



FEDERATION NEWS

EFCA calls on Commission officials to improve external aid procedures	p1
Putting the case for adequate financial management of EU development assistance	p2
EFCA President calls for more effective regulatory frameworks of infrastructure financing to secure economic growth	p2
Structure and shape of EFCA pillars reviewed to deliver better results	p3
Austrian association welcomes debate on business practices	p4
How good is EFCA at communicating with members?	p4
Liability and Insurance Committee embarks on 2009 strategy plan	p5
EFCA and Architects' Council of Europe jointly address ambiguity in Health & Safety Directive	p5
EFCA President encourages Polish awarding authorities to enact appropriate procurement procedures	p6
EFCA agenda	p7
Hotels in Brussels – EFCA corporate rates	p7

In his presentation at the EFCA roundtable on 'EC external actions – service contracts procurement', Koos Richelle reaffirmed the European Commission's commitment to deliver aid in ways that are consistent with its emphasis on aid effectiveness and its strategic vision for strengthening country ownership. He emphasised the importance of technical cooperation to move forward the EU development agenda.



Koos Richelle welcomed the industry's pushes for changes, but added that financial management and procurement systems in the end need to comply with all European Community's budgetary principles.

EFCA calls on Commission officials to improve external aid procedures

EuropeAid Director General Koos Richelle welcomed EFCA's invitation to a high-level dialogue on challenges for development cooperation reform in the 21st century.

EFCA President Panos Panagopoulos and Robert Couturier, Chairman of the European External Aid Committee put forward proposals that would significantly improve the delivery of technical assistance and that can be immediately achieved without changes of rules.

The debate was concluded with a statement from EFCA's President on the need for simplification and increased flexibility of procedures and from moderator Jules Muis, former World Bank Vice-President, who emphasised the need for an ongoing constructive dialogue between Commission and professional associations such as EFCA to ensure optimal efficiency and effectiveness in procurement procedures.

<http://www.efcanet.org/pages/news.aspx?item=8958>

Putting the case for adequate financial management of EU development assistance

EFCA and FEACO, representing the European engineering and management consultancy firms that deliver the know-how in the implementation of EU development projects, highlighted practical measures to ensure effective aid support at a well-attended seminar.

EFCA and FEACO organised a seminar to screen a series of current EuropeAid financial management procedures, illustrate good practices of other development agencies and offer the firms' expertise in the field for delivering quality aid.

'It is both a timely contribution from the industry, and a positive engagement for collaboration with its client in order to achieve the requisite quality standards' said EFCA Board member Hannes Posch in his introductory statement.

His invitation to participate in the dialogue to provide for a change process and a continuous improvement in proposed solutions and approaches did not fall on deaf ears.

All speakers, including EuropeAid, provided challenging contributions and looked at measures at the level of financial management systems and procedures that are critical for achieving development objectives.



The questions raised will be taken back into EFCA's European External Aid Committee with a view to elaborate further best practice and EFCA policy.

<http://www.efcanet.org/pages/news.aspx?item=8828>

EFCA President calls for more effective regulatory frameworks of infrastructure financing to secure economic growth

National and European policy makers have an important role in creating conditions to ensure that necessary public work projects can start and continue without delay. Moreover, significant returns can be achieved from such projects if a number of regulatory reforms would allow for innovation-oriented solutions.

EFCA President Panos Panagopoulos outlined key conditions for accelerating the development and the delivery of transportation, energy, environmental and other infrastructure projects.

EFCA believes it is now a critical time for improving the business environment for the engineering consultancy industry, which has a crucial role in building strategic infrastructure to meet Europe's future needs.

EFCA urges governments to:

- define and prioritise projects for social, economic and environmental sustainability;
- appoint contractors, design engineers, supervising engineers and project managers as equal partners at the outset of each project;
- deploy simple and transparent award procedures and flexible contracts with them, with a mission to achieve results with the utmost efficiency in regard to time and expenditure;
- fast-track the project delivery process, i.e. facilitate the commencement of construction for parts of the projects where design is complete while others are being designed;
- accelerate the environmental & other permitting processes, e.g. with public sector committees authorized to process environmental & other permitting, and
- accelerate processing of site access by putting in place fair and efficient procedures for establishing right-of-way.

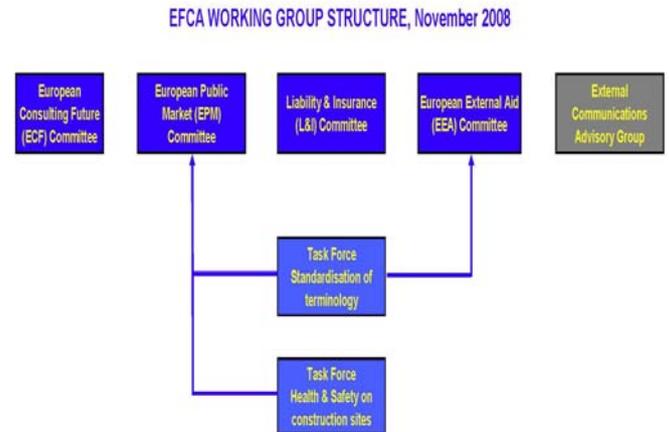
<http://www.efcanet.org/pages/news.aspx?item=8993>

Structure and shape of EFCA pillars reviewed to deliver better results

The EFCA Board of Directors reviewed the set-up of the EFCA committees and task forces in order to improve their clarity and effectiveness.

