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EU NEWS

'MS OR MR SME': SMALL BUSINESS GETS AN ADVOCATE IN EACH EU MEMBER STATE

To give SMEs a greater voice in Europe, Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani unveiled a new Network of national SME Envoys at the recent conference 'Mobilizing SMEs for the future of Europe'. The Conference, held in Budapest on 24 May 2011, was co-organized with the Hungarian EU presidency and gathered representatives from the public and private sectors.

In every Member state, a new 'Ms. or Mr. SME' will represent the interests of SMEs. Their main responsibility will be to ensure that relevant EU laws are applied correctly with regard to these businesses and that policies at national, regional and local level are enterprise-friendly. Because SMEs are affected by a wide range of policies originating in different government departments from taxation to education, the SME envoys should help entrepreneurs focus on their main task of creating jobs.

The Small Business Act (SBA) is the European Commission's SME policy aimed at making Europe more business-friendly and conducive to entrepreneurship. In the future, the new Mr or Mrs SME will meet with business organisations at EU-wide level within the SBA Advisory Group. This is part of the new governance urged in the recent review of the Small Business Act. This new mechanism will ensure closer monitoring and coordinated action in support of SMEs.

For more information about the Small Business Act for Europe go to

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/index_en.htm

List of national SME Envoys

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/small-business-act/sme-envoy/national-sme-envoys/index_en.htm

DEEPENING EU-CHINA INVESTMENT TIES: VIEWS SOUGHT IN PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Despite a steady increase in trade between China and the EU, investment flows between the regions remain limited. European investors repeatedly identify China as a location with great untapped potential. At the same time, investors are concerned about persistent trade barriers and an uncertain business environment.

In the context of an Executive-to-Executive meeting on 29 April 2010, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao instructed their respective teams to study the options for enhancing the bilateral investment relationship between their regions. To this end, a 'Joint EU-China Investment Task Force' was launched in summer 2010 to explore the scope for deeper cooperation on investment, including a possible standalone investment agreement.

Against this background, the Commission invites views on the future EU-China investment relationship in a new public consultation open to all interested parties within the EU and in third countries. The Commission services will publish a report on the outcome on the Directorate General for Trade website. Except for cases where respondents request confidentiality, individual submissions will be published in an annex to the report.

Your input and comments on the questionnaire are welcome by 5 July 2011 at the latest.

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/consultations/?consul_id=153

EU TO CONCENTRATE IMPORT PREFERENCES ON DEVELOPING COUNTRIES MOST IN NEED

The European Commission plans to concentrate its import preferences on developing countries most in need. Specifically, it will limit its Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) to the 80 poorest, least economically developed countries. Only they will be able to benefit from specific tariff preferences such as reduced or zero tariff rates or quotas as allowed under the GSP.

At the same time, the Commission seeks to encourage more countries to respect core international conventions on human rights, labour standards, environment and good governance in the GSP+ scheme, which grants additional trade concessions for trade-vulnerable countries.

While the wide product coverage and preference margins would remain unchanged under the new system, several countries will no longer be eligible to benefit from the GSP, including:

- Countries with a high or upper middle income per capita, according to the internationally accepted World Bank classification (such as Kuwait, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Qatar);
- Countries with preferential access to the EU which is at least as good as under GSP - for example, under a Free Trade Agreement or a special autonomous trade regime.
- A number of overseas countries and territories with an alternative market access arrangement for developed markets.

The definitive list of beneficiary countries will only be compiled at the end of the ordinary legislative procedure, based on statistical data going back three years.

The GSP scheme is implemented over cycles of 10 years to take into account changing trade patterns. The present cycle began in 2006 and will expire in 2015. The scheme is implemented through successive Regulations applied over a three-year period. The current GSP scheme is established by Council Regulation (EC) No 732/2008, which entered into force on 1 January 2009 and will expire on 31 December 2011. In 2010 the Commission adopted a roll-over proposal of the existing GSP regulation to ensure continuity after 2011. The current system is expected to be extended until the end of 2013.

<http://ec.europa.eu/trade/wider-agenda/development/generalised-system-of-preferences/>

FIRST COMMENTS ON THE FUTURE EU RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FUNDING CONSULTATION

The European Commission's recent consultation on future EU research and innovation funding attracted widespread interest, yielding more than 1,300 responses to the online questionnaire and over 750 written responses by the deadline of 20 May 2011.

Máire Geoghegan-Quinn, the European Commissioner for Research, Innovation and Science, underscored that the Innovation Union is a top priority in the EU. According to the Commissioner the Innovation Union aims to transform Europe's world class science base into a world-beating one; make coherent of public sector intervention to stimulate the private sector across Europe and remove the remaining bottlenecks to the commercialisation of good ideas. "We've made a rapid start on this, with a single European patent and legislative proposals on venture capital and standardisation already in the pipeline," the Commissioner said.

