

# **ENTERPRISE INDUSTRY** *magazine*



## **Small Business Act Review**

Intellectual Property Rights Portal

Universal charger for mobile phones

Tailored business support in 17 sectors

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## EDITORIAL

*The EU has a strong track record in supporting its small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The 2008 Small Business Act (SBA), for example, put in place a comprehensive SME policy framework for the EU and its Member States. This issue of E&I magazine analyses progress made so far in implementing the SBA, while looking at how the recent SBA review will drive Europe's economic engine forward to respond to new challenges.*

**A**s part of a regular feature, we also take a look at the **Enterprise Europe Network**, which is helping European SMEs find business and technology partners and apply for EU funding. In this issue, we focus on how the network sector groups provide enterprises operating in 17 sectors – from retail to space technology – with customised support.

Internationalisation is indeed an ingredient crucial to the success of SMEs. However, in order to seize the opportunities it opens up, enterprises need to take care of several aspects, not least the protection of their intellectual property rights. We discover the new **TransAtlantic intellectual property rights (IPR) Portal**, a joint EU-US initiative offering a wealth of useful information in this domain.

The promotion of a **single charger for mobile phones** regime is also featured. European consumers will soon be able to

use a single charger for mobile phones produced by 14 major manufacturers, thanks to new standards promoted by the European Commission. This agreement will also help to cut waste.

Other articles in this issue investigate strategic actions to enhance the EU's access to sustainable **raw materials**, efforts to boost the competitiveness of the European chemical industry, and what the new Innovation Union Scoreboard reveals about the innovation performance of EU Member States. We also take a look at the benefits of **electronic invoicing**, the lack of a harmonised EU-wide car registration and what the Union is doing to address this situation.

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# SMALL BUSINESS ACT REVIEW

The **Small Business Act (SBA)** was launched in 2008 to ensure that European small and medium-sized enterprises have **access to finance and markets** and can thrive in a regulatory environment conducive to growth. A recent European Commission review reveals that progress in implementing the SBA's measures has been made, while indicating further actions needed to respond to the new challenges that have emerged in the meantime.

**S**mall and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are the engines of Europe's economic growth, providing jobs and driving innovation. Supporting Europe's 23 million SMEs, which employ 67% of the private sector workforce, has become especially vital in today's tough economic climate where nearly 10% of the EU's labour force is out of work. Fresh ideas are needed. Providing the conditions within which SMEs can flourish – such as access to finance and markets – is therefore a priority for the European Union.

## Where do we stand?

The EU has a strong track record in supporting business. The 2008 Small Business Act (SBA) put in place a comprehensive SME policy framework for the EU and its Member States, while strengthening its links with all relevant policy areas through the "think small first" principle. The SBA addresses the needs of companies which are independent and have fewer than 250 employees.

Given the priority attached to SMEs by the European Commission, a regular assessment of progress made in implementing the SBA is crucial in order to identify new needs under changing circumstances. To this end, the Commission has recently presented a Review of the SBA.



Between 2008 and 2010, numerous actions set out in the SBA Action Plan have been implemented. To alleviate administrative burdens, for example, the European Directive on e-invoicing has helped small businesses by making e-invoices equal to paper ones, and businesses with a turnover of less than €2 million can now benefit from an optional cash accounting scheme, making it possible for them to delay accounting for VAT until they receive payment. In addition, thanks to the Directive on late payments, public authorities are now required to pay within 30 days, which should enhance the cash flow of SMEs.

A number of initiatives have also been introduced specifically to improve access to finance. Some 100 000 SMEs have so far benefited from Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP) financial instruments, while a further 200 000 SMEs are expected to benefit by 2013. Furthermore, the vast majority of Member States have adopted measures to facilitate SME access to finance through public support to guarantee schemes. On average, each SME that is granted a guaranteed loan creates 1.2 jobs. Several Member States also supply funding to innovative young companies through

### Encouraging entrepreneurship

Some interesting initiatives put forward in the Small Business Act Review also focus on promoting entrepreneurship. Member States are invited to reduce the start-up time for new enterprises to three working days and the cost to €100.

The Commission is keen on creating mentoring schemes for female entrepreneurs in at least 10 EU countries to provide advice and support with the start up, functioning and growth of their enterprises. And by the end of this year, a Social Business Initiative focusing on enterprises pursuing social objectives will be adopted.

Looking forward, the Commission also wants Member States to reduce the time it takes to get licences and permits – including environmental permits – to one month by the end of 2013. It would also like governments to give honest entrepreneurs a second chance by limiting the discharge time and debt settlement after bankruptcy to a maximum of three years by 2013.

seed capital and venture capital, while others provide financial support to competitiveness poles that link universities, research centres and businesses.

### Strengthening Europe's economic engine

Although progress has been made in improving access to finance and markets and creating a better regulatory environment for SMEs, implementation of the SBA has varied between Member States. The Review of the SBA stresses that all Member States must now step up their efforts to support SMEs in what is still a very challenging economic climate. Some 3.25 million jobs in SMEs have been lost, which further underlines the need to restore their job-creating capacity.

"SMEs represent more than 99% of all businesses and employ more than 90 million in Europe. They are the engine behind our economy and must be kept strong, competitive and innovative," says Antonio Tajani, European Commission Vice-President in charge of industry and entrepreneurship. "Member States must act quickly to ensure that the Small Business Act is fully implemented."

The SBA review sets out new actions needed to respond to challenges resulting from the economic crisis and to align the SBA with the priorities of the Europe 2020 strategy, the EU's growth strategy for the coming decade. Key areas for action include access to finance, smart regulation to reduce administrative burden, helping SMEs to benefit fully from the Single Market and tackle the challenges of globalisation and climate change.

### Paying specific attention to SMEs' financing needs

An SME Finance Forum has now been established to monitor the market situation and to encourage new approaches to improve access to finance for SMEs.



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The second high-level SME Finance Forum meeting, chaired by Vice-President Antonio Tajani, took place on 15 March 2011.