The EFCA committees and task forces are fundamental to the federation's representational work in the interest of the engineering consultancy industry. Whilst committees are focused on the engineering consultancy industry's strategic business conditions, task forces respond to specific EC initiatives that may impact on the industry's business conditions and/or provide collective analysis of current matters of pertinence.

Based on the identification of the European industry's core areas, the BoD decided the following committee set-up:



European Public Market committee (previously Public Procurement committee): procurement issues and matters related to consultant contract conditions in the internal European market. The committee's scope will also comprise award of public private partnership projects as well as relations with contractors and concessionaires in the context of DB and PPP projects.

European External Aid committee (previously Partnership for Development committee): the committee will continue to address questions of efficiency and effectiveness relating to the procurement and execution of EC service contracts for external actions, i.e. including recommendations on appropriate consultant contract conditions.

Liability and Insurance committee (previously Professional Liability committee): the committee will maintain its present scope of work, i.e. business and policy issues that impact on risk, liability and insurance costs and availability for the engineering consultancy industry.

A new committee called '**European Consulting Future**' will be established. The committee will analyse business trends and challenges, including

- the development of a European vision of the challenges of the future and the

potential of the consulting sector to address these issues;

- the evaluation of business trends in Europe;
- innovation, knowledge management and issues of intellectual property, and
- issues relating to industrial design.

Standardisation of Project Terminology (SPT) task force (previously

Standardisation Working Group): the task force will continue to support the European Public Market and European External Aid committees.

Health & Safety on Construction Sites (HSCS) task force (previously working

group on Directive 92/57 - Health & Safety) will continue to support the European Public Market Committee.

The **External Communications Advisory Group** will continue to provide expert opinions on the Voice of EFCA, the Bulletin and other PR tools.

Austrian association welcomes debate on business practices

The EFCA Board of Directors' meetings outside Brussels are a key instrument for reinforcing relations and communication with the EFCA stakeholders.



3rd European Consultants' Cooperation Forum
Vienna, 14 November 2008

As a sequel to the 14 November 2008 high-level 3rd European Consultants' Cooperation Forum in Vienna, ACA (Austrian Consultants Association) representatives discussed the regulation

and organisation of the Austrian engineering consultancy profession with the EFCA Board of Directors in Vienna.

The two Austrian associations, bAIK/BS-Ing (Bundeskammer der Architekten und Ingenieurkonsulenten/Bundessektion Ingenieurkonsulente) and FTBI (Fachverband Ingenieurbüros) established the umbrella federation ACA in 1997.

ACA/bAIK President Josef Robl provided an overview of the complex picture of the Austrian legislation and regulation governing the practice of engineering consultancy services.

ACA representatives informed about ownership and liability of engineering consultancy firms, the role of engineering chambers, reserved activities of Austrian chartered engineering consultants, and ACA activities in the area of public procurement.

In order to set up a systematic data system on national market conditions and association matters, the Board is currently reviewing a survey, which will be launched to the membership shortly.

ACA and EFCA concluded to strengthen their cooperation in order to educate public clients on the need for carefully balancing issues of both price and quality in the selection process.

How good is EFCA at communicating with its members?

Directors of the national associations evaluated the EFCA communication tools and content, and suggested some improvements at the November 2008 D&S meeting.

The member associations are happy with the number of communication tools, which satisfy their needs. However, they feel that improvement can be made to regular updates on the actions of the committees and task forces.

A majority of the associations use the Bulletin to communicate EFCA's representational activities to their firms.

The member associations suggested activities to raise the federation's and the industry's visibility in a wider context. In the current credit crunch, they called on EFCA to raise a strong and effective voice on the need for increased investments in construction, infrastructure and energy efficiency measures and for financial support to the banking sector to ensure that banks re-open credit lines for businesses.



All suggestions were welcomed by the Board of Directors, and immediately acted upon.

EFCA President Panos Panagopoulos sent out a press release (see page 2).

Also, it is planned to publish reports in 2009 in order to support the national associations in their outward communication with all stakeholder groups on a range of issues such as innovation, health and safety, public procurement and award procedures for public private partnerships.

Liability and Insurance Committee embarks on 2009 strategy plan

At its December meeting, the Liability and Insurance Committee set the 2009 agenda and agreed the activities that it would action during the coming year.

The well-attended meeting debated key challenges facing the industry at national level and how the EFCA committee could assist in addressing those challenges.