The results of the consultation will be presented and discussed in a conference on the Common Strategic Framework (CSF) for the EU to be held in Brussels on 10 June 2011.

For more information on the public consultation

http://ec.europa.eu/research/csfri/index_en.cfm

More information on the Innovation Union

http://ec.europa.eu/research/innovation-union/index_en.cfm

EACI NEWS

UPDATE ON BEST PRACTICE AWARDS 2011

The Best Practice Awards 2011 competition has entered the final stretch, with 25 good practices from 14 countries submitted by the 24 May 2011 deadline. Of the 25 good practices submitted, 14 relate to access to finance and nine to innovation support services.

We thank all Network partners for their contributions and wish them good luck! An EACI evaluation committee will assess the submitted good practices and shortlist the three best ones per category, who will compete for the awards.

As every year, all partners will be able to vote for the top one per category during the summer break through an online vote. Besides the two categories mentioned above, this year's awards will also recognise good practices selected by Sector Group chairs. The winners will be announced at the Annual Conference in October in Warsaw (Poland).

NEW BATCH OF GOOD PRACTICES ON THE INTRANET

Following the revamping of the good practices intranet pages, new good practices are being published all the time. There are currently 40 good practices available, with another 30 to be uploaded in the coming weeks.

To have a look at the published good practices go to

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/good-practices>

UPDATE OF THE E-INVOICING INTRANET CHAPTER

The e-invoicing chapter of the intranet section 'Business Services' has been updated with new information. It now includes information about the "European multi-stakeholder forum on e-invoicing", which will support the European Commission by monitoring developments at national level, exchanging best practices and coordinating activities facilitating e-invoicing at European level.

For more information:

<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/my/intranet/e-invoicing>

MEETINGS, FAIRS & EVENTS

'FIT FOR HEALTH' RESEARCH PARTNERING EVENT (BRUSSELS, 10 JUNE 2011) AND INTERNATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP FOR FP7 HEALTH APPLICANTS (ATHENS, 21 JUNE 2011)

'Fit for Health' is a European initiative designed to encourage the participation of European SMEs in Calls for Proposals under the Health theme of the 7th EU Framework Programme (FP7).

Focusing on research-intensive, high-tech SMEs, the project offers targeted support covering the entire innovation pipeline.

In the upcoming months 'Fit for Health' will organise several activities to support researchers from SMEs and Academia.

The first event will be held on 10 June 2011 in Brussels. The projects 'Fit for Health' and 'Health-NCP-Net' will jointly organise the FP7 partnering event. The main part of the day will be dedicated to matching individuals interested in the same call areas.

This event will take place after the open information day organised by the European Commission on 9 June 2011 in the running up of the official publication of the 2012 Health Calls for Proposals. This official European Commission event will convey first-hand information on the novelties in the planning of the new Work Programme to researchers from SMEs and academia.

The second event, organised by 'Fit for Health', is a free of charge full-day training tailored to applicants of the upcoming FP7-Health-2012 Calls on 21 June 2011 in Athens. European experts with vast experience in FP7 will offer an interactive hands-on training for a maximum of 60 participants on proposal writing, financial and legal aspects and consortium building. Network partners planning to participate in or to coordinate a proposal submission for this call can use this opportunity to get more information and practical advice. The deadline for registration is 6 June 2011.

For more information on both events:

<http://www.fitforhealth.eu/events/fp7-health-research-partnering-event-10-june-2011-brussels-/127.aspx>

and

<http://www.fitforhealth.eu/events/international-training-for-fp7-health-applicants-21st-june-2011-athens-greece/150.aspx>

For more information about the European Commission's information day

http://ec.europa.eu/research/health/events-05_en.html

CONFERENCE ON THE MODERNISATION OF EU PUBLIC PROCUREMENT POLICY (BRUSSELS, 30 JUNE 2011)

European Internal Markets Commissioner Michel Barnier invites all interested parties to share their views on making European public procurement policy more efficient.

The Commission will use the event to present the results of the ex-post evaluation of the existing legislation and the public consultation via the Green Paper launched in January 2011.

Speakers will discuss the findings and exchange views on the possible ways forward to a modernised EU public procurement policy. The discussions provide a significant contribution to the preparation of legislative proposal.

The draft programme and link to online registration are available at

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/modernising_rules/conferences/index_en.htm

The list of the events advertised in the EU and Services Bulletin is not exhaustive. Therefore, you are kindly invited to visit the events page in the intranet (<http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu/src/events/viewevents.cfm>) or the Enterprise Europe Network public website.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

NEW E-LEARNING MODULE ON EUROPEAN PATENT PROTECTION

Learn all about the scope of patent protection under the European Patent Convention (EPC) via a new free e-learning module, available via the website of the EU-China Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights (IPR2). According to the IPR2, the tool was produced based on the training given by the European Patent Office and may be used by authorities and industry.

