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ENTERPRISE & INDUSTRY magazine

Reducing administrative burden

Promoting women's entrepreneurship

Ecodesign for a sustainable future

Key enabling technologies

European Commission
Enterprise and Industry

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6

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WHEN **LESS** IS **MORE**

A new report reveals that the EU's drive to reduce the administrative burden on businesses is progressing well, and European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen gives his take on the 'Better Regulation' initiative. This issue also finds out why we need more women entrepreneurs, how Europe's innovative future lies in key enabling technologies, and much more.

The latest European Commission assessment confirms that, not only is the target of slashing red tape associated with EU legislation by 25% realistic, but the European Union is also well on track to meet it by 2012. Following the adoption of the report, European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen speaks to *Enterprise & Industry magazine* about the main achievements in this area during his five years in office. In total, measures proposed by the European Commission and under preparation could enable businesses to save around €40.4 billion.

Even with less paperwork, taking advantage of the opportunities afforded by the EU's single market is challenging. The Enterprise Europe Network, funded under the Union's Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme, is on hand to provide a wide range of support services to SMEs. In this issue, we highlight some of the network's successes.

There are too few women entrepreneurs in Europe, but this is changing. More businesswomen are needed and we meet a number of inspirational female entrepreneurship ambassadors who will help spread the message. In addition, we learn how key enabling technologies, such as nano- and biotech, are crucial building blocks of the EU's future innovativeness and competitiveness.

Other articles in this issue look into the single market for goods and an initiative to help the European shipbuilding industry weather the storm of the economic crisis.

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ENTERPRISE & INDUSTRY

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LESS ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN FOR BUSINESS

A recent progress report shows that the European Union is on track to meet its ambitious target of cutting red tape by a quarter by 2012, while preserving the effectiveness of European legislation in achieving its goals, such as protecting the public and ensuring fair competition.

Based on a Commission recommendation, the European Union has set itself the ambitious goal of reducing red tape associated with EU legislation by a quarter by 2012. In order to make these savings a reality, the European Commission has already proposed several measures and is preparing a number of others. In total, this would enable businesses to save around €40.4 billion out of a total of €123.8 billion (i.e. a third) spent on complying with the 72 EU texts covered by the 'Action Programme for reducing administrative burdens in the EU'.

At the end of October 2009, the European Commission released its assessment of progress to date in 13 priority areas, and found that the Union was well on the way to meeting its 2012 deadline. European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said: "The Commission is fully on track to deliver on its goals to reduce red tape for businesses. Businesses are already set to save €7.6 billion a year. That will become about €40 billion if Member States and the European Parliament back our proposals in full. But better regulation is a job that never ends. It is not just about changing bad rules, but making good rules work better, using new technologies and new innovation. Further streamlining European and national regulation – without compromising on protecting the public – will be a key to the Commission's next drive to promote sustainable economic recovery."

Whilst measures already in place or adopted could bring a reduction of €7.6 billion, measures proposed by the Commission and pending adoption would add €30.7 billion to that amount. Other efforts in the pipeline could lead to the presentation of additional measures worth at least €2.1 billion in savings. At the beginning of 2009, the European Commission unveiled two major proposals, one in the field of VAT aimed at facilitating e-invoicing (worth €18 billion), the other in the field of company law, exempting micro-entities from accounting obligations (worth €7 billion).

Further action

Now it is in the hands of the EU co-legislators to ensure that businesses can fully benefit from these measures. At the presentation of the progress report, Vice-President Verheugen urged action: "The Commission has done everything in its power to achieve the 25% target by 2012. I invite the European Parliament and Member States to adopt all of our remaining proposals to make them fully effective for the European economy as soon

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Already delivered

- *The '**VAT package**' includes a mini one-stop shop for telecom, broadcasting and e-commerce services and a new procedure for claiming value-added tax refunds for businesses not established in the Member State in which the VAT was incurred.*
- *Member States have been allowed to apply less burdensome **accounting and auditing rules** to 340 000 SMEs since 2006.*
- *To save fruit and vegetable producers some of the estimated two hours they spend on labelling and grading every tonne of produce, a new Regulation (1221/2008) replaces 26 marketing standards with a **single General Marketing Standard**. Labels will indicate origin but no longer class, size or variety – which is set to save European producers up to €970 million.*
- *Standard **procurement procedures** require all candidates to submit documents – costing €100 on average – to prove their eligibility. The European Commission has formally recommended that only the winner of a public tender needs to present these documents, saving the other applicants this cost.*

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as possible. It does not cost anything but would mean a boost of around €30.7 billion for our enterprises, and especially for SMEs."

This progress report confirms the choice made by the European Commission to concentrate on the selected priority areas. It also confirms the vulnerability of SMEs to excessive red tape. Stakeholder involvement was instrumental in evaluating the feasibility and in identifying further reduction measures, which may be part of new initiatives for reducing administrative burdens during the next Commission.

But it is not just about existing legislation. The European Commission is committed to ensuring, through its impact assessment system, that the requirements imposed on businesses by new legislation are kept to an absolute minimum. The Action Programme for Reducing Administrative Burdens in the EU is an essential part of the Commission's overall Better Regulation Agenda which aims to promote competitiveness, growth and jobs. Slashing red tape is also in line with the Small Business Act and its 'think small first' principle (please see E&I n° 5, p. 10). Moreover, it is one of the key action areas in the European Economic Recovery Plan.

Gauging progress

Some example of proposed measures awaiting approval by the European Parliament and the Council:

- *A whopping 18 billion VAT invoices are generated in the EU annually, so the switch to a fully electronic invoicing system would save time and money for more than 22 million taxable enterprises. The Commission has proposed the removal of obstacles to* ***electronic billing****, such as the additional requirements imposed by some Member States to make invoices VAT compliant. The maximum reduction potential in the medium term is estimated at €18.4 billion (that is, if all businesses send all their invoices electronically).*
- *A Commission proposal of February 2009 recommends that* ***micro entities*** *(with a maximum of ten employees) should no longer need to present annual accounts in line with EU regulations. Instead, each Member State should define the appropriate rules within its own borders. This proposal would suppress around €1 170 a year of administrative burdens of EU origin imposed on each of the 5.4 million micro-enterprises in Europe.*

The way ahead

Some examples of measures under preparation:

- *By the end of 2010, the Commission might propose that EU accounting and auditing **rules for SMEs** should include a simplified balance sheet, profit and loss account, and notes to the accounts.*
- *By the end of 2009, the Commission could recommend that recognition as "**a regular shipping service**" should be eased for enterprises shipping goods between two ports in the EU. A new database would simplify initial registration procedures and subsequent assignment of vessels to the service.*
- *In early 2010, the Commission might propose the simplification of **statistical reporting for small hotels** by exempting establishments with fewer than ten beds (20 beds in many Member States) from statistical reporting obligations. Instead, appropriate statistical estimation techniques will be used.*

An overview of the reduction measures in each priority area

Priority Area	Administrative Burden (in €)	Sectoral Reduction Figure (in €)	Reduction as % of Burden
Agriculture/ Agricultural Subsidies	5 289 700 000	-1 891 400 000	-36 %
Annual Accounts / Company Law	14 589 100 000	-8 274 500 000	-57 %
Cohesion Policy	929 100 000	-222 600 000	-24 %
Environment	1 180 600 000	-242 100 000	-21 %
Financial Services	939 600 000	-141 600 000	-15 %
Fisheries	73 900 000	-33 400 000	-45 %
Food Safety	4 073 300 000	-1 281 800 000	-31 %
Pharmaceutical Legislation	943 500 000	-154 600 000	-16 %
Public Procurement	216 300 000	-60 100 000	-28 %
Statistics	779 500 000	-328 100 000	-42 %
Taxation / Customs	87 005 300 000	-26 334 200 000	-30 %
Transport	3 861 700 000	-748 200 000	-19 %
Working Environment / Employment Relations	3 879 200 000	-659 600 000	-17 %
Total	**123 760 800 000**	**-40 372 200 000**	**-33 %**

BETTER REGULATION – A PROMISE KEPT

*Following the recent Communication on Reducing Administrative Burdens in the EU, **European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen** reviews the main achievements in this area during his five years in office.*

E&I: You've detailed plans to cut the administrative costs faced by enterprises by 25%. How is that working?

