

Enterprise Europe

Enterprise policy news and reviews


Published by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry


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Europe's Commitment to small businesses





enterprise europe network

 Growth and jobs strategy delivering results

 Lead markets for Europe to promote innovative sectors

 European Enterprise Awards

 Easing cross-border investment by venture capital funds

 Safety first: Commission proposes strict new rules for toys

Business Support at Your Doorstep

- This is the last issue of Enterprise Europe.

A new DG Enterprise & Industry magazine will be launched in Spring 2008. This magazine will appear mainly online with only three printed copies a year. In the coming months, these are expected to appear in May/June, Sept/Oct and Dec/Jan. If you already receive Enterprise Europe, you will be informed on how to subscribe to the new (free) magazine. You may also visit our website, where this information will soon be made available.

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

- DG Enterprise and Industry also sends out regularly its electronic newsletter "Enterprise News". Each issue focuses on a topical Enterprise & Industry issue and links to a series of other news items available on our website.

If you wish to receive our e-newsletter, please visit the following address:
<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/welcome.cfm>

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Photographs and illustrations
for this edition were supplied
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Catalogue no:
NB-BH-07-027-EN-C

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Enterprise News

From the European Commission's Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry
European Parliament supports proposal to reduce paper work for 300,000 freight carriers, saving € 160 million
17 January 2008

The European Parliament has adopted this week the European Commission's proposal to remove unnecessary burdens for transport companies. Freight carriers will no longer have to carry separate transport documents, explaining e.g. frontier crossing points, routes to be taken or distance travelled, thus rationalising outdated reporting requirements dating from 1960. Information on intra community transport flows, name and address of the consignee, nature and weight of the goods and place at which the goods are to be delivered.

The proposal also aligns the remaining information requirements with provisions in existing international conventions, facilitating freight carriers' opportunities by allowing them to use simpler means of documentation. This simplification applies to more than 300.000 freight carriers across Europe, most of which are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). This is a Fast Track Action within an Action Programme which has the objective to cut administrative burdens on businesses in the EU by 25% by 2012.

See: [Pressemittteilung](#) / [Press release](#) / [Communiqué de presse](#)

17 January 2008
First meeting of High Level Expert Group on administrative burdens chaired by Edmund Stoiber

17 January 2008
See the new website of VP Günter Verheugen - Gute Jobs für alle

17 January 2008
Report on information to patients on medicinal products

22 January 2008
Event: European Presidency Conference on Innovation and Clusters

22/01/2008 - 23/01/2008
Charion Hotel
Stockholm

23 January 2008
Event: Moving forward and implementing a long-term e-skills agenda in Europe

23/01/2008
Brussels

WISSE FÜR PROJEKTE

ENTREPRENEUR

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Helping small and medium-sized enterprises to develop their innovative potential and to raise their awareness of EU policies is the aim of the Enterprise Europe Network. This new European Commission initiative offers entrepreneurs a one-stop shop where they can seek advice and benefit from a wide range of easily accessible business support services.

7 Growth and jobs strategy delivering results

Three years after it was relaunched, the European Union's growth and jobs strategy is working well, according to the Commission's latest assessment of the economic reforms taking place across the Union. The structural reforms are starting to raise future growth potential, thereby improving the long-term prospects for prosperity.

10 Lead markets for Europe to promote innovative sectors

A new Commission initiative will unlock the market potential for innovative goods and services in six key areas by removing the obstacles they currently face. This will be achieved by improving legislation, facilitating public procurement of innovative goods and services and by further developing interoperable standards.

13 European Enterprise Awards: Promoting entrepreneurship

The European Enterprise Awards reward initiatives by local and regional authorities that promote entrepreneurship and create a favourable environment for business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises.

16 Improved competitiveness fuels economic growth

Productivity in the European Union in 2006 had its best performance for six years and grew faster than in the United States according to the Commission's

latest European Competitiveness Report. Measured as GDP per employee, EU productivity reached 1.5% compared to an annual growth rate between 2000 and 2005 of 1.2%, and to the 1.4% recorded in the US in the same year.

17 Safety first: Commission proposes strict new rules for toys

The European Commission has proposed to improve toy safety by strengthening EU-rules, especially those relating to the use of chemical substances in toys. The revision of the 20-year old Toys Directive 88/378/EEC of 3rd May 1988 has a threefold objective.

