



Euro News

The UK Network of Euro Info Centres

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Questions and Answers

Question:

The EU emissions trading scheme has produced its first year figures. What is the scheme exactly?

Answer:

The EU Emissions Trading Scheme (EU ETS) is one of the key policies introduced by the European Union (EU) to help meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction target under the Kyoto Protocol. The EU is required to make an 8 per cent reduction in emissions compared to 1990 levels by the first Kyoto Protocol commitment period (2008 to 2012). The EU scheme is entirely different and separate from the voluntary pilot UK ETS, which involves only UK-based companies and is set to end in December 2006 for direct participants.

The EU ETS uses a market-based mechanism to promote the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in a cost-effective and economically-efficient manner. Installations operating in the energy sector, iron and steel production and processing, the mineral industry and the paper and card industry will automatically be subject to the emission trading scheme.

At the heart of the ETS is the common trading currency of emission allowances. One allowance represents the right to emit one tonne of carbon dioxide. The EU has drawn up national allocation plans for 2005/2007 which give Member States and the companies affected a certain number of allowances free of charge, thus allowing it to emit the corresponding amount of carbon dioxide without any cost. Decisions on the allocation are made public. The limit or 'cap' on the number of allowances allocated creates the scarcity needed for a trading market to emerge. Companies that keep their emissions below the level of their allowances are able to sell their excess allowances at a price determined by supply and demand at that time. Those facing difficulty in remaining within their emissions can invest in more efficient technology or use a less carbon-intensive energy source or buy the extra allowances they need at the market rate

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or a combination of the two. The buying and selling of allowances takes place on an EU-wide market. The scheme provides a flexible compliance regime for operators, whilst ensuring that emissions are reduced in the EU to the level of the EU cap.

HERTS Helps Out

Here is an example of how your local EIC can help your business with its expertise and knowledge while looking after your interests.



In May 2006, Hertfordshire Euro Info Centre received an enquiry from a local company manufacturing IVF laboratory equipment. Referred by the UK Trade & Investment team in Essex, the company was trying to source the details of a tender notice published by the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The contract was an open procedure tender to supply the University with laboratory equipment such as pipettors, incubators and vacuum pumps. Hertfordshire EIC sourced the contract notice by looking it up on TED (Tenders Electronic Daily), the online version of the Official Journals Series, where most high-value public contract notices have to be advertised, and sent it to the interested company. However the EIC noticed that an application fee of £50 was required by the University in order to receive the documents and that the receipt of the application fee qualified as notification of interest.

Herts EIC mentioned to the client that it was unusual for public authorities to charge a fee for sending the tender documents to interested parties and highlighted that it could be seen as discriminative and contrary to EU Public Procurement legislation.

It appears that this practice has increased amongst universities. Indeed, in its June 2006 briefing, smallbusiness|Europe highlighted similar cases. The Brussels-based representative organisation for UK SMEs was recently informed by the British Printing Industries Federation (BPIF) that certain UK universities comply with the requirement of the open procedure stipulated in the EU Procurement Directives in such a way as to further preclude smaller businesses from tendering for contracts. Specifically, four universities in England and two in Scotland have requested that prospective suppliers pay a fee without

HERTS Helps Out

which their tender applications will not be processed. These fees range between £50 and £118 - on the surface, not a great deal of money, but potentially crippling for small businesses that rely on securing multiple, small public contracts and consequently having to submit numerous tenders.

On smallbusiness|Europe's recommendations, the BPIF submitted a response to the European Commission's internal market policy consultation at the last moment to highlight these practices, which certainly appear to be contrary to the objectives of the directive and, as such, are a pertinent example of the unintended and sometimes perverse consequences that legislation can have for smaller businesses.

smallbusiness|europe would be interested to hear of similar experiences from other business organisations. Contact Ben Butters at benbutters@smallbusinesseurope.org, or Rebecca Smith at rebekahsmith@smallbusinesseurope.org, on telephone 0032 2503 1062.

Cyprus: A Burgeoning Market

Annabel Fogden, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's World Trade Executive (Business Development) considers Cyprus as a familiar base for UK companies in the east of Europe.

The burgeoning opportunities for trade with Cyprus were the subject of a business briefing held at London Chamber of Commerce in June this year. The briefing was organised around the visit of David Brown, First Secretary Trade and Investment from the British High Commission in Nicosia.