GV: Reducing administrative burdens for European companies is part of a bigger project of better regulation. Better Regulation, in simple terms, means modernising EU legislation, simpler, fewer and better rules. If you ask European citizens and, in particular, entrepreneurs what they would like to see, their answer is always the same; their complaint is always the same. "Regulation is too heavy, too expensive and there's too much of it." I took it seriously, not least since perception also defines reality.

When I made the proposal that better regulation had to be a flagship project of this Commission, I had two objectives in mind. The first was purely political, to make every effort to demonstrate to citizens that the European Union is not a bureaucratic monster, as it is very often described. The second was economic, knowing that cumbersome and insufficiently targeted regulations create unnecessary costs, notably for small to medium-sized enterprises.

Since 2007, the reduction of unnecessary administrative burden is the established policy of the EU and of its Member States. We have undertaken an EU-wide measurement exercise which shows that the admin burden coming from European legislation is about €124 billion. Up to now, the Commission has adopted or is committed to adopting proposals with potential savings exceeding €40 billion per year. So we have kept our promise: proposals are on the table that will lead to more than a 25% reduction, provided that the Parliament and Council agree with our approaches. Better regulation is, however, a continuous exercise and we have already identified areas for the next Commission to take up. It remains important that, step by step, enterprises in all sectors feel the disburdening on the ground.

E&I: Are the Member States doing their bit?

GV: Our Member States have clearly understood that better regulation is an important tool. It does not cost anything but can do a lot, not least to better assist SMEs in the current crisis. The experience in some Member States, in particular the Netherlands and United Kingdom, which are front runners in better regulation, is very encouraging.

E&I: What are the other aspects of the Better Regulation programme?

GV: Our decision to make impact assessment mandatory has been of similar importance for the European economy: no new significant EU initiative without proper

Ideas for reducing red tape

GV: I strongly believe that the input of stakeholders themselves is very important, notably from the business community, since they know best where the real problems are. So I always encourage stakeholders to share their experiences and to make suggestions for improvements. Together with the high-level group of independent stakeholders under the leadership of former Bavarian Minister-President Edmund Stoiber, we launched a Europe-wide competition, the Best Idea for Red Tape Reduction Award. We got a lot of promising proposals. The best of them received an award and the Commission is now in the process of evaluating all the proposals from the stakeholders, to transform them into policy recommendations. One proposal has already been taken up by the Commission. We will exempt small craft businesses from the application of the rules for work and rest times, for up to 100 kilometres, which is already the case for farmers. In addition, it will no longer be necessary for farmers and craftsmen to use a tachograph for journeys of up to 100 kilometres.

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Günter Verheugen

Günter Verheugen is Vice-President of the European Commission from 2004-09, responsible for enterprise and industry policy. Previously, he was European Commissioner responsible for enlargement (1999-2004). A member of the German parliament – Bundestag – from 1982 until he joined the Commission, he held a number of offices in the Social Democratic Party (SPD), and was Minister for European Affairs in the government of Chancellor Gerhard Schröder. Before taking up politics full time, he worked for the federal government.

impact assessment. The assessment must cover all aspects, economic, social and environmental. And, since the beginning of this year, there is also the obligation to do an SME Test. That means that our impact assessment must answer the question: "How does the proposed initiative affect the conditions of European SMEs?" This makes a big difference, and has already improved the quality of our proposals.

Moreover, with the programme of legislative simplification, we have already reduced the statute book by more than 10%, which is quite considerable. Simplification also has a very important cost effect for European companies. It is easier for them to find the rules. The rules are more transparent and, in the case of modernisation, there is very often an element of cost reduction, too.

Smart regulation

The Commission is not only committed to improving regulation, but it is also determined to implement smart regulation. This commitment was highlighted by President Barroso when speaking to the European Parliament on strengthening Europe. Simplifying procedures and reducing administrative burdens, particularly on SMEs, will remain a priority in the next Commission he told MEPs, so much so that President Barroso will take this task under his direct control – reflecting the high priority he accords it.

E&I: When you meet people from SMEs, do they recognise that these achievements have been made?

GV: Yes, now they do. At the beginning, there was reluctance. Notably, SMEs have heard so many promises over the years that were never kept in the past. Now it is understood that we are changing our regulatory culture. But there is also impatience now, since everybody is keen to experience the positive impact on the ground. I believe that, in principle, especially in the SME community in the EU, there is a much more positive view of European policy and European institutions than existed in the past. ■

Ambassadors receiving their diplomas with HRH Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden, Ms. Maud Olofsson, Minister of Enterprise, Energy and Communications and Deputy Prime Minister of Sweden, and Mr. Vladimir Špidla, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities.

EUROPE NEEDS MORE BUSINESSWOMEN

Entrepreneurs are indispensable to Europe's economic growth and prosperity. But women are still held back from launching their own companies by a range of barriers, including education, stereotypes, lack of confidence and access to start-up finance. The EU is working with Member States to overcome these obstacles, thus enabling women to express their potential to the full. A new network of ***Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors*** *will help spread the message.*

Entrepreneurs are the people who have the creative ideas, drive and determination to set up new small businesses: the seeds from which big enterprises can blossom. However, women currently make up only a third of the EU's entrepreneurial community because of an environment that makes it more difficult for them to set up and grow their own companies. Only about 8% of the female workforce is self-employed, compared with 16% of men, and almost three times more self-employed men than women have their own staff.

"This must change, and we have to encourage more women-led businesses," says Enterprise and Industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen. "This will not only bring fresh business ideas but it will also strengthen the role of women in our societies." Member States are introducing their own measures, but Europe-wide action is also required. The EU has launched a series of innovative schemes aimed at fostering female entrepreneurship.

Similar developments are taking place elsewhere in the world. In the United States, the number of women-owned businesses grew at twice the rate of all firms between 1997 and 2002, jumping

Built on the Small Business Act

The Ambassadors' network is just one of the many initiatives foreseen in the Commission's 2008 Small Business Act, designed to boost the growth of SMEs across Europe. Other measures on the SBA agenda include a mentoring scheme, to be launched in 2010, and steps to promote entrepreneurship among women graduates. The Act urges Member States to offer mentoring and support to female entrepreneurs and to exchange good practice. It also makes proposals for legislation: for example, the General Block Exemption Regulation on State Aid (GBER) permits state aid of up to €1 million for new, women-led companies.

14% to 6.2 million, according to the Centre for Women's Business Research, and contributing $2.38 trillion to the US economy. But women too have been hit by the economic downturn, and in October, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton joined female entrepreneurs from North and South America at a conference in Washington DC, to give a new boost through mentoring and businesswomen's networking schemes. In south Asia, few countries compile gender-specific data, but research indicates that the obstacles women face include limited access to training, finance and markets, as well as traditional attitudes to their role in society.

