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***National associations urge decision makers to implement recovery plans through projects that make a difference in society***

*At their Spring meeting in Rome, the directors of all national associations exchanged information on actions for accelerating infrastructure projects that are in the pipeline and initiatives that they take to assist firms.*

The national directors commented and elaborated on the Secretariat's compilation of stimulus packages across Europe and, in particular, about advanced and additional investments in public infrastructure in their countries.

The meeting discussed critical issues and challenges for the engineering consultancy industry, including the need for accelerated timeframes for procurement and simplified administrative procedures.



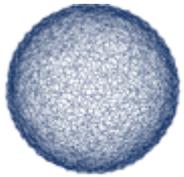
The associations will continue to focus on the industry's quality capacities to optimise the investments and create sustainable infrastructure.

<http://www.efcanet.org/pages/news.aspx?item=9787>

***EFCA emphasises the need for integrated and global climate approach***

*EFCA's member associations prepare to promote together the industry's crucial capabilities to develop long term solutions to the climate change threats in the context of the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen.*

The meeting of national directors acknowledged that the engineering consultancy multidisciplinary teams develop innovative and integrated concepts to fight global warming and that sustainability is among the core values of their firms' services.



COP15  
COPENHAGEN

The associations will call on national decision makers, public clients and private partners for raising awareness about sustainability in their planning and implementation of projects. At the same time they will highlight that it pays to focus on sustainable alternatives.

This campaign highlights that our industry's green conscience and expertise are definitely making the difference in sustainable planning.

### ***EFCA achieves appropriate interpretation of Directive regarding CVs and advocates flexibility in project procurement and execution***

*In a meeting with officials from Directorate General Internal Market & Services, EFCA presented its long-elaborated views on the evidence that firms are to submit to demonstrate they are suitable in the pre-qualification stage.*

On 26 March 2009, EFCA president Panos Panagopoulos and secretary general Jan Van der Putten discussed the industry's concerns about the evaluation of CVs in the selection stage with the European Commission.

The Commission agreed that only the firms' general experience is relevant at the selection stage, including relevant project experience and CVs of available key staff that carry the requisite experience – while the project team qualifications and effectiveness should be assessed in the award stage. EFCA's key considerations

and recommendations are outlined in the March 2009 policy paper.

The meeting also touched on the need for more efficient and successful project implementation through other than traditional procurement approaches.

EFCA advocated more flexibility in the procurement process and referred in this respect to the study on the use of 'voluntary collaborative arrangements' in construction, commissioned by DG Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission.

EFCA particularly drew attention to some critical aspects in the current European legislative framework, in particular with regard to the need for double tendering for design projects, one for the project definition and one for the design per se - which led the European Commission to the imperfect concept of competitive dialogue.

### ***EFCA shares views with EuropeAid on the aid effectiveness strategy***

*At the April meeting of the European External Aid committee, Luc Bagur, Head of Unit, EuropeAid (Organisation strategies, Aid effectiveness and relations with bilateral donors) highlighted major challenges in the implementation of co-financing, donor coordination and country ownership, and discussed the impact of the Commission's vision on the engineering consultancy industry.*



Mr Bagur presented the Commission's principles for delegated cooperation, both where the EC receives from a bilateral organisation and where it delegates funds to a member state's organisation.

He explained that the better donor coordination goes hand-in-hand with a better division of labour, i.e. concentrating aid activities of each member state in sectors and regions where they have specific experience and comparative advantages and on a limited number of priority countries.

Concentration of aid at sector level is needed to address the existing fragmentation of aid, which weakens ownership and burdens already limited institutional capacity.

He pointed out that, as a consequence of delegated cooperation arrangements between the Commission and the member states, information about proposed projects is posted on the web site of the delegated bilateral donor.

Mr Bagur underlined that the key goal of the Commission's aid effectiveness agenda is to increase the use of country systems for the delivery of aid. The EC will pursue this goal through increased delivery of aid through general and sector budget support and decentralisation.

According to Mr Bagur, critical issues in working towards country ownership and capacity development relate to assessment of existing organisational or system capacity, quality project proposals, tender documents and award procedures, and operational and financial management aspects of aid implementation.

In conclusion of the debate, Mr Bagur stated that no reduction of the demand for technical cooperation is envisaged and that the European consultancy industry is to remain an important partner in the implementation of EU development aid.