18 Easing cross-border investment by venture capital funds

In order to finance and stimulate innovation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the European Commission has tabled measures to promote cross-border investments by venture capital funds. These are a vitally important source of funding for small companies looking to grow and to put their ideas into practice.

19 Reducing paper work for freight carriers

The European Parliament has adopted the Commission's proposal to remove unnecessary administrative burdens on transport companies. Outdated information requirements contained on separate travel documents will disappear and the essential data that must still be provided will be collected in other, more efficient ways.

20 Transatlantic Economic Council moves into action

The EU and the US made important commitments during the first meeting of the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) in Washington on 9 November 2007. In a joint statement, they emphasised "the importance of our shared commitment to reducing barriers to international trade and investment to increase the standard of living of our citizens".

Enterprise Europe Network - Business Support at Your Doorstep

Helping small and medium-sized enterprises to develop their innovative potential and to raise their awareness of EU policies is the aim of the Enterprise Europe Network. This new European Commission initiative offers entrepreneurs a one-stop shop where they can seek advice and benefit from a wide range of easily accessible business support services.

⇒ Small companies, especially in their early stages, often do not have the resources to closely monitor the many different kinds of assistance EU programmes can provide. Nor are they always able to fully assess the innovative and market potential of their products or explore new business opportunities, particularly outside the areas they know well.

The Enterprise Europe Network bridges this gap. It builds on the strengths of the previous Euro Info Centre and the Innovation Relay Centre networks, and unites **more than 500 organisations in Europe**, in close proximity to its clients. With almost 4,000 experienced staff, the network is the largest in Europe providing expertise and services for business. Although the network gives assistance not only to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), but also to big companies or research institutes, it is expected to be of enormous help especially for small businesses.

The network can help clients in their **search for business partners** in countries other than their own. Fewer than one in ten SMEs now do business outside their own country, despite the abolition of national barriers and the opportunities firms with innovative products can find in niche markets. Yet, it is estimated that one million SMEs could be involved in cross-border trade, investment and technological cooperation if only they could call on the appropriate support services.

Network partners are able to offer advice on a broad range of business issues, such as transfer of innovation, intellectual property rights, access to finance and services to support innovation in SMEs.

Network partners organise visits and brokerage events for local SMEs everywhere in Europe and beyond. On the basis of their clients' particular interests, they can take care of all the logistics to ensure the process of business and technology cooperation runs smoothly.

On-site visits to assess a company's needs is another service the network offers and one which can frequently raise the prospect for the first time of a possible partnership with another company with complementary business interests.

The network can offer advice to enterprises seeking help in looking for debt and **risk capital** and explain the financing possibilities which exist under individual EU programmes. This is particularly true for the seventh research framework programme which has been designed in such a way as to increase SME participation in its activities.



Business Support at Your Doorstep



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Enterprise Europe Network: lending a helping hand

One shop for all services

The previously separately organised networks forced would-be clients to go to different addresses and follow separate administrative procedures. With the new network business receives 'Business Support at Your Doorstep', as the slogan suggests. All SMEs will receive information and a personalised service tailored to their needs, from every organisation in the new network. By grouping the services under a single roof, it is possible to reduce bureaucracy and enable all the major players in the business support community to offer their expertise alongside one another.

Innovation is what the network is promoting. To better convert innovation into commercial success, the network provides support services to encourage SMEs, especially in their early stages, to become more innovative and strengthen their technological capacity. SMEs will be encouraged to participate in research programmes and apply for funding. Collaboration with clusters bundling different innovation related activities and other regional initiatives will also be improved. Ensuring access to innovative technology will help them face global competition.

The network's purpose is to make small companies more competitive. With its extensive expertise and contacts, the network is extremely important for the European economy since small companies are major sources of employment and innovative goods and services.

Experience and professionalism


All the organisations in the new network, with their different backgrounds in business, research and industry, have extensive experience of helping small firms. The majority had already participated in the two previous support networks – Euro Info Centres and Innovation Relay Centres – which had operated for 20 and 12 years respectively.

By welding those earlier services together, and adding additional ones, the new network provides a more integrated approach, particularly as the consortia involved are more extensive than previously. At the same time, it will also simplify administrative procedures for network partners which were earlier connected to both the EIC and IRC networks.

Two-way street

Providing practical assistance and advice to business is only one way the network can help SMEs. It will also strengthen the voice of businesses within the EU's decision-making process. The network can be used as a sounding board, channelling the comments, views and observations of entrepreneurs on the ground back to policy-makers in Brussels in order to be fed into discussions on future policy initiatives.