Brown said: 'Cyprus is a country where British businesses will feel comfortable because the links between the two countries are both wide and deep. Cyprus' legal and financial systems are similar to ours. London is the largest Cypriot city and an estimated 57,000 British expats live in Cyprus.'

In fact the UK is Cyprus' largest trading partner. UK exports were valued at £337 million in 2005, representing 8 per cent of the market.

Background to Cyprus

There is a long history of ties between Britain and Cyprus going back to the colonial period. After Cyprus' independence in 1960, these ties were reinforced by commercial ones. Brown also spoke of the political situation as it is important that companies are aware of this when doing business in Cyprus. The northern part of the island refers to itself as the 'Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus' and is not recognised by the UK, the EU or the UN, or by any other country apart from Turkey.

Cypriots enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the EU and unemployment is low. The country has a strong economy based on services which grew a healthy 3.7 per cent per year in 2004 and 2005, well above the EU average. Tourism is the single most important sector of the Cypriot economy, accounting



Image: © European Community, 2006

Cyprus: A Burgeoning Market

for 20 per cent of GDP.

Like most island economies, Cyprus is very dependent on imports. The main imports are: clothing, food and drink, electrical machinery, appliances and parts, medicines and pharmaceutical products, office machines and ADP equipment, power-generated equipment, road vehicles and telecommunications.

Following EU accession in 2004, sectors such as telecommunications, electricity generation and civil aviation were liberalised. Opportunities can also be found in energy, environment, education, high technology, legal services and tourism.

Researching the market

Companies visiting Cyprus will find that English is widely spoken and that Cypriots are 'very professional and are keen to do business' according to Peter Jenkin, export sales manager at Deta Electrical Ltd, who spoke on his long experience of doing business in Cyprus. He stressed the importance of researching the market and encouraged companies to take advantage of the Export Marketing Research Scheme (EMRS).

This scheme is managed by the British Chambers of Commerce and funded by UK Trade and Investment. Companies can access free advice about researching export markets and receive financial subsidies of up to 50 per cent towards marketing research costs. More information on EMRS can be obtained from the British Chambers of Commerce, emr@britishchambers.org.uk.

Peter Jenkin also recommended that companies take advantage of the commercial services offered by the British High Commission and suggested joining a trade mission as the best way to exploring a new market.

Cyprus: A Burgeoning Market

John Morrish, quality manager, Institute of the Motor Industry spoke on his company's success in establishing a training centre in Cyprus and attributed their success partly to regular communication and visits that enabled them to develop a strong business relationship. Morrish said: 'The ideal time to visit is outside the holiday season given the massive influx of tourists during this period.'

Further information

Every year London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's World Trade team run a series of seminars on different markets and organises a number of trade missions to different parts of the world. For more information on these seminars and trade missions, please contact Julie Nicolas on 020 7203 1949 or jnicolas@londonchamber.co.uk.

Trading With France: Problems Reported

UK businesses face the most problems when trading with France due to lack of information revealed a recently published report on enquiries dealt by Hertfordshire Euro Info Centre (EIC) and the other UK EICs within the period 2003-05. Here the report's findings are summarised.



Image: © European Community, 2006

The EIC network was created by the European Commission and is represented across the whole of Europe. Its aim is to inform, advise and assist SMEs on European issues. EICs also provide the European Commission with valuable feedback about problems (legal, administration or other barriers) encountered by businesses when operating in the Internal Market. This feedback enables the European Commission to think of possible remedies in EU policies.

The main points from the report are as follows:

- The number of cases of businesses reporting problems in the UK dropped by 33 per cent in 2005 compared to 2004.
- Overall 66 per cent of cases were reported by SMEs (companies with less than 250 employees) at the national level. There were 83 per cent of cases reported by SMEs to Hertfordshire EIC.
- In 2005, the main country with which UK businesses reported having problems trading with or in is France followed by Germany and Poland. France and Germany appear every year as the main culprits and Poland appeared after the country joined the EU in 2004.
- According to the UK statistics, all the countries in which the number of cases decreased (i.e. there were fewer problems reported against these countries) between 2004 and 2005 are old Member States, while all the increases are from new Member States which joined the EU in May 2004. Interestingly, there are completely opposite results for Hertfordshire EIC.

Trading With Fance: Problems Reported

- For 60 per cent of UK businesses which approached a Euro Info Centre, the main problem is how to access information. In Hertfordshire, this figure was 80 per cent.
- The majority of cases relate to problems when buying and selling products.
- The manufacturing and the service sectors represent the main sectors where problems were occurring in 2005.