### ***EFCA shows European donors that adequate project budgets and consultant selection procedures are prerequisite for sustainable quality infrastructure***

*On 26 March 2009, more than 50 participants from the European Commission and from EIC (European International Contractors), including EFCA, FIDIC, and bilateral donor agencies and the EU member states, came together to exchange views on issues pertaining to procurement of infrastructure works in the ACP (African, Caribbean and Pacific) countries in a roundtable discussion organised by the EC and EIC.*

Whilst controversial issues, such as the increasing use of (sectoral) budget support and country procurement systems, were not avoided during the talks, all participants agreed that the current regulatory European Development Fund system should be engineered towards allowing a maximum of quality and sustainability.



Martin Güldner, chair of EFCA's European External Aid Committee (left)

Martin Güldner, chair of the European External Aid committee, emphasised the primordial role of our industry in both the design and the supervision stage and discussed the reasons why quality issues have been raised in project designs.

Panos Panagopoulos, who attended the meeting contributed to the discussion with European Commission officials.

In particular, the EFCA president called for:

- more flexibility in the pre-qualification, urging the contracting authorities to refrain from defining the project team in the Terms of Reference. Such definitions are often disproportionate with project requirements and inhibit the allocation of the appropriate human resources, including young engineers.;
- more flexibility in the award of consulting and construction contracts, facilitating the early involvement of contractors for acceleration of project delivery;
- commit to quality based competition: participants should be selected on the basis of their ability to implement the project in accordance with contractual expectations. In this context, it would be a real step forward if the tender would be based on a realistic project budget and the award on quality and sustainability criteria.

The European Commission's invitation for further consultation and exchange of experience was very much welcomed by EFCA and EIC.

<http://www.eicontractors.de/seiten/focus/africa.php>

### **How to build the firms' medium-term future?**

*The new European Consulting Future committee, chaired by Lena Wästfelt, will develop a blueprint of EFCA objectives for supporting business strategies into 2015.*

The kick-off meeting addressed a series of basis questions:

- What is the impact of the current economic climate on the European industry (opportunities, lessons to be learned, labour practices, marketplace)?
- What are the most significant drivers in 2020?
- What are possible changes of the engineering consultants' image, roles, responsibilities, clients and clients' attitudes in 2020?

- What strategies should the committee develop to best position the European firms?
- What will the market look like in 2015?
- How can the industry control its own destiny and take on leadership roles in society?

Following the assessment of the industry's strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities and threats, the meeting discussed the committee's objectives.



The committee will set out its findings in a report, which is aimed at assisting the firms in preparing for, and dealing with, the key issues that impact their future.

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

## ***French association welcomes debate on markets and business practices***

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

SYNTEC-Ingénierie's Board of Directors discussed the regulation of the French profession and addressed issues related to the procurement of engineering consultancy services with the EFCA Board of Directors in Paris.

Secretary General Jean Félix explained the organisational set-up, the mission and the membership of the French employers' and professional association.

President Alain Bentéjac touched on the current French debate on the legal protection offered to architects in the context of the Services Directive.

SYNTEC-Ingénierie Board members set out the procurement procedure for buildings and infrastructure and debated critical issues such as profitability, insurance costs and price-quality ratio. They informed EFCA about the industry's experiences with public private partnerships, in particular concessions in the building and highway sectors.

Subsequently, EFCA's president Panos Panagopoulos presented the forward plan and progress of the federations' activities to the SYNTEC Board.

SYNTEC-Ingénierie concluded that EFCA's long-term efforts to influence European policy making provides a powerful contribution to the improvement of the business environment of the French member firms. The French association will continue its strong cooperation with the federation to ensure that the business interests of its firms are well represented at the European level.

## ***EFCA makes inventory of member states' current liability and insurance frameworks***

*The Liability & Insurance committee has taken a decisive step forward with the European fact-finding study on legal liability systems and insurance market practices.*

At its April 2009 meeting, the committee members agreed the methodology for finalising the ongoing fact-finding study on national regulatory frameworks, statutory and contractual insurance requirements and market practices and contributed valuable information on the situation in their countries.



As currently envisioned, the report will provide general and useful knowledge and principal differences between national systems to both national associations and their firms about national liability and insurance regimes in the EU member states.