Within an enhanced set of financial instruments, the European Commission aims to help a higher number of SMEs through strengthened loan guarantee schemes and will present an action plan including access to venture capital and targeted measures to make investors more aware of the opportunities offered by SMEs. In addition, the Commission intends to explore options for setting up an intellectual property rights valorisation instrument at the European level, in particular to ease SMEs' access to the knowledge market.

### Making Smart Regulation a reality for SMEs

In order to lighten the administrative burden, the European Commission will make sure that impacts on SMEs are thoroughly analysed and taken into account by using a so-called 'SME Test' when proposing new legislation or major new policies.

Member States are invited to do the same.

The Commission also plans to promote the application of the 'only once' principle whereby public authorities and administrative bodies should refrain from requesting the same information, data, documents or certificates which have already been made available to them in the context of other procedures. Likewise, Member States will be asked to simplify further the regulatory and administrative environment in which SMEs operate.

Helping SMEs benefit from the single market is another continued priority. Making cross-border payments is still perceived as costly and burdensome, as are the instruments available to resolve possible conflicts with customers, in particular in e-commerce. In order to encourage cross-border activity, the European Commission will carry out an in-depth analysis of unfair commercial practices in the EU and, if needed, table a legislative proposal. Furthermore, in March 2011 the Commission put forward a legislative proposal for a Common Consolidated Corporate Tax Base (CCCTB) to reduce tax obstacles and administrative burdens for SMEs in the single market.

### Expert export advice

Internationalisation is crucial to SME success. Although some 25% of SMEs export or have exported at some point during the last three years, they are often less well-equipped than large enterprises to deal with different legal environments, standards and risks.

Exports represent a huge untapped market potential, in particular in the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) countries which at present are only served by 7% to 10% of exporting EU SMEs. This is why the European Commission opened an EU SME Centre in China in November 2010 in order to facilitate SME access to this significant market and help them overcome challenges they face. A new strategy planned for the adoption by end 2011 will present some key principles on the support of EU SMEs in markets outside the EU.

The SBA review underlines again the importance placed on the role of SMEs in Europe's economy, and also an understanding that their needs must be taken into account if Europe is to prosper. The proposals and initiatives presented in the review should help ensure that SMEs are empowered to flourish despite trying economic circumstances.

### Stronger governance for a speedy implementation

The Commission proposes to speed up implementation of the updated SBA by proposing a set of measures which give Member States and SME stakeholders a key role in evaluating and reporting on the uptake of the SBA. Member States are invited to appoint a national 'SME Envoy', or a "Mr or Mrs SME" who would ensure, in close contact with SME stakeholders, that national legislation is SME-friendly. The national SME Envoys would also be part of the new SBA Advisory Group alongside representatives of governments and business organisations in order to evaluate the uptake of the SBA and to promote the exchange of good practices. ■

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# HOW TO STAY TOP OF THE INNOVATION CLASS

According to the new **Innovation Union Scoreboard**, the European Union is making progress in the innovation stakes but is losing ground to some of its rivals. This shows that EU Member States need to step up their efforts to boost their innovation potential so as to turn ideas into **new jobs and sustainable growth**. By joining forces under the umbrella of the Innovation Union flagship initiative, Europe should be able to achieve this.

Innovation is the engine which drives economies and pushes the boundaries of what is possible.

It also creates jobs and opens new markets, especially vital in today's tough economic climate. For these reasons, encouraging and promoting innovation is an EU priority. In October 2010, the European Commission unveiled the Innovation Union (IU), an ambitious strategy which aims to improve framework conditions and access to finance for research and innovation, while refocusing these policies on the key challenges of our times, such as climate change, energy efficiency and demographic evolution.

But how is Europe faring in the global innovation race so far? To assess performance in this domain, the European Commission recently presented the first-ever Innovation Union Scoreboard (IUS), which builds on and replaces the former European Innovation Scoreboard as a valuable tool to identify areas where further action may be needed.

The scoreboard indicates that, the economic crisis notwithstanding, most EU Member States are pursuing a promising upward trend in their innovation performance. This is particularly the case for the EU's 'innovation leaders', the top group made up of Denmark, Finland, Germany and Sweden, whose performance

– 20% or more above that of the EU as a whole – would rival and even exceed that of any international player.

This leading group precedes the ‘innovation followers’ (Austria, Belgium, Cyprus, Estonia, France, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Slovenia and the UK), the ‘moderate innovators’ (the Czech Republic, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain) and the ‘modest innovators’ (Bulgaria, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania). Although the gap between the EU’s top and bottom innovation performance is wide, it is narrowing and there has been something of a convergence in recent years.

### Areas for action

Nevertheless, despite these gains, the EU is losing ground to its major international competitors, the United States and Japan. There is, for example, a rapidly increasing EU lag in licence and patent revenues from abroad, suggesting that Europe is producing fewer high-impact patents than America and Japan. And while the EU still maintains a clear lead over emerging economies, such as India and Russia, Brazil is making steady progress, and China is catching up rapidly.

“The scoreboard shows that we need to step up our efforts in making Europe more innovative in order to catch up with our main competitors and recover the path of robust and sustainable growth,” said European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, who is responsible for industry and entrepreneurship.

According to the scoreboard, Europe’s research and innovation gap lies primarily in the private sector. This gap is particularly large in licence and patent revenues from abroad, an indicator of economic dynamism. The EU is producing fewer high-impact patents – those that generate significant income from third countries – than either the USA or Japan, and is not positioning itself sufficiently well in high global growth sectors.

The protection of intellectual property is another key factor. At present in Europe, markets have become borderless but patents are still largely organised along national lines. Obtaining patent protection for all 27 EU Member States is currently at least 15 times more expensive than in the United States, largely due to translation and legal fees. This is effectively a tax on innovation. The priority for policy-makers should, therefore, be to create conditions to encourage more private sector investment and facilitate the exploitation of research results by the business sector, in particular through a more efficient patents system.

### Doing the right things

The IUS found that countries at the top tend to have in common a number of strengths in their national research and innovation systems. While there is no single way to attain top innovation performance, most innovation leaders perform very well in business R&D expenditure and other innovation indicators related to firm activities.