The members agreed to embark on the European fact-finding study on national legislative frameworks and market practices, which has been extensively discussed in the past. They carefully reviewed the draft questionnaire in order to identify critical liability and insurance issues.

In this context, they exchanged views on national standard contract conditions and how such standard forms might provide the starting point for negotiations on a delimitation of the engineering consultant's liability.

The EFCA committee will closely cooperate with the FIDIC Risk & Liability Committee on the new 'Short Guide -Top 5 Risk Issues'. In close consultation with FIDIC, EFCA will also update its policy statements and campaigns on capped liability and joint & several liability.

Given the critical importance of these issues for the European industry, the committee will increase its activities and agreed to plan its next meeting on 2 April 2009.

Please contact the secretariat (vdalle@efca.be) if you are interested in joining and supporting the committee.

EFCA and Architects' Council of Europe jointly address ambiguity in Health & Safety Directive

As the result of a joint effort between EFCA and the Architects' Council of Europe (ACE), both federations submitted further input into the non-binding-guidance for the member states on the correct interpretation and implementation of Directive 92/57.

The Commission has contracted an external consultant to prepare the guide. Experts from stakeholders have been invited to take part in the monitoring and steering work. Both EFCA and ACE nominated experts and collaborate together in order to make joint submissions on issues facing the designers' community.

At the end of October 2008, EFCA and ACE submitted three documents to the Commission and the external consultant to offer direction in the drafting of the guide. It is thus aimed at setting out the core value of designers (i.e. consideration of the principles of prevention as far as reasonably practicable) and delineating equitable responsibilities of other project parties.

The first joint paper is a contribution to identify suitable examples of good health and safety practice on construction sites and illustrating how the General Principles of Prevention can be incorporated in the various stages of a construction project.

Secondly, EFCA and ACE address particular concerns in relation to the use of the terms 'design' and 'compliant design'. The first term is very frequently misinterpreted in relation to the complex processes involved in the realisation of a construction project.

Furthermore, EFCA and ACE believe that the concept 'compliant design' cannot be reasonably included in the proposed guide because the General Principles of Prevention are, by their nature, too general to form a set of criteria on which compliance can be assessed.

The third paper outlines various procurement methods, effects on design responsibility and consequences for health & safety coordination.

EFCA and ACE underlined the need for including in the modular guide an explanation and definition of the terms 'project preparation', 'planning' and 'design' with a view to the procurement strategy.

The external consultant is expected to review the first draft by January 2009, before the 18-19 February 2009 meeting of the Commission-experts working party.

EFCA and ACE will continue their joint efforts to safeguard the interests of the designers' community in the enforcement of Directive 92/57.

EFCA President encourages Polish awarding authorities to enact appropriate procurement procedures

On 23 October 2008, EFCA President Panagopoulos made a presentation on the EU public procurement framework to the Polish Minister and the administrative staff, responsible for national procurement law.



Clients and consultants from the central and eastern European countries gathered in Warsaw to exchange 'best practices' in the implementation of such EU funded projects.

SIDiR, the Polish member association, is committed to achieve optimum quality of EU regional policy assistance, aimed at advancing infrastructure projects and ensuring sustainable development.

In conclusion of his presentation, Panos Panagopoulos called on Polish representatives to adopt procurement procedures focused on quality rather than on price, in the interest of overall project cost-effectiveness.

European Public Market Committee	Brussels	12.01.2009
Board of Directors meeting	Brussels	06.02.2009
European External Aid Committee	Brussels	18.02.2009
Board of Directors meeting	Paris	19-20.03.2009
Liability & Insurance Committee	Paris	02.04.2009
European Public Market Committee	Paris	03.04.2009

Hotels in Brussels - EFCA corporate rates 2009

For 2009, the EFCA Secretariat negotiated special corporate rates with three already known hotels located in three different areas of Brussels' city centre.

The *Hotel IZÁN* (former Melia) near the Avenue Louise offers comfortable rooms in an English, colourful and cosy style. The design hotel *The Dominican*, inaugurated in October 2007, is located close to the Grand Place and offers comfortable, stylish and elegant rooms with upscale amenities. The hotel *Crowne Plaza Brussels City Centre 'Le Palace'* close to the train station 'Nord' faces the botanical gardens and is the nearest to the EFCA Secretariat. It combines the Art Nouveau style with Art Deco style and offers a large number of comfortable, modern and elegant rooms with upscale facilities.

Please note that this selection is based on members' booking habits and on the number of rooms that were reserved in 2008. The Secretariat decided to work with three hotels only in order to increase the number of rooms per hotel and thus to avoid a steep price rise in 2010.

The 2009 list of hotels as well as a map with their location are available on request, on the EFCA Website (Calendar/Hotels) and on Extranet for the members (Useful Papers/Useful Documents). Please do not hesitate to contact the EFCA Secretariat (Virginie Dalle, vdalle@efca.be), should you need assistance or more information.