The committee will also compile an overview of the insurance scheme / insurance-related services to firms that national associations provide to their member firms to allow member associations to capitalise on such information.

The meeting also looked at EFCA policies on European harmonisation of liability law and insurance. The committee confirmed its position that for the moment such a Europe-wide regime would not be practicable and effective, and that prerequisites for EU action are not present.

## E F C A A G E N D A

European External Aid Committee	Brussels	04.06.2009
Board of Directors meeting	Brussels	04.06.2009
EFCA GAM	Brussels	05.06.2008
European Public Market Committee	Brussels	15.06.2009
European Consulting Future Committee	Brussels	07.07.2009
Liability and Insurance Committee	London	11.09.2009
Board of Directors meeting	London	13.09.2009
European Public Market Committee	Brussels	08.10.2009
European External Aid Committee	Brussels	21.10.2009
D&S meeting	Seville (tbc)	06.11.2009
Board of Directors meeting	Copenhagen	26-27.11.2009
Liability and Insurance Committee	Brussels	10.12.2009 (tbc)

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### ***2009 EFCA General Assembly meeting***

*The 2009 EFCA General Assembly Meeting (GAM) will take place in Brussels on 5 June 2009.*

T.N. Narasimhan, Professor Emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley will address the formidable task of adapting to a changing society; a society that is in transition from exploitation to adaptation, based on his knowledge of earth science and its relevance to societal governance. This presentation will offer food for further debate between the industry's representatives and invited guests and clients during the dinner.

The 5 June 2009 Pre-GAM and GAM will decide a number of significant matters, including the 2008 accounts and the 2010 budget, the evolution of the FIDIC-EFCA relationship and the composition of the new Board of Directors. The president will present his report on progress in relation to the 2008-2011 Forward Plan and his vision of the future and the committee chairs will comment on the status of their activities. Before lunch, the attendants will have the opportunity to attend a presentation.

EFCA and ORI are inviting you to participate in this major forum, which offers the opportunity for an interchange of the European industry's experiences and bringing recommendations to its European representational federation.



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## GLOBAL CRISIS

### EUROPE'S RESPONSE

#### *Commission fights late payments*

*The Commission suggests that public authorities should lead by example and should - as a rule - pay their bills within 30 days.*

Based on a commitment in the Small Business Act, the Commission proposes substantial changes to the late payment directive of 2000.

The proposed changes reflect the importance of timely payments to businesses, and especially to SMEs:

- As a rule public authorities should pay within 30 days. Otherwise they will have to pay interest, a compensation for recovery costs and a flat-rate compensation of 5% of the amount due, which kicks in from day 1 of the delay. In duly justified cases the payment periods can be longer.
- The freedom to contract will be respected in business to business relations. However, in case of delay, businesses will be entitled to claim late payment interest and a compensation of recovery costs.
- The rules on grossly unfair contracts are tightened.

In parallel, the Commission commits itself to speed up payment of goods and services to fully respect the targets for paying bills and, in a number of cases, even shortening payment times to under the current legal period (see below).

This proposal aims at improving the cash flow of European business which is particularly important in times of economic downturn.

[http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/late\\_payments/index.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/late_payments/index.htm)

## ***Harder targets for faster payments of EU grants and contracts***

*The EU Commissioner for Financial Programming and Budget proposes a series of measures to speed up the 415,000 direct payments that the Commission makes each year.*

The measures focus on the part of the EU budget that the Commission implements directly (centrally managed grants and contracts).

It is aimed at reducing time-limits for pre-financing (from 30 to 20 days) and payment times from 45 to 30 days.

The Commission will also

- encourage its services to increase the use of flat rates and lump sums;
- offer its services the possibility to publish calls for proposals covering two successive years;
- promote the introduction of standardised calls of proposals;
- continue its efforts to reduce the overall time span of procurement procedures.

Furthermore, the Commission's Budget Directorate-General (DG BUDG) will play a more active role in assisting other services to accelerate financing decisions.

[http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/documents/sond\\_fin\\_management/management\\_systems/sec\\_2009\\_477\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/budget/library/documents/sond_fin_management/management_systems/sec_2009_477_en.pdf)

## ***Accelerated access to 6.3 billion euro of EU structural funds***

*The Council adopted a regulation aiming at a quicker and more targeted use of EU structural funds in order to counter the economic crisis.*

Member states get access to additional advance payments for an amount totalling 6.3 billion euro.