All the innovation leaders have higher than average scores in the public-private co-publications per million of population indicator, which points to good linkages between the science base and businesses. All Europe’s most innovative countries also excel in the commercialisation of their technological knowledge, as demonstrated by their good performance on the ‘Licence and patent revenues from abroad’ indicator.

The results show that successful countries have a consistently high performance across all or most of the indicators. There is no evidence that success can be achieved on the back of exceptional performance in a limited number of areas, compensating for other indicators scoring poorly.

### Profiling innovative countries

The Innovation Union Scoreboard is designed to monitor the implementation of the Innovation Union. It draws on 25 research and innovation-related indicators so as to provide a better picture of Europe’s overall situation, and make it easier for policy-makers to identify the relative strengths and weaknesses of the research and innovation sector.

The IUS has helped to identify the common characteristics of countries capable of fostering effective research and innovation, such as stable research and innovation policies, along with well-tested policy design and delivery mechanisms (see box). ■

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# SUPPORTING EUROPEAN SMES ON THE GLOBAL SCENE

*In order to seize the opportunities opened up by internationalisation, enterprises need to take care of several aspects, not least the protection of their **intellectual property rights (IPR)**. A new EU-US portal provides a wealth of useful information in this domain.*

**B**usinesses which 'internationalise' their operations through exports, foreign partnerships, investments and cross-border clustering are more likely to enjoy growth, enhanced competitiveness and long-term sustainability. This is borne out in a 2009 study which found that internationally active SMEs reported employment growth of 7%, while SMEs without any international activities experienced only 1%.

The same study found that 25% of European SMEs export or have exported at some point during the last three years, thus being more active at an international level than their US and Japanese counterparts. However, despite the advantages of internationalisation, most SMEs still depend largely on their domestic markets.

## Pirates of globalisation

One reason for this apparent reticence is that SMEs often do not feel adequately equipped to launch themselves upon the international market, and fear that if they do so they might leave themselves open to copyright infringement and even counterfeit fraud.

Indeed, the reality is that the international trade in counterfeit and pirated goods, estimated at \$250 billion a year, represents a serious threat to international business. According to a recent OECD study entitled 'The economic impact of counterfeiting and piracy', the share of counterfeit and pirated goods in world trade is also estimated to have increased from 1.85% in 2000 to 1.95% in 2007.

This issue is especially acute for SMEs, which often lack the resources to deal with this sort of challenge. For example, very few can afford to have an in-house lawyer, and managers may see the subject as too technical or time-consuming, or fear high costs.



### Navigating the Chinese market

The EU has been backing European enterprises in their internationalisation endeavours through a series of initiatives. One remarkable example is the China IPR SME Helpdesk, which is financed under the Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme and supports European SMEs in both the protection and enforcement of their IPR in China. The helpdesk has assisted several SMEs in this manner since it was established in 2008.

For example, a Greek olive oil manufacturer operating in China since 2007 found that its Chinese distributor had registered its trademark in a number of food classes without consent. After studying related case studies and e-learning modules on the China IPR Helpdesk portal, the Greek company contacted the helpdesk for a more in-depth consultation.

The company was advised to file an opposition within three months of the date of publication of the trademark application in the official *Trademark Gazette*, or to negotiate buying back the trademark. By providing invaluable background information and advice, the China IPR SME Helpdesk saved the firm significant time and enabled them to act quickly and efficiently.

### Portal to safe business

This is why the United States and the European Union have joined forces to launch the TransAtlantic IPR Portal, which offers guidance to both European and American enterprises wishing to do business in other countries. It contains a wealth of information on intellectual property rights (IPR) that has been pooled, then classified and arranged in an easy-to-use manner. It also provides information on how to contact relevant authorities and where to find advice.

The ultimate goal of the joint website is to help European and American companies fully utilise all the IPR-related resources and tools developed on both sides of the Atlantic. "Improved IPR protection and enforcement will result in greater employment prospects and economic growth," says European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, who is responsible for industry and entrepreneurship. "Counterfeiting and piracy cause great damage to businesses, not least to small and medium-sized enterprises. Both the EU and US are committed to helping companies compete fairly on both sides of the Atlantic."

The portal came about through the US-EU IPR Working Group, which was established in 2004 to identify areas for joint action – particularly in third-country markets – where the United States and Europe share many of

the same concerns regarding intellectual property rights protection. It became clear that, while both parties had plenty of information on this issue, this was often difficult to find. Through pooling resources and communicating information more clearly, SMEs on both sides of the Atlantic stood to benefit.

The IPR Portal is organised into six major sections, with the country tool kits section at its heart. Here, a dynamic map of the world enables the visitor to click on a continent and to find the particular country he or she is looking for, together with all the relevant information. Entrepreneurs can also use the portal to learn the basics about intellectual property rights, manage their IPR correctly, learn about training opportunities, find the relevant enforcement authority, and locate more experts who can advise on a particular issue. ■

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[www.china-iprhelpdesk.eu](http://www.china-iprhelpdesk.eu)

# EMBRACING EUROPE'S E-FUTURE

While **electronic invoicing** promises significant **time and cost savings** to customers and businesses alike, some obstacles still hinder its full take-up. The European Commission has put forward a plan to help Europe to exploit fully the benefits e-invoicing can offer.

**T**he European single market is a real engine of prosperity. The free movement of people, goods, services and money has resulted in new business opportunities, more choice for consumers and closer collaboration between people, across borders which no longer act as a barrier. A key concept underlying the single market is that European enterprises and citizens should be able to do business as easily anywhere in the EU as they can at home.

However, some barriers still block the free flow of on-line commercial services across national borders and EU single market rules need to be updated for the digital

era. Information and communication technologies have already driven half of European productivity growth over the past 15 years and they have a very good potential in further contributing to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Therefore, the Digital Agenda, one flagship initiative under the Europe 2020 strategy, has identified the strengthening of a digital single market as one of its priority actions. In this framework, e-invoicing is a promising area and the European Commission has recently proposed a plan to address the issues hampering its take-up.