You can request a copy of the report by contacting Hertfordshire EIC by emailing info@hertseic.co.uk or calling on 01727 813693.

A Real Estate Boom

Elspet Edmunds, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's World Trade Events Executive, investigates the recent property market explosion across Eastern Europe.

Bulgaria may not have fielded a team in this year's World Cup Finals but they are achieving immense success in other realms: namely, the real estate market. Since the early 1990s the area has been turning into the fastest developing market after Asia, and it was reported by the National Statistical Institute in January that the average sales price per square metre for residential properties in Bulgarian cities had gone up 36.6 per cent in the previous year.

On track to join the EU

Bulgaria and its northern neighbour Romania are on track to join the European Union on 1 January 2007 and this can only greater strengthen their positions as leaders in economic growth in the region. After membership it is predicted that sales prices, incomes and construction costs will soar which is sparking a sense of urgency to invest in real estate among both foreigners and citizens.

A huge number of people are now flocking to newly established Eastern European countries such as the Czech Republic and Hungary on holiday, enticed by good weather and cheap food and drink. EU membership is certainly a crucial factor for long-term investors, and since the accession of eight Eastern European countries to the EU on 1 May 2004, there has been a huge increase in the number of low budget airlines flying to the previously unexplored region.

Hungary's capital Budapest is attracting serious investors, where typical Budapest homes remain half the price of comparable properties in Paris, London and Berlin. The 'shabby-chic' appearance of many of these homes owing to rough treatment



Image: © European Community, 2006

A Real Estate Boom

from tenants are a renovator's dream and consequently property investors are flocking to the city to get value for money before prices are expected to rise substantially in the near future.

The Slovakian experience

Whilst Bulgaria and Hungary are enjoying the benefits of holiday home investment, Slovakia's recent economic success has had a positive effect on employment, wage growth and, subsequently, purchasing power of local consumers. As a result, Slovakia currently has the second highest saturation of hypermarkets in Eastern Europe, after the Czech Republic, seeing Slovak households doing their weekly grocery shopping in chains such as Tesco, Carrefour and Lidl.

Miroslav Lopata, general manager of Premier Consulting in Slovakia, said: 'The real estate market in Slovakia, like in many other Central and Eastern European countries, has been rapidly growing in and around the capital city. Today, real estate business in Bratislava is not very different to that in the "old" 15 EU Member States. As the market matured, risk declined but so did the margins - although they still remain higher than in most Western European countries.'

However, Lopata explains that it is not just the country's capital Bratislava that is reaping the rewards. 'Investing in the regions outside the capital city is becoming very interesting, especially for small and medium projects. Investors can benefit from a stable and predictable business environment, just as in Bratislava, but can take advantage of significantly lower prices than in the "old" EU Member States. Outside Bratislava it is still possible to get a bargain for an attractive location and expect margins long forgotten in and around the capital city.'

Slovakia's excellent strategic position in the centre of Europe, bordered by four other EU Member States, as well as the fact

A Real Estate Boom

that it has the fastest GDP growth rate in Central Europe, explains the attention that it has received from property investors. The rate of new investments looks set to continue and as these investments mature over the coming years, they will significantly enhance the potential return from property investment in Slovakia.

The key investors in Eastern Europe are more diverse than in recent years. German and US money is highly significant but Dutch, Irish and UK buyers also have a strong presence.

Large real estate investment projects, economic growth, new technologies and many other innovations combine to create the appeal of an area that forms more than half of Europe and is destined to become highly developed in the next decades. With the growth of business and the seemingly insatiable demand for travel fuelling the European property markets, the real estate boom looks set to continue for a long time to come.

Further information and help

Every year London Chamber of Commerce and Industry's World Trade team run a series of seminars on different markets and organises a number of trade missions to different parts of the world. For more information on these seminars and trade missions, please contact Julie Nicolas on 020 7203 1949 or jnicolas@londonchamber.co.uk.

Grants in September 2006

This is the current list of funding opportunities coming out of Brussels. The month of August is always quiet as the European Commission virtually closes down for the holiday. Nevertheless there are some projects worth looking at, particularly for SMEs, as Brussels gets back into gear.

INTI - Integration of Third Countries Nationals

This project is open to all organisations that can show innovative ways of integrating immigrants within the EU. The application deadline is 20 October 2006.