Up to 1.8 billion euro of advance payments of the European Social Fund (ESF) will allow member states to reinforce their labour

market policies, refocus support on the most vulnerable and step up action to boost skills.

Up to 4.5 billion euro of the European Regional Development Fund are brought forward from 2010 and 2011 to 2009 in order to finance productive investment, investment in infrastructure and regional and local development.

Furthermore, the new regulation increases the provision of assistance to member states by the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Investment Fund (EIF) in the implementation of operational programmes.

The two other parts of the recovery package in the field of Cohesion Policy (which aim at a further simplification of the ESF operations and at a greater support to energy efficiency and renewable energy investments in housing) will probably be adopted in the coming weeks.

<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=OJ:L:2009:094:0010:0012:EN:PDF>

## ***Nearly 1 billion euro for European transport infrastructure projects***

*The European Commission launched the 2009 TEN-T call for proposals.*

This year's call includes a 500 million euro call in the framework of the Commission's European Economic Recovery Plan, to support works which can start in 2009 or 2010 and be largely implemented over this two-year period.

In addition, there will be 370 million euro available under the TEN-T Multi-Annual Work Programme.

2009 priorities include Motorways of the Sea, Intelligent Transport Systems for Road, and the European Rail Traffic Management System (ERTMS).



Potential applicants must submit their proposals by 15 May 2009 at the latest.

[http://tentea.ec.europa.eu/en/apply\\_for\\_funding/follow\\_the\\_funding\\_process/calls\\_for\\_proposals\\_2009.htm](http://tentea.ec.europa.eu/en/apply_for_funding/follow_the_funding_process/calls_for_proposals_2009.htm)

### ***EU response to the crisis in developing countries***

*The European Commission presented a number of measures to help the developing countries weather the economic crisis.*

To take immediate action, the Commission will anticipate its aid payments in the total amount of 4.3 billion euro in 2009, i.e. 21% of the 2008-2013 European Development Fund for the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states.

This sum includes 3 billion euro as budget support and 800 million euro (of 1 billion euro) under the food facility to help farmers from poor countries. The remaining 500 million euro will finance social safety spending in the most vulnerable countries.

In addition, the Commission will double its contribution to the Infrastructure Trust Fund for Africa, adding 200 million euro more in 2009 and 2010. This money should provide leverage for the implementation of 2.5 billion euro in low-interest loans for infrastructure development (transport, water, energy and telecommunications).

The Commission also recommends better coordination between member states, noting that the multiplication of small programmes

and the lack of efficiency cost 5 to 7 billion euro a year.

[http://ec.europa.eu/development/services/news\\_en.cfm#newsDGdev](http://ec.europa.eu/development/services/news_en.cfm#newsDGdev)

## **EU FUNDS & PROGRAMMES**

### ***Public private partnerships for smart investments in clean technologies***

*The manufacturing, construction and automotive sectors and the Commission take steps to move ahead in the implementation of the research Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) for the 'Factories of the Future', 'Energy-efficient Buildings' and 'Green Cars' initiatives.*

These initiatives, announced as part of the European economic recovery plan will be funded under the 7<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme for Research and Development.

They concern three large industrial sectors which have been particularly affected by the economic downturn and where innovation can significantly contribute towards a more green and sustainable economy: automotive, construction and manufacturing.

The Commission foresees to provide a contribution of 50% to the total R&D budget, with matching investment coming from the private sector.

Ad-hoc industrial advisory groups are set up to facilitate the strategic dialogue between the Commission and the industry.

To allow research on priority topics to start-up rapidly, first Calls for research projects will be published in July 2009 with deadlines at the turn of the year, which could allow the first projects under the PPPs to start in spring of 2010.

<http://ec.europa.eu/research/index.cfm?pg=newsalert&lg=en&year=2009&na=ppp-310309>

## **15 million euro to promote sustainable energy investments in cities**

*The 'Intelligent Energy-Europe' (IEE) programme co-funds non-technological projects designed to promote energy effectiveness, renewable energies and non-pollutant transport systems.*

The 2009 IEE budget totals 96 million euro. For the first time, financial support will involve technical assistance to towns for the development of viable investment projects or programmes in the area of urban renewable energy.