We would appreciate your feedback on these hotels.

For your information, some of the hotels do not always guarantee the special corporate prices during the so called 'blackout dates', e.g. the congress periods in Brussels: Intensive Care 23-27/03/2009, Seafood 27-30/04/2009, Decosit 7-11/09/2009, Label Expo 22-26/09/2009.



**SEASON'S GREETINGS
FROM THE EFCA SECRETARIAT**



EUROPEAN BRIEFING

INTERNAL MARKET p8

Services Directive: transposition process in some member states is alarmingly slow
Successful tool against unnecessary barriers to intra-EU trade

Commission takes action to ensure that member states implement EU public procurement laws

EU FUNDS & PROGRAMMES p9

Who gets EU cash? New web site gives details of beneficiaries

Commission wishes to bring six neighbours closer to the EU

EC and Cuba re-launch cooperation

Irregularities in Bulgaria: Commission cuts funds

MISCELLANEOUS p11

Financial crisis: facts, policies and the EU response

Security and solidarity at the heart of Europe's energy review

Initiatives to break down barriers to using procurement for innovation

January deadline approaching for EU construction business missions to Korea

DOCUMENTS & WEB SITES OF INTEREST p14

INTERNAL MARKET

Services Directive: transposition process in some member states is alarmingly slow

One third of national business associations believe that their respective countries will not meet the deadline for the transposition of the Services Directive by 28 December 2009.

Under the Services Directive, member states are required to screen existing

legislation on service providers so as to remove unjustified protectionist obstacles and unduly complicated requirements. However, the screening process and the setting up of the 'Points of Single Contact' progresses at different speeds.

This entails a risk of delays in transposition and uneven implementation.

<http://212.3.246.117/docs/3/GLDNDJCACLLFJE NEFIJAKKAGPDBW9DPYT19LTE4Q/UNICE/docs/DLS/2008-02275-E.pdf>

Successful tool against unnecessary barriers to intra-EU trade

A preventive mechanism against regulatory barriers to trade within the EU has been in operation for 25 years.

For 25 years the notification procedure under Directive 98/34/EC and its predecessor, Directive 83/189/EC obliged Member States to provide information on any draft technical regulations before they are adopted at the national level.

Member states make intensive use of the 98/34 procedure. Food and agricultural sectors as well as telecommunications, transport, construction and mechanical engineering are the major areas in which the 98/34 procedure has been applied. In 12% of cases, the Commission found that the new regulations could have hampered trade.

However, in more than 95% of these cases, solutions were found before member states adopted these texts. These solutions thus avoided the need for infringement procedures which are always cumbersome and onerous for all parties involved.



All proposed national safety regulations have to be entered onto the EU's TRIS database. Stakeholders can browse legislation that may impact on their

business. Notified drafts are classified according to their aim and area of activity. The TRIS database is a free service and is updated daily.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/tris/index_en.htm

Commission takes action to ensure that member states implement EU public procurement laws

The Commission ensures that public procurement laws are properly taken on board, and takes steps to put the situation right in the member states.

The Commission acted in connection with several breaches:

- **Germany:** public service contracts for the maintenance of district roads by administrative districts in eight German States (Länder), concluded with the State entities responsible for the federal roads. These contracts are mostly concluded without prior calls for tenders or contract award procedures.
- **Greece:** in the course of the tendering procedure for the award of the project 'Main Drainage Collectors of the West Part of Thriassion Field', the contracting entity accepted the offer of the preferred bidder, although it deviated from the terms in the call for tenders in relation to the bank guarantees, provided under exclusion penalty. Furthermore, it accepted also the offer of the second lowest bidder, although it presented unacceptable deviations regarding the way of submission of the supporting documents (principles of transparency and equal treatment of the participants).
- **Spain:** the Commission still holds some doubts as to whether the new Spanish system of remedies in the field of public procurement actually guarantees the existence of a period between award and conclusion of the contract, providing all rejected bidders with the necessary elements which would allow them to effectively institute review proceedings. The Commission considers that the rules on modification of contracts after their

award in the new Spanish public procurement law (Ley 30/2007) are not in line with the principles of equal treatment, non discrimination and transparency. The Commission also considers that the law makes it possible for the contracting authority to resort to the use of negotiated procedures without publication, outside the circumstances foreseen in article 31 of Directive 2004/18/EC.

- **Cyprus:** tendering procedure of the Electricity Authority of Cyprus (EAC) for the award of the public contract for the design, supply and construction of the 4th Unit of the Vasilikos Power Station. The provisions of the invitation to tender were not applied in a uniform way during the procedure in question; an offer was rejected on the basis of criteria which were not clearly mentioned in the call for tenders and a candidate who did not respect the requirements on experience was accepted. Also the complainant was not provided in due time with the necessary information concerning the reasons for his rejection.
- **Luxembourg:** has not transposed Directive 2004/18/EC on public procurement. The deadline for transposition of the directive expired on 31 January 2006

EU FUNDS & PROGRAMMES

Who gets EU cash? New website gives details of beneficiaries

The 'Financial Transparency System' search engine makes details of the beneficiaries of EU funds publicly available.