Ambassadors for women entrepreneurs

The EU has had an action plan to boost female start-ups since 2004. Although there has been an encouraging upturn in women running businesses in the past decade or so, more needs to be done. The newest initiative is a European network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors. At a ceremony in Stockholm in October, 130 successful businesswomen from ten European countries were appointed by Commissioner Vladimír Špidla and undertook to act as mentors and role models for budding female entrepreneurs.

One of their tasks will be to promote entrepreneurship in schools, universities, community groups and the media, aiming to inspire women and young girls to set up their own businesses. The Ambassadors will demonstrate, through their own experience, that women can be successful in each and every sector, even if women's enterprises tend to be concentrated in such sectors as retailing, catering and community services, which are seen as less vital for the knowledge economy.

Svana Helen Björnsdóttir was one of the new ambassadors who received her diploma from Sweden's Crown Princess Victoria. She set up her own information technology company, in Iceland, 17 years ago. "When I was young I didn't know any other women who studied electrical engineering," she explains. "With a role model, it would have been easier to start my company and convince customers that I was reliable. It's also a question of acceptance by society."

She plans to take her 'can-do' message to other women in the science and engineering sector: "I want to encourage them to seize the opportunity to make their dreams come true, not just to join a big organisation. Most women don't want to take too many risks, but it's also a question of enjoying life." With three sons of her own, Ms Björnsdóttir hopes to convince other women they can combine motherhood with a challenging career. "But you have to stick with it if you're going to succeed," she concludes.

Zlatica Maria Stubbs, from the Slovak Republic, has 20 years' experience in the consumer electronics and automotive industries. She moved into coaching and mentoring as a logical extension of her management role, and organises inspirational workshops for new entrepreneurs.

The Ambassadors, from Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Slovakia and Sweden, were selected through the Enterprise Europe Network, an EU-backed business support network. At the end of the year, the European Commission will issue a second call for nominations to the network from the remaining EU countries.

Advice and support

The Commission has already opened a Women's Entrepreneurship portal, with links to contacts, events and networking opportunities within and between Member States. The European Network to Promote Women's Entrepreneurship (WES) brings together government representatives from 30 European countries to provide advice, support and information for female entrepreneurs, helping them to raise their profile and expand their businesses. It publishes an annual report of activity by national governments. ■

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www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/promoting-entrepreneurship/women/portal

FIRMS' EXPERIENCES IN ACCESSING **FINANCE**

What differences have companies observed when trying to access finance since the economic crisis hit? A recent Eurobarometer survey of companies tries to establish to what extent firms are now finding it harder to gain credit or investment. This survey is intended to be the first of a regular series charting the financial environment in different countries so as to identify key areas of action regarding businesses' access to finance.

Problems in accessing finance have long been identified as a major barrier for entrepreneurs trying to start or grow small businesses. Over recent years, the European Commission has put in place a range of financial instruments, managed by the European Investment Bank group, to stimulate private-sector lending and investment in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Over €1 billion will be made available through the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme in the years 2007-13, and the leverage effect of this funding should result in some 400 000 SMEs benefitting from lending or equity investment that would not otherwise be available. The EU is also mobilising other policy instruments, such as the Structural Funds, to improve the funding conditions for SMEs across Europe. The European Investment Bank has increased its lending to SMEs to €30 billion for 2008-2011. And the European Commission continues to work with Member States and stakeholders to remove the barriers which hinder small firms seeking finance in Europe.

The 2008 banking crisis is widely feared to have led to a credit crunch, with many banks unable or unwilling to increase their lending to small business. In fact, many small businesses might expect to see the conditions on their existing credit arrangements tightened. In particular, overdraft facilities – on which many small companies rely to overcome the difficulties caused by late- (and non-) paying customers – could become more restricted. But is this widespread impression borne out by the real experiences of small business in Europe?

To find out businesses' experiences in accessing finance since the economic crisis hit, the European Commission, in partnership with the European Central Bank, launched a Eurobarometer survey. Chief executives or finance directors from some 9 000 enterprises of all sizes across Europe were surveyed in June and July 2009. This survey is intended to be the first of a regular series charting the changing financial environment facing business.

Not easy

The majority of companies surveyed agreed that the general economic outlook had deteriorated since the beginning of the year. One in two had seen turnover and/or profits fall in that period. Medium-sized companies (those with between 50 and 249 employees) were the most likely to report a drop in turnover and/or profits, whereas those reporting a rise were most often large firms. Companies which reported introducing at least one form of innovation in the past year were more likely to have improved their financial performance than 'non-innovative' firms.

Asked about the biggest immediate problem they face, 29% of companies cited difficulties in finding customers in the current environment. On the other hand, 16% – little more than half as many – were most concerned about gaining access to finance. In Greece and Croatia, more than one-quarter of managers named access to finance as their most pressing problem. The companies for which access to finance was most likely to be an immediate problem tended to have relatively low turnover, and to have been established between two and nine years ago.

Debt instruments from banks are the most popular form of external funding. Some 30% had overdrafts or credit lines from banks, while 26% had used longer-term bank loans. Leasing or hire purchase was used by 23% of respondents while 16% made use of trade credit. On the other hand, very few companies – other than in Sweden – had received equity investments.

External funding

Some 22% of respondents stated that they had applied for a bank loan (either new or renewed) in the first half of 2009. And only 7% cited 'possible rejection' as a reason why they had not sought a bank loan. Of those that applied, more than half (55%) received all that they asked for, while a further 15% received a lower amount. Likewise, of those which applied for trade credit from suppliers, 60% received all that they asked for and a further 21% received a lower amount.

Amongst those that had sought external financing in the preceding six months, almost half (46%) thought that bank loans had become more difficult to obtain, while one-third (34%) thought there had been no change. While three-quarters of managers surveyed agreed that bank loans were relevant to their company, almost half reported that there had been no change in their company's need for loans in the six-month period.

Turning to their future financing needs and the investment readiness of businesses, 59% of managers felt confident that they would be able to talk to banks and obtain the credit they needed. In comparison, although half thought equity investors were not relevant to their business, less than 40% of the remainder felt confident in talking to potential equity investors or venture capital firms and obtaining the desired result.

Asked what their preferred source of external funding for future growth would be, almost two-thirds of managers cited bank loans (currently the most common source of external funding). A further 13% would seek loans or credit from other sources, while just 6% would seek equity investment as a preferred route to support growth. In terms of the amounts sought, 23% were likely to seek less than €25 000, with 36% expecting to request between €25 000 and €100 000.

Useful input for analysis and action

This and future surveys will help policy-makers to assess the specific difficulties faced by small businesses in different countries and with different characteristics. In particular, the survey results can be used to identify key areas of action regarding SMEs' access to finance, including innovative growth-oriented enterprises. For the European Central Bank, the survey will provide complementary information concerning the effects of monetary policy and financial market developments on SMEs in the euro area. ■

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SUPPORTING **SMALL BUSINESSES** IN A **BIG WORLD**

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When you are a small business, who do you go to for help when your sights turn to bigger things? Success stories from Germany, the United Kingdom and Poland show how the ***Enterprise Europe Network*** *is helping SMEs expand markets, find partners for innovation and obtain EU funding to develop their businesses.*

Since its launch in February 2008, the Enterprise Europe Network has grown to almost 600 partners in 44 countries in Europe and beyond. The network integrates the long history of the European Commission's business and innovation support in a single, even more efficient structure: it can call on 4 000 experienced advisers dedicated to providing companies with a broad range of services tailored to their needs.

Solar SME goes international

An important role of the Network is to help SMEs expand their markets into other countries, whether elsewhere in the EU or further afield.