As well as the professionalism of the services on offer, the network will have geographical breadth. It can be accessed not just in the 27 EU member states, but also in Norway, Iceland, Turkey, Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Switzerland, Armenia, and Israel. In addition national networks from the United States, Russia and a number of other countries have proposed to cooperate with the network.

For 2008, the very first priority is the promotion of the network's visibility in particular towards the 23 million SMEs in the EU. Follow-up of the single market review and related issues including intellectual property rights awareness will also be a priority this year. 

Broadest range of services for SMEs

The network partners:

- Assist companies in identifying potential commercial partners, in other countries,
- Help to better valorise innovative products and services through technology transfer,
- Assist SMEs in raising their innovative capacity, to access new markets and inform them about EU activities and opportunities,
- Advise small businesses on technical issues such as intellectual property rights, standards and EU legislation, and
- Act as a two-way street between entrepreneurs and EU decision-makers, relaying views in both directions.

A powerful European business support network

- Some 500 organisations, including chambers of commerce, regional development agencies and university technology centres,
- Approximately 4,000 experienced professionals, and
- Operations in almost 40 European countries.

Annually, it is expected to:

- Perform 50,000 technology audits,
- Document 1,000 technology audits, and
- Organise 4,000 local events and workshops on SME-related topics.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise-europe-network>

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/sme>

Growth and jobs strategy delivering results

Three years after it was relaunched, the European Union's growth and jobs strategy is working well, according to the Commission's latest assessment of the economic reforms taking place across the Union. The structural reforms are starting to raise future growth potential, thereby improving the long-term prospects for prosperity. However, some member states are demonstrating signs of "reform fatigue" and the Commission's Strategic Report stresses that further progress is needed at both European and national level. It also sets out a series of new policy initiatives which will be examined by EU leaders at their Brussels European summit in March.



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EU growth and jobs strategy: fresh opportunities for all



As the European Union approaches the end of the first three-year cycle in the Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs, it is clear that the reform measures governments have signed up to are producing results and contributing to the improved performance of Europe's economy.

In the last two years, almost 6.5 million new jobs have been created and a further five million are expected in the next two, reducing unemployment to its lowest level for over 20 years. Economic growth is hovering around 3% and for the first time in a

decade, strong increases in employment have gone hand in hand with robust productivity growth. National budget deficits have fallen from 2.5% of GDP in 2005 to just over 1% and the EU's public debt is also decreasing.

But in its Strategic Report, the Commission stresses that further efforts must be made during the next cycle and that the pace of change must quicken not slow down. To support and complement the national reform efforts, it has proposed a new **Community Lisbon Programme (CLP)** for 2008-2010. This is the

European-level equivalent of the National Reform Programmes and should guide the work of all EU institutions on the renewed Lisbon Strategy. It is calling on EU leaders to agree to the ten priorities it contains.

A Commission analysis of the longer term impact of the reforms the CLP proposal contains suggests they could raise the level of EU real GDP by approximately 2.75 percentage points by 2020.

The **new proposals** respond to the four priority areas agreed at the March 2007 European summit. These focus on:

- Investing in knowledge and innovation,
- Unlocking business potential, especially in small companies,
- Modernising labour markets and investing in people, and
- Responding to energy and climate change challenges.

New priorities

The new package of measures is designed to strengthen Europe's ability to face up to growing uncertainties in the global economy. It emphasises the need to give an even higher priority to the social dimension, education and skills, information and communication technologies, flexicurity, energy and climate change.

To increase **investment in knowledge, R&D and innovation**, the Commission is proposing to make the "fifth freedom", the free movement of knowledge, a reality. Just as people, goods, services and capital can now move freely across national frontiers, so too should there be free movement of knowledge through the creation of a genuine European research area and an integrated patent jurisdiction with a single affordable patent, says the report.

It is also looking to governments to draw up **national broadband strategies** to increase high-speed internet access. The targets are to achieve a 30% connection rate for European citizens, and to connect all schools by 2010.

Business potential can be unlocked by developing an integrated policy approach to small and medium-

sized enterprises through adoption of a **European Small Business Act**. This would set out the range of measures that could be used to help the development of such firms which are responsible for the creation of nine out of every ten new jobs.

The business environment can also be improved by continuing to strengthen the single market through competition in the service sector generally and the removal of remaining national barriers in financial services in particular. Efforts to implement the target of **reducing EU administrative burdens** by 25% by 2012 will also help to lighten the regulatory burden on enterprises.