The Commission and its executive agencies, set up to help run EU funded programmes, give around 10 billion euro grants and other forms of support every year.

Beginning with the 2007 financial year, the new Commission website details some 28,000 beneficiaries of EU research, education and culture, energy and transport energy and transport and certain aspects of aid to third countries.

It lists data on beneficiaries of support managed by the Commission at a central level only.

http://ec.europa.eu/grants/search/index_en.htm

Information on beneficiaries of support, which is managed by national administrations, is available through:

http://ec.europa.eu/grants/search/beneficiaries_en.htm.

Details of beneficiaries in the field of external aid can be found at:

http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/funding/beneficiaries_en.htm

Commission wishes to bring six neighbours closer to the EU

The Commission's proposal for a new Eastern Partnership represents a step change in the EU's relations with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

The Commission intends to base future 'more ambitious partnerships' with Eastern countries on three main pillars:

- more intensive political relations and economic integration into the EU economy (including a comprehensive Institution-Building Programme),
- a framework for multilateral cooperation (Integrated Border Management, Small and Medium sized Enterprise Facilities, Regional electricity markets, renewables and energy efficiency, Southern energy corridor, Prevention of, preparedness for, and response to natural and man-made disasters) and
- gradually increased financial assistance.

The Commission proposal is going substantially beyond what has so far been politically and economically available to

these partners under the ENP (European Neighbourhood Policy).

http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/index_en.htm

European Commission and Cuba re-launch cooperation

The European Commission and the Republic of Cuba have signed a joint declaration, which sets out a framework for future cooperation.

Both parties agreed to continue to explore the areas for potential cooperation. These could include the environment, science and technology, trade, cultural exchanges and disaster preparedness.

European Commission funding of between 20 and 25 million euro could be invested in these areas of future co-operation.

http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/EU-Cuba-Joint%20declaration-261108_EN.pdf

Irregularities in Bulgaria: Commission cuts funds

In July 2008, Bulgaria had roughly 500 million euro of EU funding suspended over corruption fears. Measures taken subsequently have not delivered concrete results.

Bulgaria will lose 220 million euro allocated to it under the EU's Phare programme. When Bulgaria joined the Union in January 2007, some Phare funds remained unspent, but it was initially allowed to continue using them.

However, the Commission froze the money in February 2008 because of concerns about irregularities in spending and a perceived lack of sound financial management.

The Commission did not lift the freeze before 30 November, which, under Phare rules, is the final deadline for Bulgaria to allocate money to individual projects. As Bulgaria cannot allocate money while funds are frozen, the Commission's decision

effectively deprives Bulgaria of access to 220 million euro.

The Commission's worries about Bulgaria's handling of EU funds puts at risk allocations from several pre- and post-accession funds. During the course of 2008, the Commission has frozen several funds, including 36 million euro from the Transition Facility, a post-accession fund for institution building, which needs to be unfrozen by December 2009 if it is not to be lost.

Another 115 million euro was frozen from the Instrument for Structural Policies for Pre-Accession (ISPA). The Commission will send its own auditors to Bulgaria in mid-January to assess whether the ISPA freeze should be lifted.

The Commission has yet to decide whether there is any need to suspend the EU structural funds allocated to Bulgaria since it became a member state.

Bulgaria has been allocated approximately 11 billion euro from the structural funds for the period 2007-13.

MISCELLANEOUS

Financial crisis: facts, policies and the EU response

In the EU, the current turmoil has prompted action at many levels – by national governments, the European Central Bank and the Commission.

The Commission's **Recovery Plan** is based on two, mutually reinforcing, elements:

- firstly, short-term measures to boost demand, save jobs and help restore confidence;
- secondly, 'smart investment' to yield higher growth and sustainable prosperity in the longer-term.

The Recovery Plan calls for a timely and temporary fiscal stimulus of around 200 billion euro, within both national budgets (around 170 billion euro) and EU and

European Investment Bank budgets (around 30 billion euro).

The Plan makes full use of the flexibility offered in the revised Stability and Growth Pact.

It also continues to implement the medium- and longer-term challenges of structural reforms called for under the Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs needed to raise potential growth.



It puts forward steps to promote entrepreneurship, research and innovation, including in the car and construction industries.

The Plan also aims to boost efforts to tackle climate change while creating much-needed jobs at the same time, through for example strategic investment in energy efficient buildings and technologies.

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/focuson/focuson13254_en.htm

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0800:FIN:EN:PDF>

The contribution of the **Cohesion Policy** to the Commission's recovery package consists of a variety of legislative and non-legislative measures.