INTERREG III

This groundbreaking funding method is ideal for SMEs and is open to companies in the Southern Home Counties to support trans-national co-operation. Partnership with an organisation in France or Belgium is necessary. Minor applications are invited at the moment but a larger budget will be available from the beginning of 2007. The next application deadline is 6 November 2006.

eContentplus

This programme which supports the development of interoperable digital libraries has been long awaited. The objective is to establish a European Digital Library by 2010. Projects need to have a cross-border interest and the application deadline is 19 October 2006.

Marco Polo - Freight Transport

A call for proposals for Marco Polo - Freight Transport with a budget of 35 million euro was issued on 27 July. Its purpose is to shift freight from road to rail or inland waterways transport. Projects can attract up to 50 per cent of the cost and the

Grants in September 2006

application deadline is 11 October 2006.

Safer Internet Plus Programme

A call for proposals was issued in July for projects to combat illegal or harmful content on the internet. The overall budget is 45 million euro and projects can attract up to 50 per cent of costs. The application deadline is 29 September 2006.

Work in Integrated Health

This is not a European Commission programme but comes from the British-based King's Fund and is targeted at the better understanding of London's health needs. Up to £150,000 is available for research into primary care practitioners' needs. There are several dates by which an application can be made and these are 23 March 2007, 5 October 2007 and 28 March 2008.

Peter Matthews worked for the European Commission and now advises on how to complete applications for Grantfinder projects. He also specialises in global trade and investment funding support and soft loans from the EU to Eastern Europe, Northern and Sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

Please contact your local Euro Info Centre for more information on these programmes. A one-page summary of the programmes generated from Grantfinder will be sent to you free of charge.

A Guide To SME Policy

Some 99 per cent of all European businesses are small and medium-sized enterprises, providing some 75 million jobs and accounting for more than 80 per cent of employment in some sectors. SMEs are thus vital for Europe.



This is why the European Commission puts the needs of small businesses at the centre of its action for more growth and jobs. It has now created a new website dedicated to SMEs: A guide to SME policy.

Want to start your own business? On this website, you will find information on all aspects of the EU's SME policy that concern you. In the section 'Improving access to finance', you will find out what the EU is doing to improve the financial environment for SMEs, and how you can gain access to finance for your business. The section 'Making life simpler for SMEs' contains information on the regulatory framework and the EU's efforts to cut red tape.

Are you the director of a small business? Check out the section 'Protecting your ideas' and learn how the EU helps you protect your intellectual property rights. If you would like to operate in another European country, pay a visit to the section 'Helping SMEs go international' to find out how you can take full advantage of business opportunities abroad.

In addition to this more specialised information, the site offers a wealth of information on SMEs in general: it provides facts and figures on SMEs and shows how the EU promotes responsible entrepreneurship.

A news section gives an overview of the latest development in SME policy. It shows how active the EU has been in this field: one of the latest initiatives was the introduction of internships in SMEs for all administrators from the Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry of the Commission. They will be sent out to work for one week in an SME in order to gain hands-on

A Guide To SME Policy

business experience (see the Enterprise Experience item in Information roundup). The aim of this 'Enterprise Experience' programme is to raise the awareness among Commission officials of SME needs and to address these more effectively.

For more information access:

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

European Week For Safety And Health At Work

This event takes place between 23 and 27 October 2006 and is in response to the disturbing fact that too many young people are still getting hurt at work



Image: © European Community, 2006

Across Europe, 18 to 24-year-olds are at least 50 per cent more likely to be injured in the workplace than more experienced workers. Behind the statistics are harrowing stories of young people having to live with the consequences of accidents and damaged health for the rest of their lives, or dying when they had so much of their lives ahead of them.

Employers need to do more to protect young workers, and young people need to be more aware of health and safety issues when they enter the world of work. This is why the Safe Start campaign was launched by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. Safe Start is dedicated to improving the occupational health and safety of the EU's 75 million young people.

Safe Start has already received the backing of employers' representatives, trade unions, youth organisations and the education sector, as well as all the EU Member States. As well as making employers and young workers more aware of risk, Safe Start aims to involve educators in an important role. As Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, Director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, explains: 'We can't just leave it until young people have already started work to teach them about health and safety. We have to reach them early - while they are still at school or college - so that they get used to a culture of risk prevention.'

