Water and Marine Framework Directives. 2009 results confirm a long-term upward trend, even though 2008 annual report showed good results.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9963>

New System for Certifying Sustainable Biofuels

The Commission has decided to encourage industry, governments and NGOs to set up certification schemes for all types of biofuels, including those imported into the EU. It laid down what the schemes must do to be recognised by the Commission. This will help implement the EU's requirements that biofuels must deliver substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and should not come from forests, wetlands and nature protection areas. The rules for certification schemes are part of a set of guidelines explaining how the Renewable Energy Directive should be implemented.

Renewables include solid biomass, wind, solar energy and hydro power as well as biofuels. Only biofuels that meet the EU's sustainability requirements can count towards the targets in the Directive.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9962>

Commission Encourages Vocational Education and Training

The European Commission has presented its new vision for the future of vocational education and training. Vocational education and training is chosen by an average of around 50% of all students in upper secondary education. However, the sector needs to be modernised to make it a more attractive and high-quality option. The aim of the Commission is to reform the education and training sector so that it provides young people with the right skills to find a suitable job and adults with an opportunity to update skills throughout their working life.

Therefore, in its communication "A new impetus for European cooperation in Vocational Education and Training to support the Europe 2020 strategy", the Commission wants to encourage more people to take up vocational education, to improve the quality of the training on offer and to make it easier to move between jobs and countries. EU ministers are expected to discuss and adopt the plan in the second half of this year.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9956>

Consultation: Future Trade Policy

Following the 'Europe 2020' paper adopted by the European Commission on 3 March 2010, the European Commission is now launching a broad public consultation on the future direction of EU trade policy. The Commission's intention is to set out its policy during autumn 2010, explaining how trade policy can help achieve the objectives of the 'Europe 2020' Strategy. The purpose of this consultation is to gather views from relevant stakeholders regarding the rationale, scope and strategic objectives for a future EU trade policy. The consultation is open to all stakeholders within the EU and in third countries. The Commission services will prepare a report on the Consultation which will be published on DG TRADE's website.

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/consultations/index.cfm?consul_id=144

Consultation: Ensuring Transparency and Integrity

Wholesale energy markets are at the core of the liberalisation and integration of European gas and electricity prices. The prices paid by Europe's citizens and businesses reflect the outcomes on these markets. Therefore markets must be trusted not just by its participants but also by the general public. In order to create this trust, the Commission is currently developing an initiative to ensure the integrity of wholesale energy markets. The objective of the consultation is to seek interested parties' views on possible options for such an initiative. This will feed into an Impact Assessment which will define the most appropriate policy option and the way forward.

Interested parties will find below the consultation document and a number of relevant documents helping to put the consultation in context.

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/gas_electricity/consultations/2010_07_23_energy_markets_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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