One such firm is JMS Solar Handel GmbH, a supplier of solar photovoltaic installations based in southern Bavaria (DE).

The enterprise wanted to develop its markets in Italy so it approached Bayern Handwerk International (BHI), one of the Network's Bavarian partners.

BHI arranged for JMS to have space on its corporate stand at the 2008 Klimahouse trade fair in Bolzano, across the Alps in northern Italy, and also to take part in a brokerage event there run by the South Tyrol network partner.

"We gave the company information about the Italian market," says Tamar Moscovici of BHI. "We also made contact with a specialist lawyer and procured a regional grant." The grant helped the company to create Italian-language marketing materials and translate their website into Italian.

"The services from Bayern Handwerk International were really helpful," says Josef Mittermeier of JMS Solar. "When we noticed the huge number of visitors at the trade fair, we realised that the demand in Italy for our products was huge as well. That's why we immediately hired an Italian-speaking employee."

In fact, they took on two more employees and an apprentice to meet demand and have now set up an Italian subsidiary and one in Austria, too. Because of increased business they were able to pay for their own, bigger stand at the 2009 Klimahouse fair and will be returning again in 2010.

"Usually it takes at least two years for an SME to be in the black when entering a new foreign market," notes Moscovici. "Our client made gains immediately."

Finding partners for innovation

When businesses need partners to collaborate on new products, the network's advisers can help find suitable candidates.

Owlstone Nanotech was started in 2004 by three Cambridge University researchers working in microsystems and nanotechnology. They had devised a new kind of chemical sensor that can identify and measure very small concentrations of gases at levels of one part in a billion. The device, integrated on to a silicon chip, can be set to detect different gases simply by reprogramming the software.

Although conceived initially for security and defence applications, such as the detection of explosives, the sensor has a multitude of possible uses from food safety and quality control to environmental monitoring.

It was to explore these wider markets that Owlstone contacted Business Link East, the Network partner in the East of England. There, Dave Reynolds helped the company draw up a technology profile which was then published across the network to attract potential partners.

The call was answered by IEE, a Luxembourg company specialising in sensing technology, especially in the automotive industry. Owlstone and IEE signed a partnership agreement in June 2008 and IEE purchased a number of sensors for testing.

"Without the assistance from Dave and the Enterprise Europe Network team at Business Link, it would have taken us significantly longer to find and link up with a partner with the market presence we needed," said Billy Boyle, Owlstone's founder.

EU funding opportunities

As well as finding business contacts, network partners can assist SMEs in applying for funding from EU programmes.

Polish dentist Małgorzata Włodarczyk wanted to find ways to improve her business and attract new patients. She was looking at investing in modern, innovative equipment that would make dental tools like drills safer and less painful for the patient, while allowing the dentist to be more precise. The new technology would also be more reliable, quieter and use less energy.

She had not considered that EU funding could be the answer for her business, until she attended a seminar organised by her local Enterprise Europe Network branch, based in the Krakow Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We met Małgorzata and looked at how her business could expand," network expert Agnieszka Czubak explains. "Then we found an EU grant programme, the European Regional Development Fund, which could help her."

"I'm very happy that the Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Krakow encouraged me to apply for the funding," adds Włodarczyk.

Network consultants met the entrepreneur several times, walking her through the complicated business of applying for a grant. "We were able to draw on our experience in helping companies with such applications. The documentation is complicated and often difficult to understand," says Czubak. "Eventually, the documentation was ready and Małgorzata could send in her application."

To her delight, she was awarded an investment grant covering 40% of costs. "Thanks to the Enterprise Europe Network, I could get through the complicated procedures and finally obtain significant financial support for my business," acknowledges Włodarczyk.

›› Contact

Enterprise Europe Network

www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu

enterprise europe network
Business Support on Your Doorstep

Enterprise Europe Network

The Enterprise Europe Network is made up of 600 partner organisations in 44 countries. It offers support and advice to businesses across Europe and helps them make the most of the opportunities in the European Union. Despite being specifically designed for small and medium-sized enterprises, its services are also available to all businesses, research centres and universities across Europe.

Each partner organisation in the network is a 'one-stop-shop' for help in finding business contacts, promoting technology transfer and accessing European funding opportunities. Staff can also advise on EU law and how to make the most of the European single market.

The Network's 'no wrong door' policy ensures that no matter which partner takes the call, the client will be personally directed to the service or organisation that best meets their needs.

CLEARER RIGHTS FOR **FREE MOVEMENT** OF **GOODS** WITHIN THE **EU**

Companies which wish to trade their goods between Member States too often find barriers in their way, despite free movement of goods being one of the Union's basic principles. A recent Regulation aims to help firms overcome those barriers, by setting out clear procedures for Member States to justify any refusal to allow a product on to their market. Moreover, product contact points have been set up in each Member State to help economic operators obtain all relevant information on the technical rules which may apply to their products.

Following the adoption of a package of reforms to the rules governing the Internal Market, the European Commission has recently published an updated guide to the provisions on the free movement of goods (specifically Articles 28-30 of the EC Treaty). The guide explains the case law of the European Court of Justice, which has clarified various aspects in practice, as well as legal instruments adopted by the EU to give full effect to these Treaty articles. It is intended to provide an insight into past developments and new challenges in an area that is fundamental to European integration.

Free movement of goods throughout the European Union's single market is one of the Union's most basic principles. The EU has agreed harmonised requirements for many types of product, in particular to ensure adequate safety protection for users or to reduce the environmental impact of their manufacturing or use. But for those products that are not harmonised at EU level, the principle of mutual recognition applies: products which meet the requirements to be marketed in one Member State should be accepted on the market in others without any additional requirements being applied.