Fresh contributions to the modernisation of labour markets will come from the **renewed Social Agenda** the Commission will propose later this year and from moves towards a common EU policy on immigration. Member states are also being asked to set national plans to raise the basic skills of young people and to substantially reduce early-school leaving.

On **energy and climate change**, the Strategic Report emphasises the importance of completing the internal market for energy. It would like to see member states set mandatory energy reduction targets for government buildings and systematically include energy efficiency as one of the award criteria for public procurement contracts.

The package contains an **external dimension**. It combines the European Union's traditional open approach to trade with the legitimate defence of its own interests. This will involve even closer contacts with partner countries and a clearer focus on globalisation issues of mutual interest: market access, regulatory convergence, migration and climate change.

To highlight the importance of removing discriminatory obstacles to European exporters, the Commission will present an annual report on market access, identifying countries and sectors where significant barriers remain.

More progress needed

The Strategic Report points out that while there has been some good progress on cutting national budget deficits, the opportunity to use relatively



strong growth conditions to reduce structural deficits even further has not been fully seized. This is especially true for eurozone members.

Introducing **competition into network industries** and services has been slow and important barriers to market entry remain. Some member states are not meeting timetables to implement single market legislation and, although significant progress has been made in putting the better regulation agenda into effect, more needs to be done in some countries to reduce administrative red tape and improve the business environment.

A similar picture emerges with **flexicurity**. Around half of member states have developed, or are developing, activities in this area, yet the Strategic Report concludes that overall, the policy response remains fragmented.

The EU's target for 2010 of spending **3% of GDP on research** continues to prove elusive, partly because R&D spending has failed to keep up with recent stronger economic growth. As a result, it decreased from 2% of GDP in 2000 to 1.85% of GDP in 2006, and contains wide differences between member states. In addition, recent policy reforms to boost R&D expenditure will take some time to feed through.

Country-specific recommendations

Like last year, the Council is addressing recommendations to Member States that take account of their specific situations. These recommendations are not designed to establish a league table of achievement, but to highlight areas where a country may need to strengthen or speed up its efforts or should avoid succumbing to reform fatigue.


The country-specific recommendations tend to cover issues such as fiscal consolidation, financial sustainability, labour market reforms, competition in network industries and services, investment in R&D and improvements in the regulatory environment.

Given that structural reforms take time to implement and to show results, the report maintains most of the recommendations made the previous year. In a few cases their number has decreased. This is true for Germany, Italy and Spain, for instance.

For another small group of countries – Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Sweden – the Commission did not propose any country specific recommendations in its 2006 report. Nor has it done so this year, since no major developments have taken place to warrant a change of tack. However, it does point to policy areas on which it will be particularly necessary to focus over the next few years.

Next steps

EU leaders are now being asked to endorse the country-specific recommendations and the integrated guidelines of the growth and jobs strategy which they adopted unanimously in 2005. The Commission is proposing that they remain unchanged for the next three-year cycle, but that the accompanying text should be updated to reflect changing circumstances.

Updated National Reform Programmes will be prepared by member states by October 2008. On the basis of information contained in these reports and obtained during its regular country visits, the Commission will present its 2008 Annual Progress Report round the turn of the year. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/key_issues/growth_jobs/index_en.htm

Lead markets for Europe to promote innovative sectors

A new Commission initiative will unlock the market potential for innovative goods and services in six key areas by removing the obstacles they currently face. This will be achieved by improving legislation, facilitating public procurement of innovative goods and services and by further developing interoperable standards. The selected sectors – eHealth, protective textiles, sustainable construction, recycling, bio-based products and renewable energies – have a collective annual turnover of over € 120 billion and provide 1.9 million jobs in the EU. With the new Lead Markets Initiative for Europe, this could be increased to over € 300 billion, providing employment for at least three million people by 2020.

⇒ The **six sectors** which the Lead Markets Initiative for Europe (LMI) has identified are highly innovative, have a strong technological and industrial base and depend more than most on a favourable legal and regulatory environment in which to deliver their full potential. They all make a major strategic contribution to the economy or society at large, whether it is through health systems' improvements, environmental protection or individual job prospects.



Textile revolution: from glamour to protection

For each of them, the Commission has drawn up an **action plan of measures** for the next three to five years that will enable them to prosper not just in Europe, but also enter fast growing global markets where they are expected to **establish competitive advantage as lead producers**.

