



Business Support on Your Doorstep

EU Alert

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Commission Calls for Better Implementation of EU Waste Law

The European Commission has adopted two reports which reveal that EU waste law is being poorly implemented and enforced in many Member States. The assessment highlights the need for significant efforts by Member States to ensure that waste management meets the standards set by EU legislation. These efforts are crucial to protect the environment and human health.

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "Proper implementation of waste legislation is vital for the protection of our environment and health. Having legislation in place is not enough: the rules have to work in practice. Unfortunately, insufficient importance is attached to the enforcement of waste laws. The Commission receives regular complaints from citizens and the European Parliament regarding the bad management of waste. Member States must take the implementation of waste legislation seriously."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1795>

Developing Public Private Partnerships

The Commission has set out a framework for encouraging the use of public private partnerships (PPPs) to meet existing and future needs for investment in public services, infrastructure and research in Europe. When properly managed in the current and future public interest, PPPs can bring immense benefits. Yet their use is still limited and many Member States have little experience with them. In line with the European Economic Recovery Plan, the Commission wants to give a fresh push to PPPs to encourage a more frequent and better use of PPPs at a time where innovative public financing solutions are needed to manage the challenges of tight national budgets.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1740>

Political Agreement on the Energy Labelling Directive

This political agreement clears the way to extend the scope of the current framework directive, which covers only household goods, to all energy-related products. In practice, the new directive shall apply also to other appliances, even where these are sold for non-household uses, e.g. air-conditioning systems and lighting sources.

This directive will outline the main elements of the new energy label: an A-G scale with the possibility to open it up to A+++ if technological development so requires, the dark green colour of the scale always indicating the most efficient class and thus guiding consumers to the most efficient products.

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/efficiency/labelling/labelling_en.htm

E-PRTR: The New European Public Register to Access Information on Emissions from Industrial Facilities

The European Commission and the European Environment Agency (EEA) launched a comprehensive new European Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (E-PRTR). The register contains information about the emissions of pollutants to air, water and land by industrial facilities throughout Europe. It includes annual data for 91 substances and covers more than 24.000 facilities in 65 economic activities. The information in the register covers 30% of total NO_x (nitrogen oxides) emissions (i.e. most emissions from sources other than transport) and 76% of total SO_x (sulphur oxides) emissions to air in the EU-27 countries and Norway. The register also provides additional information, such as the amount and types of waste transferred from facilities to waste handlers both inside and outside each country, including transboundary transfers of hazardous waste. Furthermore, it gives preliminary information on pollutants from 'diffuse' sources released to water, such as nitrogen and phosphorus loss from agriculture.

<http://prtr.ec.europa.eu/>

Are Europe's Teachers Getting Enough Training?

The OECD and the European Commission have presented their new report on the "Teachers' Professional Development: Europe in international comparison". It concludes that teachers need effective feedback on their work in order to take full advantage of training opportunities, but variety in training experiences, and a better working climate in schools, are also key to successful professional development. Almost nine in ten teachers take part in some form of in-work professional training, according to the report, and more than half say they want more. Based on this year's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), which was conducted in 23 participating countries, the report provides internationally comparable data for the first time on teachers' professional development.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1808>

European Labour Markets Deeply Hit by Crisis, but More Resilient than Expected

The current crisis is taking its toll on EU labour markets, reversing most of the employment growth achieved since 2000, according to the 2009 Employment in Europe Report. Men, young people, the low-skilled and workers on temporary contracts have borne the brunt of the employment contraction. Employment in the EU has shrunk by over 4 million jobs since the start of the crisis, although the effect has been somewhat mitigated thanks to the use of shorter working hours and other schemes. But these short term measures, however important, are not in themselves sufficient to ensure a successful exit from the crisis. Employment policies must focus on preparing for the transition to a low-carbon economy.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1803>

Bridging the Gap in Supply Chain Standards

If products are not tracked from their place of origin to their point of sale, there is no way of locating when and how product problems occur. Tracking products throughout their journey to their final destination is essential if we are to ensure worldwide supply and demand chains that deliver excellent-quality products. The three-year BRIDGE project received EUR 7.5 million in EU funding to take up this challenge and it delivered exciting new tracking techniques using radio wave technology.

Problems with the transport of goods such as delays, contamination or changes in temperature can mean that products are sometimes damaged or degraded when they arrive at their destination, and perishable goods such as food or pharmaceutical products are particularly vulnerable to this.

<http://euroalert.net/en/news.aspx?idn=9338>

2011 to be European Year of Volunteering

The EU Council has decided that 2011 will be designated the "European Year of Volunteering". The organisation of the Year had been proposed by the European Commission and received a positive opinion by the European Parliament.

Welcoming the Council's decision, Mr Maroš Šefčovič, the Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, said: "Volunteering is a way for individuals to make a valuable contribution to society. At the EU level, volunteering promotes civic participation, social cohesion and provides learning opportunities for the volunteers as well as a multitude of benefits for society at large. I am pleased that our idea to have a European Year dedicated to promoting volunteering activities received such solid support from the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers."

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1836>

Green Light for New EU Telecoms Rules

With a broad majority across political parties, the European Parliament has formally approved the EU's telecoms reform package, proposed by the Commission in November 2007. 500 million EU citizens will soon benefit from more consumer choice through enhanced competition on Europe's telecoms markets, from better coverage with fast internet broadband connections across Europe, and from a stronger entrenchment of their right to privacy with regard to telecoms operators. European consumers will also enjoy a substantial number of new rights, such as the right to switch fixed or mobile operator in one working day while keeping their number; the right to be better informed about the services they subscribe to; and the right to be informed about data breaches from their telecoms operator. Operators must also give consumers the option of signing a contract which lasts no longer than 12 months.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/1812>

Consultation: EU 2020

In presenting his programme for the new Commission, President Barroso set out his vision for where the European Union should be in 2020. He believes that the exit from the current crisis should be the point of entry into a new sustainable social market economy, a smarter, greener economy where our prosperity will result from innovation and from using resources better, and where knowledge will be the key input. To make this transformation happen, Europe needs a common agenda: the EU 2020 strategy. This strategy should enable the EU to make a full recovery from the crisis, while speeding up the move towards a smart and green economy. EU 2020 will build on the successes obtained by the Lisbon strategy since its 2005 relaunch, which focused on growth and jobs, but will also address some of the Lisbon strategy's shortcomings.

http://ec.europa.eu/eu2020/index_en.htm

Consultation: Package Travel Directive

The Package Travel Directive (hereafter referred to as the PTD), which came into effect in 1990, is aimed at protecting consumers in the area of package travel. Some of the most important rules concern the liability of package organisers and retailers, who must accept responsibility for the performance of the services offered. The Directive also prescribes the minimum information that must be given to consumers and contains provisions on the security to be provided in the event of insolvency.

The travel sector has evolved considerably, especially with the development of the internet and the rise of low-cost air carriers. Consumers are also now putting together their own holiday components from different providers, instead of opting for pre-arranged packages. The Commission is considering reviewing the PTD in order to reflect the current market situation.

http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/rights/travel/consultation_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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