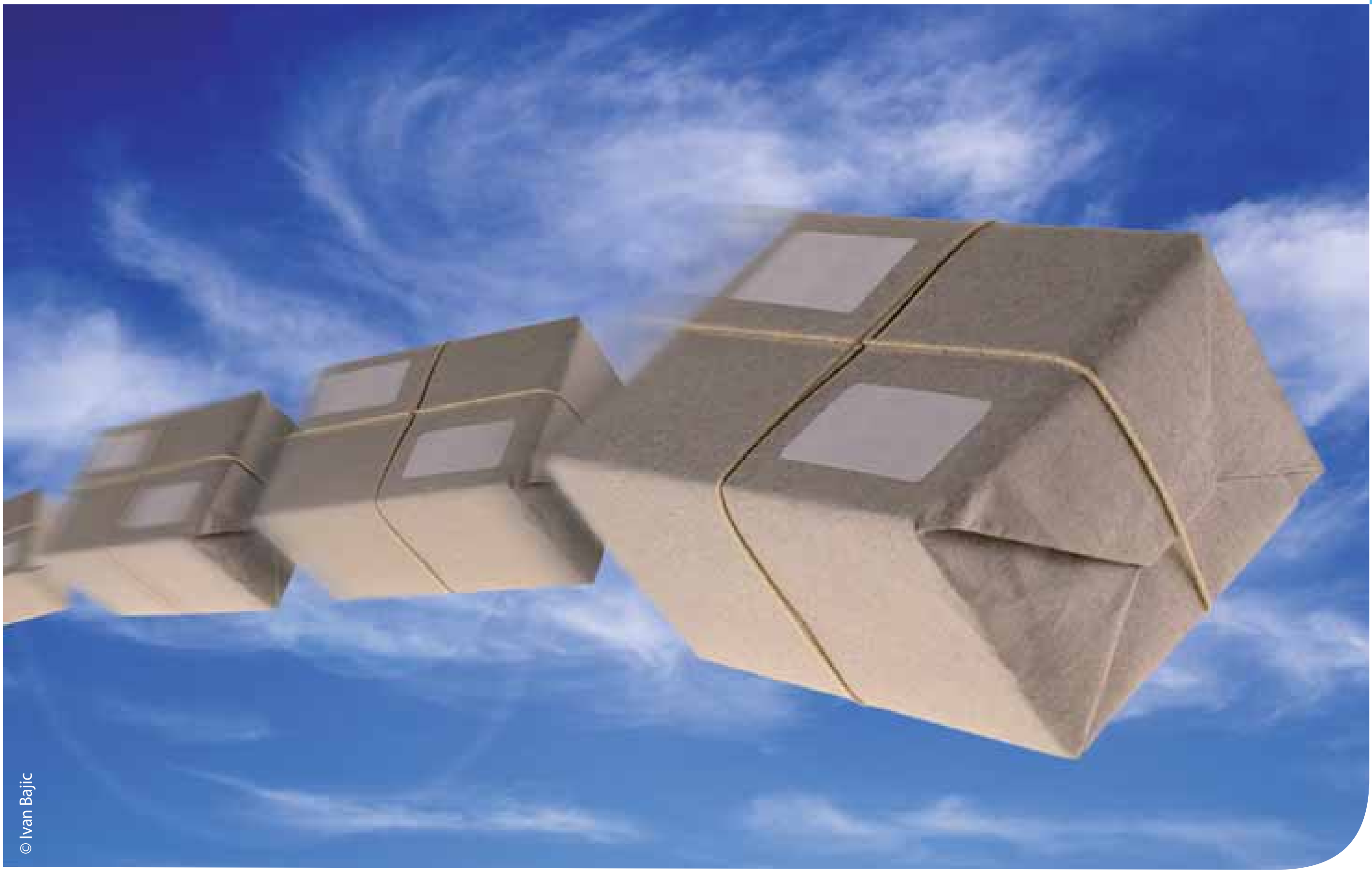
Mutual recognition

The principle of mutual recognition means, for example, that once a product has passed tests to prove its safety in a first Member State, others cannot demand it undergoes further tests. Even if national rules on product safety, and on the procedures to follow before a product can be legally placed on the market, are different, Member States' Treaty commitment means that they have to allow the import of goods once they have fulfilled the rules in another Member State. This principle has been confirmed by the European Court of Justice on a number of occasions, when it has found that specific national requirements have had the effect of restricting trade within the single market.

Only in particular circumstances – including on grounds of public morality, public policy or public security; to protect the health and/or life of humans, animals or plants; to protect national treasures; or to protect industrial or commercial property – may Member States restrict imports or exports of goods. And any such restriction must be justified by the Member State concerned, must be proportionate, and should not discriminate on the basis of nationality.

Barriers to remove

Despite the requirement for mutual recognition being clear, too many companies, in particular SMEs, have encountered barriers to trade. A 2004 survey for UNICE (now Business Europe) found that 57% of companies responding had had to change their products to meet national requirements. Some 46% had been asked to undergo additional testing/certification procedures, and 17% had been required to fulfil other demands, such as provide extra and/or different documentation. A separate 2004 survey, for the European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Commission, found that less than half of the companies which responded were familiar with the principle of mutual recognition. Moreover, more than 20% of companies which had encountered problems in getting their products accepted on national markets outside their own – where mutual recognition should apply – simply gave up.

Responding to such problems being experienced by European firms, in 2007, the European Commission proposed a package of reforms to the rules governing the Internal Market for goods. One element of that package is aimed at helping enterprises benefit from the mutual recognition principle to market their goods in different Member States, and came into force in May 2009. This Regulation sets out the procedure which all Member States' authorities must follow whenever they consider, or take, a decision – which would prohibit the marketing, or require the withdrawal from the market, of a product, or require modifications or additional testing before it can be marketed or kept on the market – in respect of any product which is already legally on the market in another Member State.

Better information

In particular, Member States' authorities which intend to take such a decision must provide written justification to the economic operator – manufacturer, importer, or their agent – which wishes to market the product. That justification must specify the technical rule on which the decision is based, and show why the public interest requires that the product should not be marketed in that country. The economic operator must be given time to respond before the authority takes its final decision, and that decision must be communicated to the economic operator within a period of four weeks (or eight weeks in certain cases). In other words, Member States' authorities must always justify their decisions, explaining their reasons to the company which wants to bring its product to market, rather than leaving them to find the technical rules themselves. Moreover, they cannot delay their decisions, which could cause additional problems to the company concerned.

A related initiative in the Regulation is the creation of product contact points. Set up in each Member State, these services enable economic operators to get all relevant information on the technical rules applying to product types, including any requirements for prior authorisation before they may be marketed in the country concerned. The services will also provide contact details of the authorities responsible for the application of any such technical rules, so that economic operators may contact them directly. And they will provide information on procedures available to settle disputes between the authorities and economic operators. This information should be supplied free of charge, and within a time limit of three weeks. ■

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LEADERSHIP 2015 – STRENGTHENING EUROPEAN SHIPBUILDING

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Recent times have seen significant restructuring in Europe's shipbuilding industry, with a focus on high-value-added products with which European firms are best placed to compete in the global economy. But the economic crisis means that global competition will get stronger, since fewer orders mean more yards bidding for each job. The European Commission recently organised a High-level Meeting to discuss how Europe's LeaderSHIP 2015 strategy for the industry needs to be reviewed to face the new challenges the crisis brings.

Europe is still a major player in the global shipbuilding industry, despite a shift in production of new ocean-going vessels in recent decades, first to Japan, then to South Korea and most recently to China. Whilst by volume, Europe's market share is now only around 15% of the global total, Europe remains in a leading position in value terms of civilian ships delivered, worth around 30% of the total, or €15 billion in 2007.

Although in the past few decades there have been many closures and workforces have been reduced, there are still about 150 large shipyards in Europe, with some 120 000 directly employed. Significantly, in some coastal areas, there tend to be few alternative major sources of employment. Beyond the shipyards, a further 750 000 jobs in the marine equipment industry directly or indirectly depend on shipbuilding. This covers suppliers of everything from steel plate, to engines, to safety systems, to electronic communications and navigation equipment, to cabin furnishings.

Globally, the shipbuilding industry (aside from the design and building of naval vessels) is the subject of significant government subsidy, with the result that European yards face unfair competition. There are also significant barriers to enforcing European patents on ships built elsewhere, so European firms may suffer infringements of their intellectual property rights.

LeaderSHIP 2015

In response to the economic turbulence following the 9/11 attacks, the EU developed the LeaderSHIP 2015 strategy for the shipbuilding sector, seeking to strengthen its competitiveness in the global market. In the period from 2003 up until the economic crisis struck, the strategy had much success. European yards' orders more than tripled in value between 2002 and 2005, growing at a faster rate than those of any other region. But while it achieved important results, LeaderSHIP 2015 needed to be reviewed to ensure it is fit to address the new economic situation.

Recent years have seen huge increases in the number of ships ordered – particularly of the tanker, bulk cargo and containership types – and many by financial speculators rather than traditional ship-owners. Indeed, many shipyards across the world still have a backlog of orders to deliver in the next two to three years. But since the end of 2008, new orders have fallen close to zero across all ship types. The amount of cargo carried around the world has dropped off dramatically. Many shipowners are laying up vessels for the long term because there is no business for them, so they now have little interest in bringing new ships into their fleets. Some orders will be cancelled, and some yards will complete vessels and find their buyers can no longer finance the purchase.