The main objective is to accelerate payments to member states and to facilitate access to the Structural Funds, which will help speed up project implementation on the ground. The advances aim to provide an immediate cash flow at the initial phase of the programming period in order to facilitate the payments to the project beneficiaries. Member states are obliged to respect the minimum national co-financing rates set by the regulations (ranging from 15% to 50%,

depending on the programme), but the system is flexible.

On 2 December, the Competitiveness Council adopted conclusions for the introduction of the **Small Business Act** for Europe that seeks to shield and support SMEs (small and medium-sized enterprises) in the current economic crisis.

The Competitiveness Council focused on three priority areas: improving SME access to finance, ensuring that the regulatory environment is supportive of SME needs and enhancing market access for SMEs.

Some of the measures to be implemented in these areas include:

- Increasing to 30 billion euro the volume of lending to SMEs from the EIB Group for the period 2008-2011 as well as modernising and streamlining EIB Group products to make it easier for SMEs to access them.
- Creating European business centres in high-growth countries such as China and India.
- Amending Directive 2000/35/EC on late payments with a view to ensuring that SMEs are paid on time for any commercial transactions.
- Creating a European network of female entrepreneur ambassadors to help unlock women's entrepreneurial potential.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/sba_en.htm

Security and solidarity at the heart of Europe's energy review

Following on from the first strategic energy review (SER) in 2006, the Commission issued a number of legislative proposals both for security of supply and for energy efficiency.



The first priority of this second strategic review is to reach the goals of a 20% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, a 20% share for renewables in final energy consumption and a 20% saving in future energy demand by 2020.

A second priority concerns the 'growing precariousness' of Europe's energy supply security. The ability of the EU to respond together in a crisis, according to the Commission, needs to be strengthened.

The Commission puts forward a new strategy to build up energy solidarity among member states and a new policy on energy networks to stimulate investment in more efficient, low-carbon energy networks.

The Commission proposes a new EU Energy Security and Solidarity Action Plan which sets out five areas where more action is needed to secure sustainable energy supplies, including six priority infrastructure projects.

The Commission also looks at the challenges that Europe will face between 2020 and 2050.

The Commission's package of measures targeting energy efficiency is large, but chiefly features a revision and extension of the scope of its directive on the energy efficiency of buildings.

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/strategies/2008/2008_11_ser2_en.htm

Initiatives to break down barriers to using procurement for innovation

The Commission launched a call for proposals to bring together leading public procurers into European networks to create a stronger demand for innovative goods and services.

The call is part of the Lead Market Initiative and aims to boost innovation in six markets, including sustainable construction.

The objective of the activities funded by the call is to support public procurers in purchasing new and improved solutions, products and services.

This objective is to be achieved through the establishment of transnational networks of public procurers from national, regional and local authorities. It could focus in particular on innovation in terms of new design technologies, developments in construction management and supply chain management and the use of standards and life-cycle costing in public procurement.

The call is open until 27 February 2009 for consortia of public procurers from at least three EU Member States or associated countries.

Three to four proposals will be selected for funding, for up to 95 percent of eligible costs and up to 1 million euro per project for a period of up to three years.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/funding/files/themes_2008/calls_prop.htm

January deadline approaching for EU construction business missions to Korea

The EU Gateway Programme provides European companies with tools to develop business in the Korean market.



EU companies in the construction and building technologies sector that are considering doing business in Korea have until 21 January 2009 to apply for a one week Business Mission to the country in June 2009.

To be eligible for support from the EU Gateway Programme for the construction and building technologies business mission, the company's activities need to be related to the engineering, design, and construction of public and private buildings and infrastructure works (e.g. roads, airports, ports).

<http://www.eu-gateway.eu/go.php?nID=22&page=Home>



DOCUMENTS & WEB SITES OF INTEREST

EU LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Legislative and Work Programme 2009 - Acting now for a better Europe

In spite of the 2009 European elections and the European Commission's end of term in early November 2009, the Barroso team wants to pass on a message of action. Its 2009 programme comprises 12 strategic initiatives, 37 priority initiatives, 33 simplification proposals and 20 withdrawals.

http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/index_en.htm

Towards world-class clusters in the European Union: Implementing the broad-based innovation strategy

Competitive clusters are powerful engines of economic development and drivers for innovation in the European Union. They provide a fertile business environment for companies, especially small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs), to collaborate with research institutions, suppliers, customers and competitors located in the same geographical area. The Commission communication calls for more efforts for facilitating the emergence of world-class clusters in the EU.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/innovation/index_en.htm

Directive on road infrastructure safety management

The Council of Ministers adopted the directive on the management of the safety of road infrastructures in the EU.

The text aims to guarantee that safety is integrated in all stages of planning, design, operation and use of road infrastructures in the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T).

The minimum requirements laid down in the Directive focus on the following procedures: road safety impact assessments, road safety audits, network safety management and safety inspections.