Funding opportunities are currently available under the Call for Proposals 2009.

This call includes specific priorities on energy-efficiency, and the integration of renewable energy sources, in buildings.

[http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/index\\_en.html](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/intelligent/index_en.html)

<http://www.managenergy.net/iee.html>

## **150 billion euro Cohesion funding in 'green economy'**

*30% of total Cohesion Policy funds 2007-2013 are targeted at support for the environment, the fight against climate change and the promotion of eco-innovation.*

A large part of the envelope (54 billion euro) is designed to help member states to comply with EU environmental legislation.

48 billion euro of the regional policy budget for 2007-2013 is targeted at measures aimed at achieving EU climate objectives and creating a low carbon economy. This includes 23 billion for railways, 6 billion for clean urban transport, 4.8 billion for renewable energies and 4.2 billion euro for energy efficiency.

The Cohesion Policy is contributing 3 billion euro to the promotion of environmentally-friendly products and production processes in SMEs.

One of the clear aims of funding for research and innovation is to maintain Europe's global leadership in the field of green technologies.

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/themes/environment/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/themes/environment/index_en.htm)

## **New cooperation framework with six Eastern neighbourhood countries**

*600 million euro is earmarked till 2013 for the Eastern Partnership with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.*



This new cooperation framework provides for free trade agreements as well as - on a case-by-case basis and as a long term goal a full visa liberalisation.

It emphasises democratic values and transformation and promotes stability and prosperity.

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/eastern/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/eastern/index_en.htm)

## **2.7 billion euro EU-ACP cooperation agreement signed**

*The European Commission and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states signed a 2.7 billion euro agreement, funded via the Tenth European Development Fund (EDF).*

The financing will help ACP states meet global challenges in a number of areas: health (up to 300 million euro under the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria), environment and climate change (500 million euro), agriculture and development of the private sector (400

million euro), water, sanitation and infrastructures (500 million euro), and peace and security (400 million euro).

The assistance comes on top of the 14 billion euro granted to the ACP countries in 2007-2008 under the EDF's 2008-2013 programming period.

[http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/strategy\\_paper\\_intra\\_acp\\_edf10\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/development/icenter/repository/strategy_paper_intra_acp_edf10_en.pdf)

### **Aid for African trade**

*The European Commission pledged 115 million euro for a comprehensive transport and cross-border trade reform programme along the 'North-South Corridor', combined with a broader package of regional trade-related reforms.*

The North-South Corridor project is being driven by three of Africa's main regional economic communities – the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the East African Community (EAC) and Southern African Development Community (SADC).



The initiative is supported by international partners, including the European Investment Bank, the World Bank, the African Development Bank and the UK government.

<http://www.northsouthcorridor.org/>

### **1 million euro assistance to Albania to enhance financial management capacities**

*The EU-funded project aims at enhancing the capacities of Albania's central administration to manage EU funds, specifically those under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), which amounts to more than 200 million euro for 2008-2010.*

The European Commission considers local ownership essential for the effective targeting of assistance and therefore provides support to the preparation for decentralised management of EU assistance.

Efficient and transparent management of these funds relies heavily on a well-trained, professional and adequate administration as well as a clear legal framework.

The project will run until July 2010 and another 1.5 million euro have already been earmarked for the continuation of assistance in this area.

<http://www.delalb.ec.europa.eu/>

## **INTERNAL MARKET**

### **Breaches of public procurement rules**

*The Commission sent a reasoned opinion, setting out its position, to Germany and to Luxembourg to bring the two cases of non-compliance to an end.*

The reasoned opinion sent to Germany concerns the award of services for the collection and disposal of waste water by the city of Hamm to the water association Lippeverband in 2003 without a tender procedure. The Lippeverband is an economic operator with a mixed public-private membership. Therefore, the award is subject to the European Public Procurement Directives.

In the absence of a satisfactory response to the letter of formal notice addressed to the Luxembourg authorities on 1 December 2008, the Commission decided to send a reasoned opinion to Luxembourg requesting to comply immediately with the judgment of the European Court of Justice in the case C-272/07.

The Court stated in this judgment that Luxembourg had not transposed public procurement Directive 2004/18/EC, and, by doing so, had failed to comply with its obligations under EC law.

The deadline for transposition of the Directive expired on 31 January 2006. To date, the Commission has still not received any implementing measures from the Luxembourg authorities.