## A big difference

The European Commission wants to see e-invoicing become the norm in Europe by 2020. E-invoicing is quicker, cheaper and, what is more, is becoming increasingly commonplace. Providing invoice data electronically allows businesses to benefit from shorter payment delays, fewer errors and reduced printing and postage costs. Most importantly, structured e-invoices facilitate business process integration from purchase to payment, meaning that invoices can be sent, received and processed without manual intervention.

"E-invoicing has the potential to make a big difference, for businesses, consumers, and European trade as a whole," says Michel Barnier, Commissioner for the Internal Market and Services.

Due to diverging legal and technical requirements, however, e-invoicing across borders has not yet been fully realised. Although large companies are using e-invoicing systems, take-up has been minimal among the EU's 23 million SMEs.

## Leading by example

The European Commission can already accept electronic invoices from its suppliers in a well-defined number of cases. Furthermore, in March 2011 the Commission adopted the ISA Work Programme, which has allocated €26 million to actions in support of electronic cooperation among public administrations in the EU Member States. One of these actions, the e-PRIOR project, has successfully developed a platform that is able to exchange electronic catalogues, electronic-orders and electronic-invoices through the provision of a web services interface which can be accessed by any machine. e-Prior is also being offered as a free-to-use, open-source, online tool under the name of Open e-Prior. Open e-Prior aims to help public administrations connect their systems to the Pan-European Public Procurement Online (PEPPOL) infrastructure. The connection to the PEPPOL network makes Open e-PRIOR very attractive to Member State administrations because it is simple, effective and easy to use.

The PEPPOL project aims to implement common standards enabling EU-wide public e-procurement. Existing national systems will be linked so that all participants can enjoy the full benefits of a single European market.



# SIMPLIFYING CAR REGISTRATION

*The single market is one of Europe's key achievements, but it needs to be further strengthened in some areas so as to fully deploy its potential as a creator of growth and jobs. In the field of registration of vehicles previously registered in another Member State, for example, the lack of harmonisation continues to act as a barrier to the free movement of goods, thus resulting in administrative burden for both businesses and citizens. With a view to addressing this issue, the European Commission recently launched a public consultation in order to get those most affected involved in finding a solution.*

**T**he single market has brought significant benefits to both consumers and businesses. However, obstacles still remain. One such concern is the issue of registration of vehicles previously registered in another Member State.

## **Double trouble**

When buying a car in another Member State, or transferring it to another Member State from where it was bought (such as when moving abroad), EU businesses and citizens are frequently faced with cumbersome re-registration formalities and paperwork and, possibly, double payment of registration tax. This is because national laws on taxation upon registration are not harmonised, and are often applied across Europe in an uncoordinated manner. As a result, applicants often have to de-register the car in the Member State of origin and re-register in the Member State of destination. In most Member States, re-registration often involves supplementary paperwork and expenses, and applicants are frequently required to provide the same information again. Several Member States even oblige the applicant to undergo a roadworthiness test, despite the fact that the person is in possession of valid documents. Car rental companies also face this problem when trying to move their fleets from one Member State to another depending on the seasonal variation in demand.

In addition, this obligation to register a motor vehicle previously registered in another Member State can also cause problems for the registration and taxation authorities of the receiving Member States.

With the deepening of the single market, this problem has become more pronounced. SOLVIT, Europe's on-line tool for detecting and solving problems related to the single market, found that 5% of reported cases are related to vehicle registration. One major problem was the requirement to have a national certificate of conformity for vehicles that had previously been registered in another Member State. This obligation to register a motor vehicle already registered in another Member State is frequently the subject of the rulings by the European Court of Justice.

### Easing the burden

These administrative formalities and requirements for moving a motor vehicle from one Member State to another represent a significant barrier to the free movement of goods, services and workers. And what should be a simple procedure often turns into a bureaucratic nightmare, with cumbersome re-registration formalities and paperwork.

As part of its strategic initiative to relaunch the single market, an essential element of the Europe 2020 strategy, the European Commission is determined to ease car registration for citizens across EU, and is taking steps to do so. In March 2011, it launched a public consultation to identify the main difficulties encountered by EU citizens and companies when moving a car bought and registered in one Member State to another. This initiative is one of the actions set out in the EU Citizenship Report 2010, which complements the Single Market Act of 2010.

"Buying a car in one Member State and then moving it to another should not be complicated," said European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship.

"This public consultation will provide us with a better understanding of the problems encountered by citizens and companies, and with ideas on how to improve the situation. Our aim is to save time and money for consumers and businesses, as well as for national registration offices", he added.

The consultation, which closes on 26 May 2011, will serve as the basis for the European Commission to take appropriate action.

### Road testing the options

Citizens, national authorities (vehicle registration authorities) and stakeholders (businesses, private

organisations and lobby groups) are encouraged to take part in the consultation, which provides one tailor-made questionnaire for each category. Results of the public consultation will be discussed in a conference organised by the European Commission.

A number of options are on the table, including: improving the implementation of existing EU law through additional guidance and better administrative co-operation; self-regulation by registration authorities with a view to an agreement on common registration principles; the amendment of existing legislation on recognising vehicle registration documents, or a new legislative instrument proposed by the European Commission setting out the conditions for national vehicle registrations and the subsequent rights and obligations of drivers and national authorities, including the establishment of a European registration certificate, issued by national licensing authorities, that will allow recognising vehicles already registered in another Member State.

Simplifying formalities and conditions for registering cars across the EU is part of the Union's relaunch of the single market. By targeting one of the obstacles EU citizens, businesses and public authorities face in their daily lives and reducing administrative burden, this action can contribute to liberating resources for growth. ■

#### A typical problem

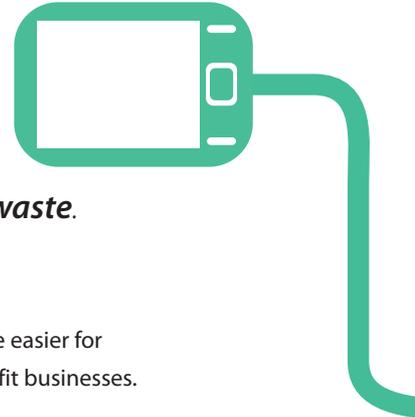
A company was trying to register in Poland a car which had previously been registered in Germany. The Polish authorities did not accept the harmonised German registration certificate consisting of two parts in accordance with Annexes I and II to Directive 1999/37/EC, as provided for by Article 3 of the same Directive, but asked for a Polish translation. This certificate is explained in detail in the annexes to the Directive and can be read simply by comparing the harmonised letters and numbers. There was therefore no need to understand the language in which the certificate is written. SOLVIT Poland convinced the relevant authorities that the law needed to be amended and the new version entered into force on 1 January 2010, thus bringing national rules on car registration into line with EU law.

