



*Business Support on Your Doorstep*

# EU Alert

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## New Road Regulations will Lead to Fairer Competition

New regulations modernising the rules governing road transport come into force this month and are expected to generate administrative savings of €190 million a year. The so-called road package simplifies and clarifies the legal framework for the 900,000 European road transport undertakings engaged in the transport of goods or passengers.

Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of transport, today said: "This road package comes at a crucial time when the road transport industry needs clear and effective rules to reduce unnecessary bureaucracy. The package balances the need for harmonised rules and free access to transport markets. I firmly believe that these rules will bring about significant cost savings and provide a more equal playing field for all those involved in the industry."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1877>

## New Rights for Rail Passengers

Rail passengers will from now on enjoy new rights that will protect them and their belongings when they travel by train anywhere within the European Union. The new EU Regulation enshrines travellers' basic rights and imposes a number of obligations on rail companies concerning their responsibility towards their customers. Every year, almost 8 billion passengers use the train for their journeys.

Antonio Tajani, Vice-President of the European Commission in charge of transport, commented: "With millions crisscrossing Europe each day, it is for me evident that Europe has to take care that people are able to travel in safety and comfort. These new rights protecting people travelling by rail promote reliable and high-quality rail passenger services. After establishing these rights for passengers travelling by air and rail, our next step will now be to protect those going by water or by bus and coach."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1871>

## Treaty of Lisbon Comes into Force

The Treaty of Lisbon enters into force on 1 December 2009. The occasion will be marked by a ceremony in the City of Lisbon organised jointly by the Portuguese Government, the Swedish Presidency and the European Commission. The Commission believes that the new treaty provides significant new benefits for citizens and will settle the institutional debate for the foreseeable future. This will allow the European Union to fully concentrate on managing a smooth exit from the economic and financial crisis and pushing ahead with the 2020 strategy for greener growth.

President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso said, "The Treaty of Lisbon puts citizens at the centre of the European project. I'm delighted that we now have the right institutions to act and a period of stability, so that we can focus all our energy on delivering what matters to our citizens".

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1855>

## What has the EU Done for you Over the Past Year?

The European Commission has launched its annual multimedia yearbook presenting some of the European Union's most important achievements of the past year. The yearbook provides a collection of success stories where EU action has led to tangible results for citizens, with topics ranging from research into finding new cures for dementia to mitigating the effects of the economic crisis.

"The examples in the yearbook clearly demonstrate that the EU produces positive and visible results in our daily lives as citizens, consumers, and workers", said Vice-President Margot Wallström, responsible for Institutional Relations and Communication Strategy.

Topics include: 'Paving the way towards economic recovery - The EU and its Member States have mobilised huge resources to put the economy back on its feet and to protect the citizens.'

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1905>

## .eu Internet Domain now Available in all EU Languages

From 10th December 2009, European citizens, businesses and organisations can register .eu website names using characters from all 23 official languages of the European Union. This means that registrants, for example, can use Greek or Cyrillic names like [www.διαδίκτυο.eu](http://www.διαδίκτυο.eu) or [www.роуминг.eu](http://www.роуминг.eu). This was made possible thanks to new EU rules adopted by the Commission in June 2009.

"Internationalised Domain Names under .eu, our European Top Level Domain, are a big step towards a truly global and at the same time local internet. Many internet users will come from countries where most languages are not based on the 'a to z' Latin script and they will naturally want to use their own scripts," said Viviane Reding, the EU's Information Society Commissioner. "The launch of international domain names under .eu will respond even better to the needs of a multilingual and multicultural Europe."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1903>

## EU Emergency Oil Stocks at Comfortable Levels

The European Commission has held a meeting in Brussels of the Oil Supply Group to discuss with Member States' experts EU emergency preparedness and confirms current levels of emergency oil stocks in Europe at 122 days of consumption, a figure well above the mandatory 90 days.

The European Commission called the Oil Supply Group meeting of experts to review the emergency preparedness of Member States with respect to oil and petroleum products at the start of the winter period. Member States reported having sufficient stocks at their disposal to assure the uninterrupted operation of their refining and distribution systems, even in case of a lasting supply disruption. Emergency oil stocks of crude and petroleum products for these occasions, maintained in conformity with EU legislation stand at present at 122 days of average consumption.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1940>

## EU and its Member States Committed to Make Life Easier for Small Companies

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>

## Easier Credit to Help Unemployed People Start Up Businesses

A "European Progress Microfinance Facility" is to make available "micro-credits" (up to €25,000) to people who want loans to start or grow very small firms (10 people or less and a turnover of less than €2 million), but are unable to obtain them on conventional credit markets.

MEPs agreed to make €100 million available for the Facility over four years - as proposed by the European Commission, but stressed during the debate that these funds do not have to come from the Progress programme for employment and social solidarity, which was set up to help vulnerable groups of people. The Commission had proposed that the Microfinance Facility be funded from this programme, as it already had received an additional €114 million, at Parliament's request.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9400>

## EU Achieves Political Breakthrough on an Enhanced Patent System

The Council adopted unanimously conclusions on an enhanced patent system in Europe. The package agreed covers major elements to bring about a single EU patent and establish a new patent court in the EU. Both together will make it less costly for businesses to protect innovative technology and make litigation more accessible and predictable. The Council agreement encompasses the main features of a future patent court in the EU. A specialised patent court will allow cases to be heard before judges with the highest level of legal and technical expertise in patents. A unified court will also mean that parties do not have to litigate in parallel in different countries incurring high costs. The court will include local and central chambers under a common appeal court. In the initial stages, parties will be able to continue to use national courts, allowing confidence to build up gradually in the new system. After this political agreement, the Council will now wait for a legal opinion on the new patent court from the European Court of Justice.

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/indprop/patent/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/indprop/patent/index_en.htm)

## Three Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in Sectors Touched by Economic Crisis

Within the framework of European Economic Recovery Plan, the European Commission has recently launched three public-private partnerships (PPPs) to promote research initiatives mainly in sectors touched by the financial crisis, such as automotive, construction and manufacturing. These new PPPs aim to promote cooperation in research between public authorities and the private sector. The Commission will prepare the strategy for each PPP in close collaboration with the relevant industrial partners.

The Commission foresees an overall contribution of 50% to the total budget for the research activities from the budget of the 7th Framework Programme. The rest of investments will be provided by the private sector. The combination of public and private capacities and money can help the process of recovery and the development of markets that will form the basis of Europe's future economic prosperity.

[http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial\\_technologies/lists/list\\_114\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/research/industrial_technologies/lists/list_114_en.html)

## Consultation: Final Report of the Expert Group on e-Invoicing

The Expert Group on e-Invoicing presented in its final report a set of recommendations for an European Electronic Invoicing Framework, supporting the uptake of cross border interoperable e-Invoicing solutions, with a particular focus for uptake among SMEs.

This consultation seeks to strengthen and deepen the Commission services' understanding of the way forward to promote uptake of electronic invoicing within the EU. The objective of this consultation is to collect stakeholders' reactions on the recommendations proposed by the Expert Group on e-Invoicing in the areas of business requirements, legal framework, interoperability and standards, as well as the proposed approach for implementation and communication.

[http://ec.europa.eu/internal\\_market/consultations/2009/e-invoicing\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/consultations/2009/e-invoicing_en.htm)

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[www.een-midlands.org.uk](http://www.een-midlands.org.uk)