Member states will have two years from the entry into force of the Directive to comply with its provisions.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st03/st03652.en08.pdf>

New framework for waste management in the EU

The EU legislation on waste management was updated by a new directive, formally adopted at second reading (co-decision procedure) on 20 October 2008 by the Environment Council.

The new directive confirms the implementation of the principle of a five-level hierarchy (prevention, reuse, recycling, recovery and disposal).

Under the new directive, member states will have to plan and implement waste prevention programmes, with the European Commission being responsible for reporting on the progress made in this field. Finally, though the directive does not set objectives for prevention (but sets out a revision to this effect two years after its implementation), it does set recycling objectives at 50% by 2020 for certain material flows, including municipal waste, paper, glass, metal and plastic waste, and at 70% by 2020 for industrial waste.

Member states will have two years to transpose the new directive into national law.

<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/08/st03/st03646.en08.pdf>

The outermost regions, an asset for Europe

Commission communication, which puts forward an updated strategy with regard to seven regions: the four French Overseas Departments (Guadeloupe, Guyana, Réunion and Martinique), the Portuguese autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira and the Spanish autonomous region of the Canary Islands. By suggesting a new approach to these regions as 'regions of opportunity' the Commission is proposing to ensure an optimum use of the 7.8 billion euro of community investments available for these regions and to deepen knowledge about them and the partnership with the EU.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/sources/docoffic/official/communic/rup2008/rup_com2008642_en.pdf

CONSULTATIONS

EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region

Deadline: 31 December 2008

A Commission communication is planned for June 2009. This communication will be accompanied by an action plan defining the key players, the financial instruments to be deployed, as well as a schedule for the strategy's execution.

http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/baltic/consultation_en.htm

Electronic procurement

Deadline: 12 January 2009

On-line survey on the actual experiences of businesses and public purchasers in the field of e-procurement.

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/publicprocurement/e-procurement_en.htm#consultation

Towards a Secure, Sustainable and Competitive European Energy Network

Deadline: 31 March 2009

The Commission invites views on what the EU should do to stimulate the necessary investments and help advance projects which can help Europe secure reliable, affordable and sustainable energy supplies for the future. It also specifically seeks suggestions on how to revise the Trans-European Networks for Energy programme to make it more effective.

http://ec.europa.eu/energy/strategies/consultations/2009_03_31_gp_energy_en.htm

REPORTS

Enlargement Strategy and Progress Reports 2008

The annual strategy document explains the EC policy on EU enlargement. It contains also a multi-annual financial framework, setting out the financial assistance available to support the reform efforts of the candidate and potential candidates over the next years. In the 2008 progress reports the Commission services monitor and assess the achievements of each of the candidate and potential candidates over the last year.

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/press_corner/key-documents/reports_nov_2008_en.htm

Trans-European Transport Network: annual reports for 2007-08

The reports are presented by the coordinators appointed by the European Commission to follow and facilitate progress in the eight priority transport projects in the trans-European network (TEN-T).

They analyse in detail the progress of the projects, all co-funded through the Community budget, and propose recommendations to enable all stakeholders in the projects to move forward.

The Commission will start its review of the Community's TEN policy, and take into account the challenge of climate change.

A Commission green paper is expected for early 2009, which will be followed by a public consultation.

http://ec.europa.eu/ten/transport/coordinators/index_en.htm

2008 EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard

The 2008 EU scoreboard contains the R&D investment data of publicly available audited accounts from 2,000 participating companies over the 2007-2008 financial year. R&D investment by EU companies increased by 8.8% compared to R&D investment growth by US companies of 8.6% and worldwide corporate R&D investment growth of 9%.

http://iri.jrc.ec.europa.eu/research/scoreboard_2008.htm

Supporting the internationalisation of SMEs

Despite the advantages of embracing globalisation and the risks of not doing so many European SMEs still remain focused on their national markets: only 8% of EU27 SMEs export and only 12% of the inputs of an average SME are purchased abroad. The main reported reasons are a lack of financial resources but most of all lack of skills or skilled human capital to tackle internationalisation (study of the Observatory of European SMEs)

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/support_measures/internationalisation/report_internat.pdf

The Lisbon Review 2008 - Measuring Europe's Progress in Reform

This World Economic Forum report shows that in many areas related to the Lisbon Strategy, Croatia is doing better than certain EU members.

<http://www.weforum.org/pdf/gcr/lisbonreview/TheLisbonReview2008.pdf>

Energy and environment report 2008

The report assesses the key drivers, environmental pressures and impacts from the production and consumption of energy, taking into account the main objectives of the European policy on energy and environment.

http://reports.eea.europa.eu/eea_report_2008_6/en/

Employment in Europe

The Employment in Europe report 2008, addresses topics that are high on the European Union's employment policy agenda. It gives a comprehensive overview of the employment situation in the EU, as well as an analysis of key labour market issues, including immigration, post-enlargement intra-EU labour mobility, quality of work and the link between education and employment.