New challenges

Indeed, the financial crisis has brought a new problem for the shipbuilding industry, one which was much less significant in 2001-02. Traditionally, shipyards receive a relatively small down-payment, with the balance of around 80% of the price only paid when a ship is delivered. The yards therefore typically fund the building, paying workers, suppliers and subcontractors through a bank loan. Similarly, shipowners would fund the purchase with a loan, to be paid back from the revenue from carrying cargoes. The collapse of cargo rates means banks will lend much less. Finding new means to finance ship construction and purchase in the context of a much more cautious financial sector is therefore essential.

Significantly, the economic boom now ended also brought massive additional shipbuilding capacity in Asia. Whilst it was mainly intended to build relatively simple tankers, dry-cargo and container-carrying vessels, in the absence of orders in those sectors, many yards in the region will be seeking whatever business they can get. European yards are currently strong in more technically advanced sectors, such as cruise ships, ferries and private yachts, offshore supply vessels, dredgers and specialist ships such as wind-turbine installation barges or cable layers. But they can soon expect to face renewed, low-price competition in these sectors, much of it with government support explicitly enabling their competitors to reduce their prices.

Revitalised strategy for an innovation-intensive sector

The European Commission brought together senior representatives from the industry, governments and trade unions concerned at a High-level Meeting in Bremerhaven on 11 September 2009. Participants reviewed the direction of LeaderSHIP 2015 so as to agree how to address the long-term competitiveness of the sector as well as the additional problems raised by the economic crisis. This implied both refocusing implementation actions for the strategy up to the 2015 horizon, and seeking agreement on short-term actions to overcome the immediate problems, including difficulties in accessing finance. The other major immediate problem is that – when orders have dried up and ships are actually being built – yards have no work for their design teams. Since these are a crucial element in Europe's competitive advantage, it is vital that the skills of both individuals and teams are not lost to the industry.

Europe is the world leader in innovation in shipbuilding. The European Commission aims to review the instruments currently supporting R&D and innovation in the sector to see how they may be improved and strengthened. The Commission will also continue and increase efforts to agree at global level on the regulation of subsidies and pricing in the shipbuilding sector. Although such an agreement is now more vital than ever to create a level playing field, the temptations for countries facing massive overcapacity to subsidise their yards will likewise be stronger than ever.

Greening shipping

The fleet operating today does not fully respond to the future needs of safe and environmentally friendly maritime transport. Something like a quarter of Europe's ferry fleet, for example, is more than 30 years old. Appropriate incentives to operators of older vessels to replace them would make Europe's fleet greener and safer, while stimulating demand for new ships and new technologies.

The Copenhagen climate change negotiations in December 2009 are likely to refocus attention on the energy performance of shipping, and in particular the greenhouse gases they emit. Industry acknowledges that technology to reduce emissions of such gases by up to one-third already exists, so the European Commission will seek to get widespread commitment to schemes to introduce such technologies on new vessels and retrofit them on vessels already in service.

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A EUROPEAN STRATEGY ON KEY ENABLING TECHNOLOGIES

Nano-, bio- and other technologies hold enormous promise for Europe's future. In a recent Communication, the European Commission charts a way forward for these key enabling technologies, which will help enhance the competitiveness and sustainability of our economy.

At 1 billionth of a metre, a nanometre is very tiny indeed, but it has enormous potential. In recent years, nanotechnology – a discipline which seeks to develop structures that are 100 nanometres or smaller – has attracted considerable attention, both from scientists and the business world.

At the nano-scale, the properties of materials can be very different to how we know them at the macroscopic level. By harnessing these properties, scientists hope to develop stronger, more lightweight and more resilient materials and devices with interesting applications in a range of different fields, from computing, semiconductors and nanoelectronics to medicine.

Nanotechnology has already opened up mind-boggling possibilities, such as super-strong, lightweight fabrics, diodes that emit light and not heat, and a computer chip so small that you could fit 400 on to the head of a pin. 'Smart' materials, such as bandages that can detect the first signs of infection, are one promising avenue for research.

Similarly, biotechnology has been progressing in leaps and bounds in recent years. It is rapidly transforming the agricultural and food sectors and creating new, cutting-edge bio-resource industries. Biotech applications and products include new agricultural products and practices, novel foods, biodegradable plastics, and biofuels.

Shaping the future

Bio- and nanotech are often referred to as 'key enabling technologies' (KETs), which also include micro- and nanoelectronics, photonics and industrial biotech. KETs reflect the enabling nature of general-purpose technologies that support widespread industrial deployment and provide significant economic improvement over existing complementary technologies. They are measured by direct R&D, indirect R&D embodied in intermediate goods, capital intensity and their potential value added. Their spillover and multiplier effects help to improve performance in other sectors, such as ICT, chemicals, steel, medical devices, automotives, space, aeronautics, etc.

As much of the EU's wealth and prosperity is based on its capacity to innovate, key enabling technologies will be crucial to the Union's future. They will also be essential to meeting the social and environmental challenges ahead.

As part of its efforts to develop a strategy for KETs, the European Commission released a Communication entitled 'Preparing for our future: developing a common strategy for key enabling technologies in the EU'.

"The EU needs a strong innovative drive to equip itself with the means needed to secure our future competitiveness and address the major societal challenges of this century," Commission Vice-President and Enterprise and Industry Commissioner Günter Verheugen said. "Mastering nanotechnology, micro- and nanoelectronics, biotechnology, new materials and photonics means being at the cutting edge – to the benefit of citizens."

New frontiers in research

KETs typically lie at the frontiers of current knowledge and require a great deal of investment in fundamental and high-tech research in order to develop and deploy them. However, the EU invests relatively less at the technological cutting edge than its main rivals. For example, the Union has an R&D intensity of only 25% in high-tech manufacturing compared with 30% in the United States, while US high-tech manufacturing output is 50% higher and Japan's a third higher than Europe's.

One reason for this is not the absence of research but the lack of application. "The EU does not effectively capitalise on its own R&D results," the Communication observes. "As a consequence, very costly research, both from public and private sources, undertaken in the EU leads to commercialisation in other regions."

The strategic vision outlined in this Communication, coupled with the EU's ongoing efforts to invest more in R&D, will help the Union close the gap and deploy the kind of enabling technologies that are crucial to Europe's future competitiveness.

The Communication identifies the five most crucial KETs for the EU's future. Besides nano- and biotechnology, these involve: micro- and nanoelectronics including semiconductors; photonics, such as LEDs and lasers; and advanced materials.

Enabling policies

Enabling technologies require enabling policies to help bring them to fruition. As KETs are of systemic relevance, several policies should take them explicitly into account. The Communication outlines ten policy areas which need to be addressed, including focusing innovation policy more on KETs, promoting more EU-wide technology transfer, as well as more joint strategic programming and demonstration projects, not to mention greater international co-operation. The European Commission also recommends the harnessing of targeted and fair state aid policy, lead markets, public procurement and venture capital financing as ways of stimulating key enabling technologies.

Furthermore, the Commission suggests that KETs should be linked closely to climate change policies and be placed at the top of the EU's international trade agenda to promote KETs and avoid trade distortions. Skills, higher education and training are also crucial priorities in the rapidly changing world of cutting-edge technology.

The European Commission will soon establish an independent high-level expert group, and task it with developing the blueprint for a longer-term EU strategy for each of the enabling technologies. Following this, the Commission will report back to the Council of Ministers by the end of 2010. ■

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ECODESIGN FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The adoption of the revised Ecodesign Directive makes it possible to set requirements on all products which affect energy consumption during use, not just those which consume energy directly. Its implementation will ensure Europe continues to lead the world in improving energy efficiency and reducing greenhouse gas emissions, providing a more sustainable future for industry and citizens alike.