EU-China Project on the Protection of Intellectual Property Rights

www.ipr2.org

The e-learning modules are available to download free-of-charge at

www.ipr2.org/elearning.

For any further information about the training activities organised or supported by the EACI send an e-mail to the "Training-Team" functional mailbox on FirstClass.

MEMBERS' CORNER

NETWORK PARTNER ORGANISATION PROVIDES FEEDBACK TO EU CHEMICALS AGENCY

The Regional Chamber of Commerce of Lower Normandy, a Network partner organisation in France, has launched an initiative to help SMEs comply with the EU Regulation for the Registration, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemical substances, better known as REACH. At the Sixth Stakeholders' Day of the European Chemicals Agency' (ECHA), the Chamber briefed the agency on the details of this initiative. The rules entered into force on 1 June 2007.

Resending to companies' questions about the directive, the Chamber recruited an expert to help identify chemical alternatives to substances required to be phased out under the new rules. Within the regional Reach+ initiative financed by the EU structural funds, the Chamber is also using the Network's BBS for disseminating technology requests.

For more information, please read ECHA's interview with the Chamber's expert and contact Network colleague Anne-Colette Alain at anne-colette.alain@basse-normandie.cci.fr

ECHA expert's interview

http://www.echa.europa.eu/news/events/6th_stakeholders_day/6th_stakeholders_day_participants_interview_en.asp

PUBLICATIONS

RESEARCH STUDY ON POINTS OF SINGLE CONTACT UNDER EU SERVICES DIRECTIVE

The EU Services Directive was established to remove trade and administrative barriers to trade in the services sector. Besides transposing the law into their national systems, each Member State was required to set up a 'Point of Single Contact' (PSC), which must meet certain criteria, to provide information to service providers and help them complete procedures electronically.

Differences in the scope of information and technical solutions provided by PSCs are the focus of a new research study, carried out by the Institute of Logistics and Warehousing as a product of SPOCS (Seamless Cross-border Electronic Procedures), a Large Scale Pilot project launched by the European Commission in May 2009 and co-funded by the CIP-ICT Policy Support Programme.

The research set out to show the differences in the scope of information and technical solutions as well as back-office integration that affect the provision of cross-border services. The study also focused on the portals' user-friendliness, which is crucial to business, measuring the transparency and availability of the PSCs.

The study concludes that Member States have adopted different strategies towards PSCs. Germany, Austria and Italy have opted for regional Points of Single Contact, while other countries have opted for one central electronic PSC. In most cases already existing national or regional websites for entrepreneurs were adopted for electronic PSCs.

PSCs mainly act as coordinators, leaving final decisions up to the relevant competent authorities. Many PSCs provided information in English in addition to the native language. However, the quality of the translation differed. Nearly all responding PSCs were found to provide legal regulations and information on the requirements for service providers.

In general, the study gives a positive picture of Member States implementing the Services Directive, and in providing support and information to service providers. There are, however, broad differences in the level of understanding regarding the use of the non-standardised electronic documents and application forms. These discrepancies should be addressed in the near future to and eventually pave the way for fully electronic administrative procedures across Europe.

The Services Directive on DG Internal Market and Services website
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/services/services-dir/index_en.htm

EU-US IPR PORTAL UNDER SPOTLIGHT IN ENTERPRISE & INDUSTRY MAGAZINE


The latest issue of the European Commission's Enterprise & Industry Magazine focuses on SMEs and takes a look at the Enterprise Europe Network. Reflecting the growing tendency of European SMEs to go international, one article looks at the new EU-US Transatlantic IPR Portal providing essential information to SMEs involved in foreign partnerships and investments.

Read the last issue of Enterprise & Industry magazine
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/magazine/print-edition/files/magazine_ei_10_en.pdf
Transatlantic IPR Portal
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/initiatives/ipr/index_en.htm

MISCELLANEOUS

THE EUROPEAN IPR HELPDESK UNVEILS A NEW GLOSSARY

Are you preparing an FP7 consortium agreement and are unsure what the terms 'foreground' and 'background' mean? An answer is just a click away, on a new glossary launched this week on the European IPR Helpdesk website.



The glossary includes definitions of many IP-related words commonly used under FP7 and the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), as well as under international partnerships, are now explained. Why not start using this handy new reference tool today?

Access the glossary

<http://www.iprhelpdesk.eu/glossary>

Due to a **public holiday, the Bulletin will not be published next week.**
The next issue will appear on 10 June 2011.

For any comment about this document, please post your message in the "Business Services" Conference on FirstClass.

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