[http://ec.europa.eu/community\\_law/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/community_law/index_en.htm)

## MISCELLANEOUS

### ***Europe's climate and energy package formally adopted***

*The package sets legally binding targets to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20%, to establish a 20% share for renewable energy, and to improve energy efficiency by 20% in the EU by 2020.*



The packages comprises:

- a directive establishing a revised European Emission Trading Scheme (ETS), which is extended to new sectors of industry and to two new gases in addition to CO<sub>2</sub>;
- a decision on effort sharing, which spells out the effort to be made by each member state to reduce its emissions in sectors not covered by the ETS (such as transport and housing);
- a directive on renewable energy, which provides for an increase to 20% of the

share of renewables in total energy consumption;

- a directive on carbon capture and storage (CCS), which sets the volume of quotas available to finance CCS technologies
- a directive on fuel quality setting a target of a 10% reduction by 2020 in greenhouse gas emissions produced during the fuel production cycle for fuels used in transport;
- a regulation limiting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from passenger cars, obliging automotive manufacturers gradually to bring down CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from new cars.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/climate\\_action.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/climate_action.htm)

### ***Doing business in other EU member states: new site answers your questions***

*The new 'Your Europe - Business' portal gives entrepreneurs easy access to information on doing business in other EU member states.*

'Your Europe - Business' is another step to implement the Think Small First principle. It answers questions about legal requirements, possibilities and constraints of doing business in each EU member state and at EU level.

It also offers direct access to e-government services (such as VAT refund procedures) and online administrative procedures in the EU Member States and gives companies a run-down of the business support services in a chosen country.

<http://europa.eu/youreurope/business>

### ***JASPERS office opens in Sofia***

*On 3 April, the European Investment Bank (EIB) opened a JASPERS office in Sofia to bring services helping to develop projects qualifying for EU fund financing closer to customers in Bulgaria.*

JASPERS (Joint Assistance to Support Projects in European Regions) was set up

by the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the KfW Bankengruppe to assist the twelve member states which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 to make use of EU Structural Funds faster and more effective.

<http://www.jaspers-europa-info.org/>

### ***EU-World Bank Trust Funds and Co-financing Agreement***

*A new framework agreement was signed between the European Commission and the World Bank Group enabling the former to co-finance trust funds set up by the latter.*

This administrative agreement replaces one signed in 2001, which resulted in the amount of Commission funds channelled each year through trust funds administered by the World Bank Group rising from just 11 million euro to over 500 million euro.

The Commission's contributions to multi-donor trust funds are concentrated on a number of post-crisis situations where the use of specific expertise and the pooling of resources are paramount for reaching objectives that could not be achieved by one donor alone with the same efficiency.

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/international\\_organisations/other\\_documents\\_relating\\_world\\_bank/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/work/procedures/implementation/international_organisations/other_documents_relating_world_bank/index_en.htm)

### ***Ombudsman late payment investigation***

*The European Ombudsman, P. Nikiforos Diamandouros, has opened a new investigation into the timeliness of payments by the European Commission.*

This follows complaints he received from companies, associations, NGOs, universities and other organisations involved in EU-funded projects and contracts.

The Ombudsman wants to find out which measures the Commission has taken recently to tackle late payment problems.

This investigation is a follow-up to the last late payment investigation which the Ombudsman closed in July 2008.

At that time, the Ombudsman found that, although progress had been made, the Commission still encountered serious problems making payments on time. He decided to open this new investigation in order to take into account new figures reflecting the Commission's performance in 2008.

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/cases/correspondence.faces/en/3821/html.bookmark>



## DOCUMENTS & WEBSITES OF INTEREST

### EU LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

#### **Directive on the promotion of clean and energy efficient road transport vehicles**

The Directive requires that energy and environmental impacts linked to the operation of vehicles over their whole lifetime are taken into account in purchase decisions. These lifetime impacts of vehicles shall include at least energy consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and emissions of the regulated pollutants of NO<sub>x</sub> (nitrogen oxide), NMHC (non-methane hydrocarbons) and particulate matter. Purchasers may also consider other environmental impacts.