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/employment_strategy/employ_en.htm

19th annual report on implementation of the Structural Funds (2007)

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0659:FIN:EN:PDF>

25th annual report on monitoring the application of Community law

One major finding is that the number of infringement cases being dealt with by the Commission at the end of 2007 had risen by 5.9% to 3,400. Despite an increase in infringement cases, the

Commission can point to a slightly faster procedure, with infringement cases now taking an average of 23 months to complete for the period of 1999 to 2006.

http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/infringements/infringements_annual_report_25_en.htm

Court of Auditors – Annual report on the implementation of the budget

The report, covering the 2007 financial year, acknowledges improvements in management and monitoring linked to the Structural Funds. The number of errors in payment requests made by member states, which may lead to undue transfers from Community funds, remains however too high.

A Commission interim report indicates that effects of the action plan to strengthen surveillance of the Commission in the joint management of structural actions (adopted following the 2006 report Court of Auditors, which identified a 12% error rate for Cohesion Policy) are already being felt.

<http://eca.europa.eu/portal/pls/portal/docs/1/1569525.PDF>

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=SEC:2008:2756:FIN:EN:PDF>

Progress towards achieving the Kyoto objectives

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0651:FIN:EN:PDF>

Eurostat regional yearbook 2008

This publication presents an overview of the most recent economic, social and demographic changes in the 271 regions of the 27 EU Member States together with the regions of three candidate countries (Croatia, Macedonia and Turkey) plus the four EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland).

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

MISCELLANEOUS

Autumn economic forecast 2008-2010

The Commission is forecasting a severe slowing in growth in 2008 (1.4% in comparison with 2.9% in 2007), which will increase in 2009 (0.2%) before rising slightly again in 2010, (1.1%); forecasts for the euro area are even darker (1.2%, 0.1% and 0.9%). Several European countries will slip into technical recession in 2008 with a decline of the GDP over 2 consecutive six-monthly periods. This will especially be the case in Estonia and Latvia which will witness a decline of 1.2% and 2.7% in their GDPs in 2008 although they are announcing growth rates of 4.8% and 2.5%. Seven EU countries including Ireland and France are due to rise above the limit allowed by the EU in terms of their public deficit (3% of the GDP). The Commission is also forecasting a severe slowing in employment growth in 2009-2010 and a deterioration of budgetary deficits. However inflation is due to return to below the 2.5% mark.

The IMF has made a serious revision of its growth forecasts for 2009. It forecasts a decline of 0.2% in the GDP for the EU, 0.5% in the euro area, 0.5% for France, 0.8% for Germany and 1.3% in the UK. These figures are much more pessimistic than the forecasts issued by the Commission on 3 November.

The Organisation for Co-operation and Economic Development forecasts an extended economic slowing in the USA, Japan and the Euro Area. Economic activity is due to decline next year by 0.9% in the US, 0.5% in the Euro Area and by 0.1% in Japan. The GDP for all OECD countries is due to contract in 2009 by 0.3% annually before recovering slightly with growth of 1.5% in 2010. The average unemployment level in the OECD zone estimated at 5.9% this year is due to rise to 6.9% next year to reach 7.2% in 2010. The report believes that the

world economy will have to face an extended period of financial turbulence until the end of the 2009 with a progressive stabilisation after that.

http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/thematic_articles/article13288_en.htm

<http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2008/update/03/index.htm>

http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_33733_20347538_1_1_1_1,00.html

2008-9 Global Competitiveness report

Report published by the World Economic Forum.

Nordic EU members retain 3rd, 4th and 6th places at top of global competitiveness league table with high levels of educational achievement laying the foundations for high levels of technological adoption and innovation.

<http://www.weforum.org/documents/gcr0809/index.html>

Construction output down by 1.3% in the euro area

Down by 1.5% in the EU27.

September 2008 compared with August 2008.

http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2008/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2008_MONTH_11/4-19112008-EN-AP_1.PDF

State Aid Scoreboard

The EU's member states granted less state aid in 2007 than in 2006: 64.8 billion euro excluding railways, compared to 66.7 billion euro. Over the last 25 years, the total level of state aid has fallen from more than 2% of GDP in the 1980s to around 0.5% in 2007.

This decrease, explains the report, is due to three factors: aid for the coal industry continues to decline; the member states have considerably reduced their rescue and restructuring aid; and the downward trend is even more pronounced in the 12 new member states.

http://ec.europa.eu/competition/state_aid/studies_reports/studies_reports.html

Study in Europe

The new web portal provides information about the range of courses in more than four thousand higher European education institutions, admission procedures, costs, and scholarships in 32 European countries (EU member states, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey).

www.study-in-europe.org

Review of EU-Russia relations

http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/russia/index_en.htm

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0740:FIN:EN:PDF>

Selected Principal European Economic Indicators

New webpage, bringing together in one single place a set of the most relevant and timely short-term economic indicators for the euro area and the European Union.

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/euroindicators>

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