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# ONE CHARGER FOR ALL MOBILE PHONES

European consumers will soon have the **convenience** of a single charger for mobile phones produced by major manufacturers, thanks to new standards promoted by the European Commission. This agreement, involving 14 phone makers, will also benefit the environment by **cutting waste**.



**W**ith your batteries on the verge of dying, have you ever wandered the corridors of your office asking whether anyone owns a similar phone and has brought in their charger? Have you ever opened a drawer to reveal a confusing snake-pit of tangled wires of the family's various phone chargers, both current and previous?

Well, this can all become a thing of the past. New European standards for mobile phone chargers, published in December, have cleared the way for a common charger designed to work with data-enabled phones (i.e. those which have a data port and can be connected to a computer) from leading manufacturers. The charger should be available later this year.



The standards are the result of a specific initiative of the European Commission, which prompted producers of mobile phones to address an issue detrimental to both consumers and the environment.

"I am very happy that the European standardisation bodies have met our request to develop, within a short space of time, the technical standards necessary for a common mobile phone charger based on the work done by industry," said European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, responsible for industry and entrepreneurship.

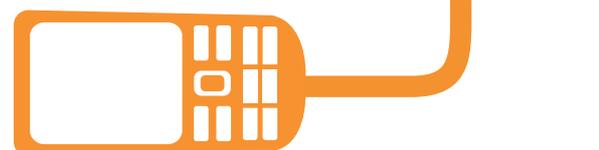
"The common charger will make life easier for consumers, reduce waste and benefit businesses. It is a true win-win situation."

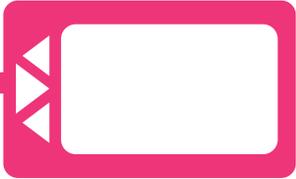
## Smooth solutions

Until now, almost every mobile phone has come in a box with its own charger which is often incompatible with other brands and models. About 30 different types of charger are currently on the market. With 185 million new phones being sold in the EU each year, half of them as replacements, many households now have more chargers than phones!

In 2008, the European Commission asked phone manufacturers either to agree on a specification for a common charger or risk a solution being imposed by legislation. A memorandum of understanding was signed by 14 companies which, in total, make more than 90% of mobile phones sold in Europe. The phone makers then worked with European standardisation bodies to establish standards on interoperability and safety for a new charger using a micro-USB connector (see box).

As a result of the European Commission's intervention, consumers will not need to buy a new charger with every new phone. In addition, the common chargers will be made to an energy-efficient design and thus reduce energy consumption, whilst competition and economies of scale are expected to reduce the cost to the consumer. The first chargers should hit the market in the first half of this year and become commonplace by 2013.





It is a clear example of one of the many ways the EU can help its citizens – not just through laws, but also by promoting at European-level a common-sense approach that benefits everyone.

### Less waste

One immediate impact will be on the reduction of waste. According to one estimate, Europeans are hoarding a stockpile of more than a billion useless chargers waiting to be thrown away. A smaller number of chargers in circulation will mean fewer unwanted items arriving on the scrap heap.

Although the memorandum of understanding formally covers just the 27 EU Member States, the European Commission is discussing the specification with other standardisation bodies and there is a good chance that Europe's common charger will be adopted worldwide.

In addition, the common charger can create a positive chain reaction as manufacturers of devices with similar power requirements, such as digital cameras and music players, are likely to adopt the idea.

More power-hungry devices, such as laptop computers, have different power and safety requirements and will not be able to use the new charger.

But consumers will be disappointed if the common-sense approach taken by the mobile phone industry does not eventually extend to other products too. ■



### Micro-USB is the answer

Manufacturers have agreed to adopt the 'micro-USB' connector for the new common phone charger.

USB (universal serial bus) is a series of standards for data transmission between computers and connected devices. USB connections can also supply electrical power and it is this feature that is being exploited for the common charger.

Industry bodies started to recommend micro-USB as a connector for a 'universal charger' in 2009, but the full specification for the common charger only emerged after the European Commission stepped in to broker agreement on the necessary standards.

Two new European standards specify how manufacturers should design chargers to work with all phones:

EN 62684, developed by the European Committee for Electrotechnical Standardisation (CENELEC), ensures that the common charger is compatible with data-enabled mobile telephones of different brands.

EN 301489-34, developed by the European Telecommunications Standards Institute (ETSI), concerns safety risks and electromagnetic emissions and ensures that common chargers have sufficient immunity to external interference.

Although some mobile phone chargers already use the micro-USB connector, they may not yet conform to these standards. Only chargers designed to the new standards can be marketed as common chargers. Consumers should examine the packaging carefully to ensure they are buying a charger that meets the new standards.

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One charger for all

[www.onechargerforall.eu](http://www.onechargerforall.eu)



# A EUROPEAN STRATEGY FOR RAW MATERIALS

*Raw materials play a key role in industrial competitiveness, including in sectors developing environmentally friendly technologies, such as electric cars and photovoltaics. Building on previous initiatives, the European Commission has proposed a set of actions that seek to enhance the EU's access to raw materials in its competitiveness, social and environmental dimensions.*

**R**aw materials and commodities are the lifeblood of European industry, yet their prices and supplies are becoming increasingly volatile and precarious which can lead to large fluctuations in costs for producers and, hence, also in consumer prices.

This is occurring at a time when European industry is facing growing competitiveness challenges in the global market. In fact, this volatility is also due to the changing patterns of global supply and demand of primary resources, as reflected by the major surge in demand from emerging economic powers, such as China, which is already the largest consumer of metals in the world. And with almost 14% of jobs (30 million) in the EU in businesses which depend on mineral raw materials, there is no room for complacency.