[http://ec.europa.eu/transport/urban/vehicles/clean\\_energy\\_efficient\\_vehicles\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/urban/vehicles/clean_energy_efficient_vehicles_en.htm)

#### **Transport Systems (ITS) in road transport**

The Commission is convinced that the potential of ITS will only materialise if deployed at EU level and not in a patchwork. However, the Council of Ministers warns that decisions on their implementation are up to the member states, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

[http://ec.europa.eu/transport/its/road/action\\_plan\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/its/road/action_plan_en.htm)

[http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms\\_data/docs/pressdata/en/trans/107025.pdf](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/trans/107025.pdf)

#### **White Paper on adapting to climate change**

The White Paper sets out a two-phase framework for a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy to the impacts of climate change. It complements actions taken by Member States through an integrated and coordinated approach.

A first phase of the strategy will run until 2012 and will lay the groundwork for preparing a comprehensive EU adaptation strategy from 2013 and beyond.

It will focus on increasing our understanding of climate change and possible adaptation measures and how adaptation can be embedded in key EU policies.

[http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/adaptation/index\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/adaptation/index_en.htm)

#### **Revised European environment management scheme**

The European Parliament adopted in plenary the revised regulation on Eco-Management and Audit Schemes (EMAS).

The revised scheme aims at increasing the participation of companies and reducing the administrative burden and costs, particularly for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). It introduces grouped registrations for organisations or companies operating in the same sector. Lower fees and reduced reporting requirements for small and medium-sized enterprises are also introduced.

The new regulation still has to be given final approval in Council.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/emas/index_en.htm)

### REPORTS

#### **Development aid sets record in 2008**

Official development assistance (ODA) has set a new record in 2008, up by over 10% to nearly 90 billion euro, according to 2008 data from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and

Development (OECD). The respective figures for the EU are 8% and 49 billion euro, representing 0.40% of GDP. The EU has committed to achieve ODA of 0.56% of GDP in 2010 and 0.70% in 2015.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_33721\\_42195902\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/62/0,3343,en_2649_33721_42195902_1_1_1_1,00.html)

### **2008 General Report on the Activities of the European Union**

Amongst the most significant facts feature the international financial crisis and climate change. The 250 page report focuses on four strategic objectives defined by the Commission at the start of its term in office: prosperity, solidarity, security and the Union's role as a world partner. Three other chapters are dedicated to institutional life and organisations, the budget and financial activities together with the general political and economic framework of community activities.

<http://europa.eu/generalreport/en/rg2008en.pdf>

## **MISCELLANEOUS**

### **Ombudsman: interactive online guide for complainants**

The guide aims to direct citizens, companies, NGOs, associations and other organisations to the body which is best placed to deal with their complaints or information requests.

<http://www.ombudsman.europa.eu/>

### **Construction output down by 1.8% in the euro area**

February 2009 compared to January 2009

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP\\_PRD\\_CAT\\_PREREL/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2009/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2009\\_MONTH\\_04/4-17042009-EN-BP.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2009/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2009_MONTH_04/4-17042009-EN-BP.PDF)

### **Pulling the EU out of the crisis**

A survey published by BusinessEurope, the European business confederation, has forecast a 2.2% drop in economic growth for 2009, with Estonia, Ireland and Latvia seeing the largest contractions. While larger companies are more worried about debt refinancing to improve cash flow, SMEs are concerned about lack of cash and bankruptcy.

BusinessEurope calls on the European Central Bank to reduce rates even further. It also wants governments, the European Investment Bank and the European Investment Fund to insure credit on transactions between companies.

<http://www.businesseurope.eu/Content/Default.asp?PageID=491>

### **Labour costs up by 4.6% in EU**

Fourth quarter 2008 compared with fourth quarter 2007

The breakdown by economic activity shows that in the euro zone hourly labour costs rose at an annual rate of 5.4% in industry, 5.1% in construction and 2.6% in services up to the fourth quarter of 2008. In the EU27, labour costs grew by 6% in industry, 5.1% in construction and 3.8% in services.

[http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP\\_PRD\\_CAT\\_PREREL/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2009/PGE\\_CAT\\_PREREL\\_YEAR\\_2009\\_MONTH\\_03/3-13032009-EN-AP.PDF](http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/pls/portal/docs/PAGE/PGP_PRD_CAT_PREREL/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2009/PGE_CAT_PREREL_YEAR_2009_MONTH_03/3-13032009-EN-AP.PDF)

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