The EU's Sustainable Consumption and Production and Sustainable Industrial Policy Action Plan, adopted in July 2008, is about ensuring products on the single market become more environmentally friendly. The action plan aims to move Europe further towards the development of a low-carbon economy, while encouraging European enterprises to develop the skills and know-how required to establish and maintain a leading position in the global market place for eco-friendly products and services.

Ecodesign is a central plank of the action plan, on the basis that products on European markets should be designed, from the outset, to minimise the environmental impact of their manufacture, use and disposal, in particular the related energy consumption. EU efforts in this field, starting in the 1990s, first focused on specific product groups with high energy consumption, such as boilers and refrigerators. In 2005, the Ecodesign Directive widened the approach, so that all products which consume energy during use could be covered. But rather than set specific requirements for each type of product in the Directive, it simply provides a framework for all energy-using products. Individual pieces of implementing legislation then enable mandatory ecodesign criteria and requirements to be set – and updated – for product groups on a case-by-case basis.

Widespread impact

So far, the European Commission has adopted nine implementing measures which will result in estimated annual savings of 341 TW-h (i.e. billion kW-h) in electricity consumption (or the equivalent of 12% of the Union's 2007 consumption). Examples include requirements to reduce energy consumed by appliances on 'standby', to reduce consumption of domestic lights and street and office lights, to improve efficiency of electric motors and television sets. Another nine measures are close to adoption, on products including washing machines, boilers, personal computers, air-conditioning and ventilation and imaging equipment. The Commission is also at an earlier stage in preparing a further ten or so measures, in areas including commercial refrigeration, transformers, vacuum cleaners and dryers.

Industry contributes fully to the development of the criteria and requirements for each product group. In some areas, the European Commission has responded to industry initiatives to develop voluntary ecodesign requirements, encouraging stakeholders to work together. Currently, discussions are taking place with a view to seeking voluntary agreements on medical equipment, complex set-top boxes, copiers and printers and machine tools. If successful, such agreements should respect the principles set out in the Directive, but in general provide a faster and more flexible solution than formal implementing measures adopted by the Commission.

Eco-innovation

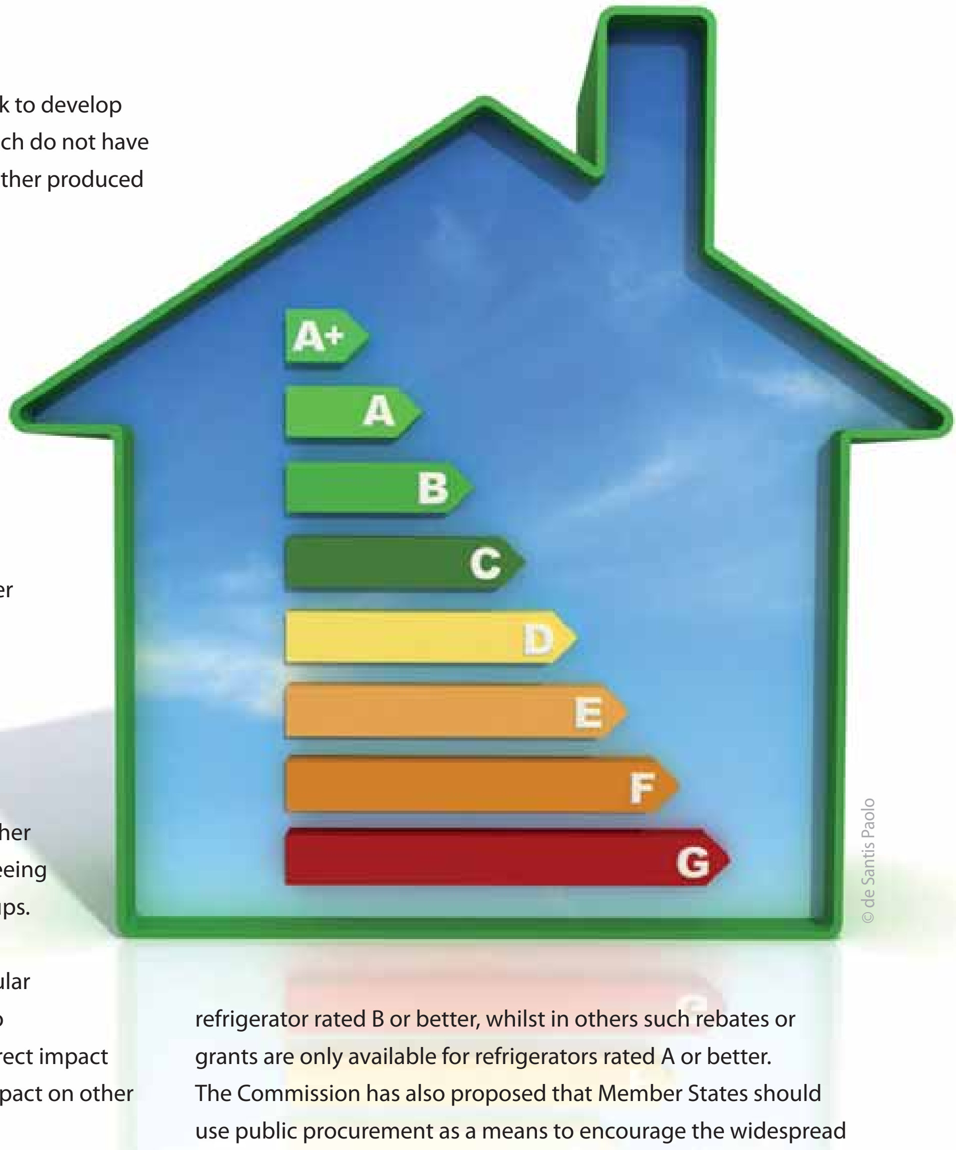
To introduce greener products into the market place requires innovation. European companies are already leading the field for many environmentally friendly products, but more needs to be done – greater efforts across a broader range of product types are essential if Europe is to maintain its leading position. Funding for eco-innovation projects is a key part of the Union's Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP). Two calls for proposals have already seen hundreds of project ideas submitted, primarily from SMEs. The next call for proposals is planned for April 2010.

It should be noted that the Commission will not seek to develop implementing measures in the case of products which do not have a significant environmental impact, or which are neither produced nor sold in large quantities in the single market.

Extending the scope

A key measure of the action plan was the extension of the Ecodesign Directive to include not only energy-using products but also other energy-related items. These are products which have an influence on energy consumption when they are being used, whilst not directly consuming energy. Examples include shower heads and taps, windows and insulation materials, and detergents.

The European Parliament and Council adopted the revised Ecodesign Directive in October 2009. Apart from extending the scope of the Directive to cover these additional types of product, it maintains its other provisions unchanged, including the means for agreeing implementing measures for individual product groups. The European Commission is required to review the effectiveness of the Directive by 2012, and in particular whether its scope should be further extended, i.e. to include products which have neither direct nor indirect impact on energy consumption in their use, but have an impact on other environmental conditions.



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Energy labelling

Consumers have got used to seeing energy ratings – A, A+, etc. – on household appliances. An indication of the energy consumption of a given product in comparison to others of its type, energy labelling is a means to encourage consumers to consider the lifetime running costs and environmental impact of their appliances alongside the initial purchase price. The energy labelling system was introduced in a 1992 Directive covering household appliances, or so-called 'white goods'. All such products must display the label when sold new.