Moreover, this challenge looks set to continue well into the future. An EU-backed expert report released last year identified 14 minerals and metals (**antimony, beryllium, cobalt, fluorspar, gallium, germanium, graphite, indium, magnesium, niobium, platinum group metals, rare earths, tantalum and tungsten**) that were in a situation that it deemed to be 'critical' out of a list of 41 it analysed.

In order to address the challenges posed by raw materials, the European Commission recently outlined, in a Communication, a set of strategic actions to ensure that European industry has reliable and stable access to resources in the coming years. In terms of raw materials, the key elements of this strategic approach are:

- ▣ Regularly updating the list of critical raw materials already identified by the European Commission
- ▣ Monitoring the development of access to critical raw materials with the view to identifying priority actions
- ▣ Strengthening the EU's raw materials trade strategy and engaging in 'raw materials diplomacy'
- ▣ Developing bilateral co-operation with African countries in the area of raw materials, based on

## Material for diplomacy

Europe needs to maintain and gain access to raw materials from third countries, but it aims to do so in a way that is fair to both sides, and creates win-win situations. This can be achieved by what the European Commission calls “raw materials diplomacy”, through the promotion of good governance, human rights, conflict resolution, non-proliferation and regional stability in resource-rich countries.

Towards that end, actions have already been launched in the framework of the raw material initiative. For instance, the African Union Commission (AUC) and the European Commission have agreed to work together on governance, infrastructure and geological knowledge and skills. Africa has great potential which is not fully developed. During the discussions held in Addis Ababa in June 2010, Antonio Tajani, European Commission Vice-President in charge of industry and entrepreneurship, emphasised: “There are many synergies between the external development dimension of our Raw Materials Initiative and the economic development dimension of the Africa Mining Vision.”

The EU has encouraged better governance under the 10th European Development Fund (EDF), whilst the EU-Africa Infrastructure Fund has financed geological surveys to enable resource-rich countries to be better aware of what mineral wealth they possess. The EU is also helping to create a sounder investment climate by funding projects that promote revenue transparency in the extractive industries.

promoting good governance, investment and geological knowledge and skills

- Improving the regulatory framework for sustainable extraction within the EU
- Enhancing resource efficiency and promoting recycling
- Promoting further research and innovation efforts along the entire value chain of raw materials, from extraction, processing, recycling and resource efficiency to substitution.

The new Communication also put forward an ambitious programme to increase the integrity and transparency of commodity derivatives markets.

## For sustainable and inclusive growth

The Europe 2020 strategy is the EU's master plan for promoting smart, sustainable and inclusive growth over the coming decade through seven flagship initiatives. Raw materials have an important role to play in two of these flagships, ‘An integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era’ and ‘A resource-efficient Europe’, which group and link up mutually reinforcing policies with a view to achieving the key overall objectives.

Fitting in this strategic framework, the recent Communication on commodities and raw materials builds on and further develops the results of the Raw Materials Initiative, which was launched by the European Commission in 2008 to ensure that European businesses and industry do not suffer a competitive disadvantage compared to resource-rich countries. The Initiative laid down measures in three areas which have been confirmed and integrated into Europe 2020: ensuring

fair access to supplies from outside Europe; improving conditions for mining within Europe; and promoting recycling and resource efficiency.

In addition, as recent developments on commodity markets show that the prices of derivative and physical markets may be linked in multiple ways, the document presents an integrated strategic vision for commodities and raw materials.

“In order to secure the supply of raw materials for European industry for the coming years, we need to link this policy with our reforms of the regulatory framework for financial markets,” European Commission President José Manuel Barroso said. “Better understanding the synergy between the two will ensure that supply of commodities and raw materials matches demand in a resource-efficient way, contributing to sustainable growth in the European Union.” ■

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# THE RIGHT FORMULA FOR EUROPE'S CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

*Medieval alchemists sought to turn copper into gold. Even though modern-day chemists focus their research on different objectives, the compounds and materials they produce are truly awe-inspiring and are the bedrock upon which one of Europe's most important, innovative and competitive industries is built. As the sector is now facing the realities of a new decade, the European Commission has taken initiatives to encourage all involved actors to join forces to **boost the competitiveness** of the European chemicals industry and to fully use its potential to resolve the societal challenges identified in the Europe 2020 strategy.*

In medieval times, alchemists were sought to transform base copper into splendid gold. This age-old quest does not appeal to modern chemists, but today's chemistry has led to the development of a seemingly endless array of substances, compounds, materials and processes that truly glitter in their usefulness and importance. To recognise and celebrate this, 2011 has been declared the International Year of Chemistry.

In fact, the chemical industry today is a major sector of the European economy, and counts as one of the EU's largest manufacturing industries. According to the European Chemical Industry Council (Cefic),

the sector generated around €450 billion in sales in 2009 and European Commission figures show that the chemical and related industries employ some 1.2 million Europeans in 29 000 companies. In terms of productivity, the sector comes second of all manufacturing sectors in terms of value-added per employee. Moreover, the chemical industry is what is known as an 'enabling' sector because it provides innovative materials and technological solutions for other industries, such as through bio-chemistry and nano-materials.

Nevertheless, the financial and economic crises have hit the sector hard. For example, the industry shed 59 000 jobs in 2009 alone. But things are looking up. In the first 11 months of 2010, sales in the EU chemical industry rose by 17% compared with the same period in 2009. In roughly the same period, the sector recorded a trade surplus of nearly €43 billion.

Despite its obvious competitiveness, the European chemical industry is facing major challenges in the form of fierce global competition, uncertainties relating to a secure and fair access to energy and raw materials, and new regulations. The industry is rising to these challenges through structural change and innovation.

## Charting a course ahead

EU policy seeks to 'future-proof' the chemical industry, which represents an important and integral component of the Union's 'Integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era', one of the Europe 2020 strategy's flagship initiatives. As an intermediate goods industry and solution provider for almost all industrial value chains, the sector has enormous potential to improve both the competitiveness and environmental performance of downstream industries through innovation in substances and materials, the document outlining the new policy described.