The LMI, in contrast to policies that use one-off measures, relies on an **integrated approach** that aims to better streamline legal and regulatory environments and accelerate a growth in demand for the innovative products the sectors produce. To be successful, the initiative:

- Promotes **acceptance of European standards** in non-EU markets, especially in areas like the environment where global trends exist, and
- Aims to **reduce the cost of bringing new products** and services onto the market.

Identifying markets and policies

The sectors were chosen according to carefully selected criteria. In addition,

The action plans for each sector look to:

- **Improve legislation** so that unnecessary burdens are not placed on innovative businesses and potential consumers,
- **Encourage public procurement** practices that enable the use of more innovative goods and services,



- **Promote standards, labels and certificates** that raise recognition of new products and enhance consumer confidence, and
- Develop **business and innovation support services**.

Six pioneers

eHealth

Without significant reforms, health spending in Europe is expected to rise from 9% of GDP at present to nearer 16% by 2020, largely due to an ageing population. eHealth tools and solutions can help prevent this by providing products, systems and services that will make medical care more efficient for health authorities, practitioners and patients alike.

Despite substantial research and development incentives, ICT investment has lagged behind that in other service sectors. Technical and organisational solutions often fail to be taken up because the market is heavily fragmented, partly as the result of different social security systems. In addition, there is a lack of interoperability and legal certainty as regards reimbursement, liability and a lack of awareness on the correct application of the legal provisions on the protection of personal data for people working in this area.

Standardising information exchange formats and certifying interoperable systems could overcome some of the hurdles. Other measures proposed are: further clarification of the legal framework, networking of public procurers and information to users, whether they are individual citizens, doctors, health managers or public authorities, on the potential benefits of eHealth.

Construction

The construction market represents 10% of the EU's gross domestic product and 7% of its workforce. Buildings account for 42% of the Union's energy consumption and produce 35% of all greenhouse gas emissions.

The sector is highly fragmented and characterised by insufficiently coordinated regulations and considerable administrative burdens. Additionally, there is a

lack of awareness on the possibilities within existing public procurement rules that could stimulate demand for innovation-oriented projects.

To encourage the development of sustainable construction solutions the lead market initiative proposes awareness raising campaigns and a more efficient regulatory framework. EU-wide standards could also be used to support concepts that would encourage sustainable construction projects.

Protective textiles

The current size of the EU market for special clothing that protects wearers from hazards and dangerous working conditions is around €10 billion. It also provides some 200,000 jobs.

Demand could be increased, enabling the sector to expand, if European standards were more widely used around the world and were accompanied by effective protection of intellectual property rights, especially for small and medium-sized companies.

The Commission's integrated action plan looks to promote the innovation of new products and accelerate the sector's growth. This will also provide benefits to key services, such as civil protection, which will have better access to protective products to deal with pandemics or terrorist attacks.

Bio-based products

The long-term growth potential for bio-based products will depend on their capacity to substitute fossil-based products and satisfy the demands of different users at a competitive price.

Europe is well placed to build on its leading technological and industrial position in the field.

The action plan describes a number of measures to improve the present targets use for bio-based products through standardisation, labelling and certification in order to provide solid data of their properties. It would also like to see public authorities purchase more bio-based products, so-called 'Green Public Procurement'. The outcome would lessen dependency on fossil fuels and water.

Recycling

Recycling plays an essential role in the move towards sustainable consumption and production. The sector is well developed in Europe. Its 60,000 companies have a turnover of € 24 billion and employ 500,000 people. The EU accounts for roughly 30% of the world's eco-industries and 50% of waste and recycling companies.

But barriers to market development remain and potential exists to improve efficiency and capacity. Removing the obstacles and introducing more effective processes and technologies would save costs, energy and natural resources.

The lead market initiative aims to use standardisation, labelling and certification to ensure the quality of recycled products and of information on them for the public.

Renewable energy

Europe's renewable energy sector has an annual turnover of € 20 billion, provides 300,000 jobs and meets 8.5% of Europe's energy needs. This must be increased. EU leaders, at their March 2007 summit meeting, agreed that this should rise to 20% by 2020.

The development of renewable energy is held back by three factors. The external costs of energy use are not fully reflected in energy prices. Low demand means that measures that would reduce prices in several technologies are being exploited more slowly than they could be. Finally, the sector remains fragmented preventing the full benefits of the internal market from being achieved.