In the action plan, the European Commission proposed to extend the Energy Labelling Directive to cover all energy-related products. This would bring it into line with the revised Ecodesign Directive, so that provisions for both design criteria and consumption rating thresholds can be agreed together, simplifying the process of preparing implementing measures.

In addition, the Commission has proposed harmonising the levels at which incentives may be offered to consumers to choose eco-friendly options; to avoid, for example, consumers in some Member States receiving a tax rebate or grant to purchase a refrigerator rated B or better, whilst in others such rebates or grants are only available for refrigerators rated A or better. The Commission has also proposed that Member States should use public procurement as a means to encourage the widespread introduction of lower-consuming products into the market place, through, for instance, stipulating minimum energy ratings for products offered in response to purchase requests. Harmonising the levels for incentives and public procurement criteria will also provide certainty and benefits for forward-looking manufacturers developing new high-performing products.

The proposal for revising the Energy Labelling Directive is currently being discussed in the European Parliament and Council. It should be noted that energy labelling is separate from eco-labelling, which is a voluntary scheme for manufacturers to inform consumers of the environmentally friendly credentials of their product. ■

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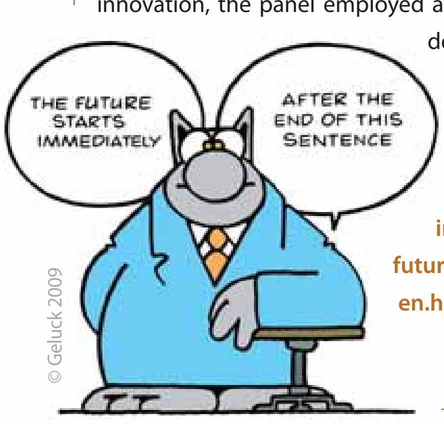
NEWS IN BRIEF

INSPIRING THE FUTURE OF INNOVATION

An independent panel of European business innovators, tasked by the European Commission services with providing a business perspective on future priorities for EU innovation policy, released its final report in October 2009 on the occasion of the first European Innovation Summit. In the spirit of innovation, the panel employed an innovative approach in its deliberations, using Web 2.0 technologies to "co-create" its recommendations.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/innovation/policy/future-policy/business_panel_en.htm



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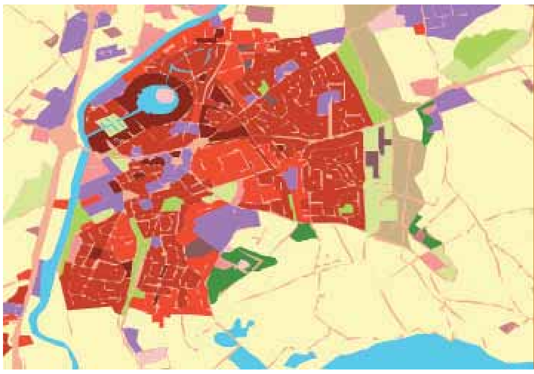
EUROPEAN MACHINERY SECTOR MOVES UP A GEAR

Applicable from 29 December 2009, the revised Machinery Directive aims to consolidate the achievements of the original legislation in terms of the free circulation and safety of machinery in Europe, whilst improving its application. Tying in with the coming into force of these changes, a conference on the perspectives and challenges for the European machinery industry is due to take place in December.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_9740_en.htm



SMARTER URBAN DEVELOPMENT

Europe's urban planners have new tools to ensure that towns and cities grow and prosper not only sustainably but also safely. Urban Atlas offers reliable and comparable urban planning information delivered through the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security's (GMES) services. With full operability foreseen for 2011, the tool has potential applications in several fields, including a deeper understanding of climate change.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_9739_en.htm

EUROPE'S MANY EDENS

There may have been just one Garden of Eden, but Europe is home to a bountiful supply of European Destinations of Excellence (EDENs), hidden tourism beauty spots that are off the regular beaten track. Each year, a number of these remarkable destinations receive the EDEN awards in recognition of their distinctiveness and in order to raise interest in them. The 22 winners of the 2009 awards, which focused on sustainable tourism in protected areas, were announced at the European Tourism Forum on 7 October 2009.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/eden/themes-destinations/2009-nature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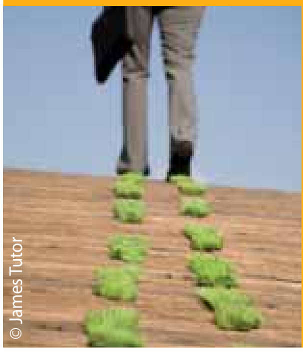
TALKING **RESPONSIBILITY**

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) deals with a number of key issues pertaining to a firm's impact on society and the environment. As part of their commitment to CSR, many companies disclose environmental, social and governance (ESG) information. A Commission-organised workshop – the first in a series of five to be held between September 2009 and February 2010 – explored ESG disclosure from the perspective of enterprises, with a view to identifying the key challenges they face and ways of addressing them.



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www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3723&lang=en

A **PLATFORM** TO PRESENT **ICT SERVICES**

The European Commission has launched a guide to electronic commerce for small to medium-sized enterprises. The eBusiness Guide for SMEs is an on-line tool which provides information to firms engaged in or interested in eBusiness. This platform allows ICT providers to present their services free of charge and, thus, to benefit from international promotion.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e-bsn/ebusiness-solutions-guide/

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Strengthening European SMEs in the defence sector,
12-13 January 2010, Stockholm
18 February 2010, Budapest

Adopted in 2007 by the European Commission, the 'Defence Package' aims to strengthen the European defence industry and overcome the fragmentation of national defence markets. It also contains numerous proposals for the support of SMEs. These are two of a series of conferences (others will be organised in Madrid, Athens and Warsaw by March 2010): they will raise SME awareness of new opportunities in defence procurement related to the Defence Package.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=3445&tpa_id=152&lang=en

European eSkills Week,
1-5 March 2010, throughout Europe

European eSkills Week is a major awareness-raising campaign which seeks to promote the acquisition and development of electronic skills in the EU: several events will be organised throughout Europe. In addition to presenting the goals and outcomes of the European eSkills strategy, the occasion will also provide a unique pan-European platform to promote the exchange of experience and good practice, foster co-operation and mobilise stakeholders.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/ict/e-skills

Sustainable Tourism – Iron Curtain Trail,
16 March 2010, Sofia

This is one of three regional awareness-raising workshops organised by the Commission focusing on the 'Iron Curtain Trail – a Future EuroVelo Cycling Route'. The event will highlight the increasing importance of cycling tourism and bring together a maximum of 150 participants from local, regional and national tourism authorities and other interested stakeholders, including the media.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/tourism/iron-curtain-trail

Corporate Social Responsibility,
25-26 March 2010, Mallorca

Organised by the Spanish presidency of the EU, this conference will focus on multi-stakeholder approaches to the promotion of corporate social responsibility.

www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sustainable-business/corporate-social-responsibility

ENTERPRISE & INDUSTRY *magazine*

The *Enterprise & Industry* on-line magazine provides regular updates on policy development, on legislative proposals and their passage to adoption, and on the implementation and review of regulation affecting enterprises. Articles cover issues related to SMEs, innovation, entrepreneurship, the Single Market for goods, competitiveness and environmental protection, better regulation, industrial policies across a wide range of sectors, and more. In short, it addresses all EU policies under the responsibility of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry.

Three times a year, the best of the on-line articles, together with a new feature article, are presented in the printed edition of the magazine. You can subscribe to receive the magazine – in English, French or German – free of charge by post. Visit the website and subscribe on-line.

Visit the magazine website to find out more:
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