In fact, a Commission-appointed independent High-Level Group on the Competitiveness of the European Chemicals Industry highlighted a number of potential contributions the sector could make to finding solutions for critical societal challenges facing the EU, such as strengthening its innovative power to allow European industry to compete on global markets, to tackle environmental sustainability and resource efficiency, and to contribute to healthy ageing by developing materials for medicines, medical devices or other tools.

More broadly, in 2009, the group issued a set of 39 recommendations aimed at bolstering the competitiveness of the European chemicals industry and targeted at all relevant stakeholders, including the industry itself, the EU, national governments and regional authorities. That same year, the Union's Competitiveness Council invited the Commission, Member States and industry to implement these recommendations.

### Turning recommendations into action

The European Commission has released a report on progress towards the implementation of the group's recommendations, the findings of which were presented at a major conference in Brussels on 10 February 2011. "I think we are moving forward in the right direction and we are doing this together," Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, in charge of industry and entrepreneurship, said at the event.

Most of the actions and initiatives are mid to long term and so it is still too early to draw conclusions. However, the report has already identified a wide range of activities taken by public authorities and private stakeholders to implement the recommendations.

### Strengthening the research-innovation bond

Research and innovation are the lifeblood of the chemical industry. This explains why the sector is one of the highest private investors in research and development.

The EU funds chemicals-related collaborative research through the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7), namely its nanosciences, nanotechnologies, materials and new production technologies (NMP) theme. This component of the programme aims to boost the competitiveness of European industry by increasing its knowledge intensity, with a special focus on dissemination of research results to small and medium-sized enterprises.

In Germany, authorities, industry, and universities have developed several initiatives to increase children's and students' interest in science and chemistry. In the United Kingdom, several networks and centres to encourage innovation have been established. Italy has supported experimental projects to develop innovative products and processes aimed at eliminating 'substances of very high concern', as defined in the REACH Regulation.

Seven European regions in Germany, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Italy have launched a joint project to improve framework conditions for supply chain management in Central and Eastern Europe.

Belgium and the Netherlands have launched a project to set up a pilot plant to scale up bio-based processes to prepare them for industrial applications, which will serve as an open innovation centre for commercial companies and research institutes looking to develop new bio-based activities.

Industry has also been busy taking action. For instance, Cefic used the High-Level Group's recommendations to draw up a road map for its members. "A significant number of actions have already been taken on the recommendations falling within our responsibility," explained Cefic President Giorgio Squinzi, adding that "We need to step up a gear."

The European Commission announced its intention to carry on the implementation of the High-Level Group's recommendations in the coming months, starting with a special focus on innovation and human resources. ■

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# TAILORED BUSINESS SUPPORT IN 17 SECTORS

The **Enterprise Europe Network** helps European SMEs to find business and technology partners and apply for EU funding. In addition, small businesses operating in 17 key industry sectors from retail to space technology can count on customised support from the Network. In these sectors, specialists from across Europe come together to organise brokerage and matchmaking events, using their expertise to find new markets and opportunities for companies.

**B**usiness support experts in 17 key industry sectors have teamed up to provide companies with customised support in their field. They are part of the Enterprise Europe Network, which links 3 000 experts working through 600 local organisations in 48 countries.

The Network helps small and medium-sized enterprises to find business, technology and research partners, as well as advising on how to make the most of European and international market places and funding opportunities. In order to customise its support further and make sure it meets the needs of specific sectors, the Enterprise Europe Network pools its expertise in key industries in 17 sector groups (see box), ranging from agri-food and the environment to intelligent energy and information and communication technologies.

## Mapping the tourism sector

The tourism and cultural heritage sector group seeks to enhance the competitiveness of European tourism and promote innovation within the sector. Moreover, it provides support to the cultural heritage sector, a key asset for European tourism. The EU is the world's leading tourist destination and its tourism sector is made up of some 1.8 million companies, many of them SMEs, accounting for about 5% of the Union's GDP and employment.

"Our main objectives are to promote innovation within tourism and to foster the sustainable use of natural and cultural heritage resources, through support to the EU's new political framework for tourism,"

## Finding the perfect match

Sector groups organise regular brokerage and matchmaking events, as well as company visits. The nano- and microtechnologies sector group organised a brokerage event, the seventh of its kind, at last year's Micronora, the biennial French micro- and nanotechnology trade fair which attracts hundreds of exhibitors and some 15 000 visitors.

Spread over one and a half days, the brokerage event brought together companies and institutes from France, Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland. Based on preferences they had expressed prior to the event, the participants were able to meet representatives from companies and institutes of interest to them in a series of half-hour-long 'speed dating' slots.

says Sabrina Montaguti of Florence-based Network member Promofirenze, who chairs the sector group. "We also want to promote business co-operation and sustainable partnerships."

The sector group is made up of business experts from 13 countries. It carries out a number of activities, including drafting guidelines for starting up a tourism business, mapping national, European and international tourism events, disseminating good practice, and maintaining a constant dialogue with policy-makers. The sector group has also conducted benchmarking analysis on tourism promotion strategies at the national, regional and local levels. To date, the brokerage events organised by the tourism and cultural heritage sector group have resulted in partnership agreements



### The Network's sector groups

- Agri-food
- Automotive, Transport and Logistics
- Biotech, Pharma and Cosmetics
- Chemicals
- Creative industries
- Environment
- Healthcare
- ICT Industry and Services
- Intelligent Energy
- Maritime Industry and Services
- Materials
- Nano- and Microtechnologies
- Services and Retail
- Space and Aerospace
- Sustainable Construction
- Textiles
- Tourism and Cultural Heritage

between European SMEs. For a German travel agency organising holidays for individuals with reduced mobility, a meeting with a Greek hotel company yielded fast results.

### Small is bountiful

Less traditional industries are also supported. Micro-technology, especially in the field of computing, electronics and machinery, has revolutionised the way we work and play. "For the past quarter of a century, micro-technology has been extremely important and its importance is growing every year," says Rim Stroeks, a consultant with the Enterprise Europe Network based at Syntens in the Netherlands. "The industry used to be focused in a handful of countries, but the geographical distribution has spread in recent years as new players have emerged."