Further information

OSHmail is a monthly newsletter produced by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work. You can subscribe to this

European Week For Safety And Health At Work

newsletter free of charge at the following address
<http://osha.europa.eu/news/oshmail/index.htm>.

You can read more about the campaign at the Safe Start website
<http://ew2006.osha.eu.int/>



Consultations

Here we provide a selection of current consultations that are of interest to SMEs.



Final consultation on the Waste Electrical & Electronic Equipment Directive

The final consultation on the Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) Directive has been published by the Department of Trade and Industry. The purpose of the consultation is to seek views of businesses, manufacturers, retailers, producers and enforcement authorities on the draft regulations that will implement the EU directive.

The consultation paper clarifies the government's main proposals that it proposes to introduce from 1 July 2007. The key elements of the plans include:

- A national distributor take-back scheme that will set up a system of designated collection facilities so that consumers can return used electrical items for recycling or reuse
- Obligatory producer registration through approved compliance schemes
- Authorised treatment facilities in order to process WEEE, which will also give evidence to producers of the amount of WEEE that has been received for treatment
- Authorised recycling/reprocessing facilities will have to verify reprocessing to producers
- An end-of-year settlement to make sure producers can fulfil their obligations via an exchange system
- An optional approach for producers to show the cost of handling historical WEEE.

The CBI has expressed concern over the delay in the implementation of this directive feeling that many businesses have been unable carry out the kind of investment required to deal with the

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waste. A clear date for implementation is a step in the right direction.

The final date for comments is 17 October 2006. The consultation can be accessed at www.dti.gov.uk/consultations/pages32448.html

Making Europe's online content market more competitive

A public consultation on ways to stimulate the growth of a true EU single market for online digital content, such as films, music and games, was launched by the European Commission on 28 July 2006. The Commission intends to encourage the development of innovative business models and to promote the cross-border delivery of diverse online content services. It is also keen to ascertain how European technologies and devices can be successful in the creative online content markets. Input to this consultation will help shape a Commission Communication on Content Online, due to be adopted at the end of the year. The deadline for replies is 13 October 2006.

For further information access:

http://ec.europa.eu/comm/avpolicy/other_actions/content_online/index_en.htm

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Removing obstacles to switching bank accounts

A 3D rendering of a globe with a blue and green color scheme, showing continents and oceans. In the center of the globe, there is a stylized blue and white building that resembles a modern bank or financial institution. The globe is set within a rounded rectangular frame.

The European Commission is to create an expert group on customer mobility in relation to bank accounts. In particular, the group will identify any legal, administrative or other obstacles that customers encounter when opening a bank account cross-border or switching banks both at domestic and cross-border level, such as the cost of opening, maintaining and closing a bank account, direct switching costs, and others. It will then provide the Commission with advice on how the identified obstacles should be addressed. This is a follow-up action to the White Paper on Financial Services Policy 2005-10 and is part of the Better Regulation agenda.

The group will be composed of experts proposed by European or national associations, who represent customer or financial services industry interests, and of individuals with an academic background in the area. For more information on joining the group, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/finservices-retail/docs/baeg_call-en.pdf

No open-door policy for Bulgarian and Romanian workers in the UK

After UK media had revealed that the government expects, according to its internal statistics, between 60,000 and 140,000 Bulgarians and Romanians to enter the job market after enlargement, pressure on the government is growing to address the situation.

Bulgaria and Romania are due to officially become members of the EU on 1 January 2007. However if both countries are deemed to be unready then membership could be delayed by one year. The European Commission will decide if a delay is warranted in the autumn.

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A decorative graphic on the left side of the page consisting of several yellow and grey stars of varying sizes, arranged in a pattern that suggests the European Union flag.

Since 2004 most countries have imposed quotas on workers from the new Member States. New figures that have recently been released by the government reveal that 447,000 workers from the eight countries that joined in 2004 have applied to work in the UK. But the number of self-employed workers has brought the number of immigrants up to more than 600,000. UK business leaders, on 19 August 2006, called on the government to curb the expected influx of migrant workers from Bulgaria and Romania. They fear that this could overstretch public services and put pressure on communities. In addition, the CBI has said that there is a need to pause for a period before opening up the labour market in the UK to workers from further new Member States.

An opinion poll, published by the Sunday Times on 20 August 2006, indicated that 75 per cent of UK citizens favour stricter rules on immigrant workers coming from Bulgaria and Romania, countries which are scheduled to enter the EU in 2007. Trade and Industry Secretary Alistair Darling told the BBC that the UK will not opt for an 'open-door' policy for migrants coming from new EU member countries, as it did for those countries who joined in 2004. He said immigration needed to be 'properly managed'.