The action plan would remove barriers to the integration of renewable energy resources into the EU energy system and would simplify authorisation procedures.

The initiative recognises that **no single measure can remove the barriers that hold back each sector's potential development.** As a result, a combination of policies is required, while leaving sufficient flexibility for technological and commercial developments.

The Commission makes clear that the policy is not designed to pick winners. This is reflected by the nature of the sectors. The decision not to favour certain technological choices, which could pre-empt alternative options, and a commitment to fair competition rule out favouritism.

Next steps

The European Commission intends to present a progress report next year on the implementation of the action plans.

A final report, drafted by independent experts, on the initial experience of the initiative, is due to appear in 2011. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/leadmarket/leadmarket.htm>

European Enterprise Awards: Promoting entrepreneurship and creating a favourable environment for business

Is it possible to register a company in 12 minutes without leaving home using the internet? Who helps start-ups and innovative businesses to develop successfully and to create new jobs? Does entrepreneurship start at school? These questions show how entrepreneurship can be promoted through the exchange of best practices.

The European Enterprise Awards reward initiatives by local and regional authorities that promote entrepreneurship and create a favourable environment for business, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises. In order to highlight such best practices, the European Commission rewards every year the most successful projects sharing their experiences with worldwide audiences and setting positive examples to inspire similar policies in other regions. This is crucial for stimulating economic growth and creating new jobs.



The **European Enterprise Awards** distinguish best practices in five different categories that are crucial to the future economic success of Europe and the wellbeing of its citizens.

- The **Entrepreneurial Trailblazer award** is about actions that promote an entrepreneurial culture and mindset.
- Innovative policies that encourage enterprises and attract investment, particularly in disadvantaged areas are rewarded by the **Enterprise Support Award**.
- The **Red Tape Reduction award** highlights the importance of measures to simplify administrative procedures for businesses, in particular for start-ups.
- Initiatives to improve entrepreneurship education and training emphasise the importance of developing highly qualified human resources. Such best practices are distinguished by the **Investment in People award**.
- The **Responsible Entrepreneurship Award** recognises that sustainable business practices are good for social cohesion, the environment and companies.
- Beside these categories, the European judges present the **Jury's Grand prize** to the entry that is considered the most creative and inspiring entrepreneurship initiative in Europe.

In 2007, the Spanish municipality Bilbao received this special award because of its pioneering approach of promoting start-ups to achieve urban regeneration in the city centre. Some 17 premises have been renovated and then auctioned off to companies in the target sectors of leisure, arts, culture, fashion and technology. As a result, 129 small companies have been set up and 270 jobs created. Start-ups in the area can obtain financial support for business viability studies, support and advice in refurbishing and fitting-out of premises, relocation, IT equipment and management support. The success of the scheme is reflected in the area's regeneration and improvement in the quality of social and economic life in these neighbourhoods, while promoting their integration with the rest of the city. It also helps to combat marginalisation and social exclusion.

Ethnic minority coach persuades immigrants to become entrepreneurs

Integration by providing business support is also the main focus of the next winner – the Ethnic Coach in Vejle, Denmark, awarded the **Entrepreneurial Trailblazer distinction**. The ethnic minority coaching project identifies role models and persuades immigrants to use business services available in Denmark. It also encourages immigrants with skills and further education to take over Danish businesses

when the owners retire. Results have been impressive: 45 guidance sessions with individual coaching by a consultant from an ethnic group have already led to **24 ethnic entrepreneurs starting independent businesses** – and 19 of these are still going. While this project is on a small scale, it is hitting a key target: dynamic people needing support. Moreover, it impacts both business and social integration.

1,2,3 GO, the Greater Region network of experts and its business start-up bonuses

The winner of the **Enterprise Support Award** is the Luxembourg based network 1,2,3 GO. It is an inter-regional network of over 290 experts and entrepreneurs assisting future entrepreneurs on how to draw up successful business plans in Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg, French-speaking Belgium and the German town Trier. In seven years, 1,2,3, GO has contributed to drafting 750 business plans, creating 160 start-up companies and 900 jobs. A key strength lies in the scheme's inter-regional nature, helping project initiators to develop cross-border contacts quickly and expand businesses beyond their home region.