The next technological revolution looks set to occur at the nano scale (a billionth of a metre). Nanotechnology has been attracting considerable attention, both from scientists and the business world. Possible applications include 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.

To help SMEs keep up with the high pace of innovation and technological change in this rapidly changing field, the Enterprise Europe Network has established a nano- and microtechnologies sector group. "Nanotechnology is a very important emerging sector and that is why we need a sector group to connect industry with academia," explains Stroeks, who chairs the group.

The group provides more specific assistance to both industry and research bodies; promotes business, technological and research collaborations; assists in addressing market barriers which can be high in cutting-edge technologies; helps deal with related ethical issues; maps the situation in the United States and Japan; and builds understanding of new EU policies and regulations.

"Because nanotechnology is such a young and fresh sector, it raises a number of safety, health and ethical issues," notes Stroeks. "The sector group can help raise public awareness and facilitate a public debate grounded in fact." ■

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Enterprise Europe Network

[www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu](http://www.enterprise-europe-network.ec.europa.eu)

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, A KEY RESOURCE

In its mission to draw more women into business, the European Network of Female Entrepreneurship Ambassadors has developed in size, strength, reach and impact as it welcomes 120 new envoys. The initiative has been promoted by the European Commission as part of its strategy designed to boost the growth of SMEs across Europe. The Ambassadors promote entrepreneurship among women by engaging and speaking to groups in schools, colleges, universities, community groups and the media, as well as addressing conferences, business networks and employment initiatives.

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e\\_i/news/article\\_10986](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_10986)

### REACH, SAFER USE OF CHEMICALS

Six substances, which are carcinogenic, toxic for reproduction or persist in the environment and accumulate in living organisms, will be banned within the next three to five years unless an authorisation has been granted to individual companies. This decision follows the successful first phase of the registration and notification of chemicals, part of REACH, Europe's initiative to make the use of chemicals safer. The following substances are concerned: Musk xylene (ingredient used in detergents, air fresheners and other household products); MDA (hardener in epoxy resins for coatings and in the manufacture of certain types of pipes and adhesives); HBCDD (flame retardant in insulation panels and in motor vehicles as well as in textile applications); DEHP (plasticiser in materials for indoor and outdoor products. Also used in mixtures such as adhesives, sealants, rubber, paints and printing inks); BBP (plasticiser in materials used for flooring, coating leather and in mixtures such as adhesives, sealants, paints and printing inks); DBP (specialist plasticiser used in polymer applications such as flooring, and advanced textile products).

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/chemicals/reach](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/chemicals/reach)



### KEEPING EUROPE COMPETITIVE

The Competitiveness and Innovation Framework Programme (CIP), which aims to encourage the competitiveness of European enterprises, comes to an end in 2013. The European Commission is currently examining actions and priorities to shape future EU support for business and it has called on stakeholders to help define a post-2013 framework. More than 550 participants took part in a conference on the topic, including representatives of business and innovation agencies, financial associations, universities and SMEs.

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e\\_i/news/article\\_10980\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/e_i/news/article_10980_en.htm)



### LIGHT THE WAY

All new types of passenger cars and small delivery vans have to be equipped now with Daytime Running Lights (DRL), following the adoption of a Directive in February. Trucks and buses will follow suit 18 months later, in August 2012. DRL, special lamps which automatically switch on when the engine is started, are expected to increase road safety by raising the visibility of motor vehicles for other road users. They also have a lower energy consumption rate than existing 'dipped-beam' headlights.

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/automotive/safety/daytime-running-light](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/automotive/safety/daytime-running-light)



## EU PATENT SYSTEM

The European Council gave its consent on 9 March for a common EU patent system to be created using the enhanced co-operation procedure. The use of enhanced co-operation was requested by 25 of the 27 EU Member States in order to establish a single patent that would be valid across the territory of participating Member States. The European Parliament gave its consent for using this procedure on 15 February. The language regime for the future unitary patent system will be based on that of the European Patent Office (EPO), where the official languages are English, French and German.

[www.europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=PRES/11/54&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en](http://www.europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=PRES/11/54&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)



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[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise)



## UPCOMING EVENTS

### High Level Conference on Defence and Security Industries and Markets, 23 May 2011, Brussels

This event will give stakeholders the opportunity to discuss the current state and future prospects of this important sector. The conference will bring together a number of high-level speakers and representatives of the defence and security community, both public and private (ministries, armed forces, European institutions, national parliaments and industries).

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/defence/conference](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sectors/defence/conference)

### Mobilising SMEs for the Future of Europe, 24-25 May 2011, Gödöllő, near Budapest

Hosted by the Hungarian Presidency of the EU, this conference will focus on local and regional solutions to key challenges facing SMEs. Keynote speakers will discuss the Review of the Small Business Act (SBA) and its implementation. Furthermore, the annual European Enterprise Awards, which reward excellence among public authorities in promoting entrepreneurship and small business, will be attributed during the event.

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/charter/2011-sba-conference-budapest](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/sme/best-practices/charter/2011-sba-conference-budapest)

### Week of innovative regions in Europe (WIRE), 07-09 June 2011, Debrecen

This conference, jointly organised by the Hungarian EU Presidency and the European Commission, will be dedicated to building co-operation between research infrastructures and clusters. It will address questions related to knowledge, innovation and competitiveness with respect to research infrastructure investments, clusters and their effects on how they can support smart growth in the regions.

[www.wire2011.eu](http://www.wire2011.eu)

### GMES and Climate Change, 16-17 June 2011, Helsinki

With the adoption of the Regulation on GMES and its initial operations last year, the European Earth monitoring programme (GMES) is becoming operational. GMES will comprise, among others, a service providing access to information for climate change monitoring in support of adaptation and mitigation policies. This conference is the opportunity to discuss the extent of existing information for climate change monitoring and debate on present and future user needs.

[www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/space](http://www.ec.europa.eu/enterprise/policies/space)

## 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, 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 feature article, are presented in the printed edition of the magazine. You can subscribe to receive the magazine – in English, French, German or Italian – free of charge by post. Visit the website and subscribe on-line.

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