This decision comes after the number of workers from the new Member States has surged to more than 300,000, in sharp contrast with the expected 13,000 since 2004.

Enterprise experience: would you like to welcome European Commission civil servants to your business?

Enterprise Experience is a unique programme to give civil servants working in the European Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise & Industry practical and hands-on experience of life in a small or medium-sized enterprise.

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Indeed if the officials of DG Enterprise are to address the needs of European companies most effectively, they need to build their awareness of these companies' needs and circumstances. Therefore, the aim of this initiative is that by 2009 all of the 300 administrators in DG Enterprise should spend a week in an SME, shadowing key personnel and experiencing the different functions or departments of the company.

Host companies should not have more than 250 employees. There is no minimum size, although the company should be in a position to offer a varied experience to the visitor. SMEs from any sector will be accepted.

The visits in 2006 will take part in the last months of the year as well as on three main 'waves' during 2007.

To find out more about this initiative, as well as an application form, please visit:

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/exp_prog/index.htm

Carbon dioxide emissions from new cars down by more than 12 per cent since 1995

The European Commission has recently published an annual report on carbon dioxide emissions from new cars. The report has concluded that in 2004 average emissions from new cars were 12.4 per cent below the level in 1995. Whilst the report welcomes this progress it also stresses that industry still needs to make significant further efforts to ensure that average carbon dioxide emissions are reduced to 140g/km by 2008/09, a decrease of about 25 per cent from 1995 levels.

Although car manufacturers have made considerable progress since 1995 the European Commission is still concerned that climate change commitments under the Kyoto protocol have not been reduced enough by the transport sector. Attempts have

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been made by some car manufacturers to produce cars that emit less carbon dioxide. The Commission has encouraged the car industry to increase its efforts to comply with the 140g of carbon dioxide per kilometre objective under the voluntary agreement.

If the car industry does not fulfil its obligations then the European Commission plans to look at legislative measures to guarantee a decrease in carbon dioxide emissions.

Italy lifts restrictions on workers from new Member States

The European Commission has welcomed Italy's decision to lift restrictions on workers from eight new Member States. Following enlargement in May 2004, only the UK, Ireland and Sweden allowed free movement of workers from the ten new EU members. Finland, Spain, Portugal and Greece followed suit in May this year. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said he warmly congratulated Italy on its decision to drop restrictions. Vladimír Špidla, European Commissioner for employment, social affairs and equal opportunities added: 'Opening up its job market to citizens from all EU Member States will bring benefits to Italy's economy and the country as a whole.' The advantages of free movement were highlighted in a European Commission report published last February which showed that workers' mobility from the EU Member States in Central and Eastern Europe to the EU15 has had mostly positive effects. Workers from the ten new Member States have helped to relieve labour market shortages and contributed to better economic performance.

Italy's decision means workers can now move freely between 18 of the EU's 25 Member States. The development is another important step forward in the context of the 2006 European Year of Workers' Mobility, which aims to promote more worker mobility in the EU.

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For more information on the free movement of workers see:
http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/free_movement/enlargement_en.htm

A Guide to SME Policy

In the past the EU's 23 million SMEs often only made it into the footnotes of political speeches. Now they are gaining the recognition they deserve as the backbone of the European economy, acknowledged as a constant source of ideas, innovation and entrepreneurial skills, the principal providers of existing jobs and the main source of new employment. SME issues were at the top of the agenda at the 2006 spring summit of EU leaders where European Commission President José Manuel Barroso declared 'We need to roll out a red carpet for entrepreneurs, not create red tape.'

The European Commission has launched a new website, A Guide to SME Policy, as part of the DG Enterprise and Industry. This website provides a detailed guide to the many measures that the European Commission already has in place, and future plans to expand and improve them.

The European Commission recognises that overregulation hits SMEs the hardest. As a result, they are now screening all EU laws for their friendliness to smaller companies, and have already scrapped over 60 pending EU laws. Additionally, the Commission plans to simplify 1400 existing laws, make customs rules a lot less cumbersome, and increase funding through the CIP 2007-13. These measures are being carried out with the specific intention of making life easier for Europe's 23 million SMEs.

This website can be accessed at:
http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/smes/index_en.htm

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EU to simplify funding procedures

The European Commission has proposed changes that will significantly simplify access to EU funds, while ensuring strict management and transparency. New rules should be in place by 2007 to equip the EU to deliver the ambitious programmes starting under the 2007-13 Financial Framework.

The usual beneficiaries of small grants and contracts, such as small and medium enterprises (SMEs), schools, universities, development agencies and small municipalities, will be faced with a reduced amount of paperwork. For example, various obligations such as the supply of evidence of clean financial health, clean criminal or professional records, or guarantees for up-front payments will be adjusted so as to be 'appropriate and proportionate'. The new proposals include an explicit principle of effective and efficient internal control, to which all EU institutions and member states will adhere.

The obligation to annually publish the list of all beneficiaries of EU funds will be extended to those policies managed by the Commission in partnership with member states (agricultural policy, structural funds, etc.).

For the purpose of better protection of the EU's financial interests, the Commission's system of identification of beneficiaries of grants and contracts with a proven record of professional malpractice or fraud will be extended to Member States managing the EU budget. This will ensure consistent exclusion from further EU funding for these beneficiaries.

Events

Export procedures (advanced)

This half day course, taking place on 25 October 2006 at

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Business Gateway in Glenrothes, will include a section on understanding EC regulations relating to origin of the goods, classification of goods by commodity code, and preferential rules of origin. This course is aimed at export administrators who have had some experience of exporting procedures, management trainees, sales and customer service staff, export and logistics managers.

For further information contact jacqui.finlay@bgfife.co.uk or phone 01592 623139

Business Services Mission to Bulgaria

27 November to 1 December 2006, four days

This mission is likely to be of benefit to those companies offering specialist business development services who also have portable skills.

For further information contact Wavell Magor on 0131 334 0520 or email wavell.magor@btinternet.com

Trade Mission to Turkey

6-9 November 2006, 4 days

This trade mission to Turkey is suitable for companies from any sector, and is being run by the Scottish Council for Development and Industry.

For further information contact Jane Gotts on 0141 352 8549 or email jane.gotts@scdi.org.uk

Protecting your copyright, design and trademarks

29 November 2006 - Birmingham Chamber of Commerce

The aim of this workshop is to help companies understand the importance of protecting their copyright, design and trademark

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rights (Intellectual Property Rights) both in the UK and overseas. Intellectual property allows people to own their creativity and innovation in the same way that they can own physical property. The workshop will be a half-day event. The cost to members of Birmingham Chamber or Midlands World Trade Forum members is £25.00 plus VAT or £35.00 plus VAT to non-members.

To reserve a place please contact the European Information Centre on 0121 455 0268 or email eic@birminghamchamber.org.uk

How to supply The United Nations, World Bank and Inter-American Development Bank

Each year, some US\$60 billion are disbursed, in the form of concessionary of guaranteed loans and grants, by governments and the multilateral development projects, designed jointly by the donor and beneficiary government. Much of this implementation is contracted out to the private sector, representing significant business opportunities for consultants, works contractors and suppliers of goods and services.

It is a potentially huge market for British firms and the UK currently gains between 4 and 17 per cent of multilateral aid-funded business. The most sought after expertise is in the healthcare, construction, consultancy, environmental, education, transport and ICT sectors.

Birmingham Chamber of Commerce is offering you the chance to find out more by inviting you to attend a half-day seminar on 13 October 2006. Here you will have the opportunity to hear from Commercial Officers based in the markets where the UN/World Bank/Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) Headquarters are based (known as Liaison Officers). Liaison Officers have an excellent relationship with procurement staff, country and sector specialists, together with Task Managers of projects. There will

Information Roundup

also be the opportunity to speak to Liaison Officers after the event during the afternoon.

Companies who feel they have a product or service that would be of interest to the UN Agencies, World Bank or IADB, and similarly staff who are new to organisations dealing with these entities, would find this seminar of interest. This is also an excellent opportunity to find out how the UK Trade & Investment overseas network can assist in helping you to win business from the UN, World Bank and the IADB.

Cost: £30.00 + VAT (£35.25) for West Midlands Chamber of Commerce members, or £40.00 + VAT (£47.00) for non-members. This price includes refreshments, buffet lunch and car parking.

Venue: Birmingham Chamber of Commerce & Industry
If you require any further details please contact Claire Gamage on 0845 603 0084 or by email on c.gamage@birmingham-chamber.org.uk