Entrepreneurship starts at primary school

Supporting entrepreneurship is not only about creating good business opportunities, but also means developing entrepreneurial skills and mindset for starting a business. The Cap'Ten project in Brussels stimulates entrepreneurship already in primary school. Children aged 10 to 12 use resources that sharpen their creativity, independence, openness, responsibility and communications skills. Participants pick their own challenge and exploit their

personal talents with the support of a kit of project management tools specially adapted to their age. A particular objective is to change the mindset in the EU Member State with the least number of people wanting to set up their own companies. The project offers a real methodology rather than just a 'book of instructions'. The Cap'Ten project won the **Investment in People Award** for its innovative method and because of the importance of early education stimulating entrepreneurship.

Promoting sustainable business practices in Tuscany

Corporate Social Responsibility is a concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations on a voluntary basis, producing an overall positive impact on society. The winner of the **Responsible Entrepreneurship Award** Fabrica Ethica from the Tuscan region in Italy was distinguished for promoting sustainable business practices. Tuscany now has the largest number of enterprises certified to the international corporate social responsibility standard SA8000, both in Italy with 32% of all certified companies and in the world with 13%. The Tuscan region has some 414,000 companies employing over 800,000 staff, of which the vast majority have less than five employees and only 1,250 have more than 50. While the area is relatively small, the activities have had a major impact, including a much cleaner environment, and gained important fiscal advantages.

Improved regulatory environment: Registering a company in only 12 minutes

Excellent examples exist for **reducing administrative burdens** which hamper innovation and create unnecessary costs. Entrepreneurs in Estonia can now register a **company in 12 minutes without leaving home**. All they need is an identity card and an internet connection. The process uses digital signatures and online bank links. The Company Registration Portal (CReP) enables entrepreneurs to handle all communications with the Commercial Register through the portal without any extra paperwork. Since the beginning of 2007, 27% of private companies have registered this way.

Another example of red tape reduction is the state-subsidised **electronic credit facility** Széchenyi Card



Bilbao City Council - Winners of the 2007 Grand Jury Award




Scheme in Budapest, Hungary. This project assists newly-launched SMEs in a country where opening a bank account is still difficult. Over the past five years, the Széchenyi Card Scheme has been reviewed regularly both to increase the availability of funding and reduce administrative burdens by simplifying entitlement and use, and to overcome practical problems such as the acceptability of documents.

There are a lot of other best practices that support innovation and promote small companies by ensuring access to finance or the necessary regulatory environment. The **Jury's special mention in 2007** goes to two projects:

- CAP Création Sarthe (France) offers financial support during the so-called business start-up leave available in France to give wage earners the chance to try and launch a business on their own.
- Thuishuis Foundation (The Netherlands) has developed a franchise system encouraging people to start fully-fledged businesses at home providing small-scale child day-care facilities.

These best practices have been selected from among more than 300 entries submitted by regional authorities across the EU. This year the awards again showcased and shared examples of best entrepreneurship policies and created higher awareness of the role entrepreneurs play in society. They showed that encouraging and inspiring potential entrepreneurs and creating a favour-

able environment for business – in particular small and medium-sized enterprises – are crucial for raising the European Union's number one challenge: stimulating economic growth and creating new jobs. 

Y4 project gets further boost from winning 2006 Awards

After winning the 2006 Grand Jury Prize, the Y4 Initiative from Central Finland started receiving so many requests for its entrepreneurship development programme that it created a training camp for public officials and other key players. It also set up a company to meet worldwide demand for its highly successful approach to building entrepreneurial culture and fostering entrepreneurial action. The approach has won over all public organisations in the area with over 100 signing up to the Y4 ideology and more than 10,000 active players in the region.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/smes/awards/index.htm>

Improved competitiveness fuels economic growth

Productivity in the European Union in 2006 had its best performance for six years and grew faster than in the United States according to the Commission's latest European Competitiveness Report. Measured as GDP per employee, EU productivity reached 1.5% compared to an annual growth rate between 2000 and 2005 of 1.2%, and to the 1.4% recorded in the US in the same year.

⇒ The objective of the European Competitiveness Report is to provide a solid analytical underpinning of the microeconomic pillar of the Lisbon growth and jobs strategy and to bring to attention developments relating to the competitiveness of European industry. In 2007, after a review of recent trends concerning growth, productivity and employment, both at the level of the EU and in the main economic sectors, the Report reviews microeconomic reforms under the Growth and Jobs agenda from the point of view of their potential to raise productivity and focuses, more particularly, on skills as a competitiveness factor. The Report assesses the relative strengths and weaknesses of European industries and concludes with a long term vision of European manufacturing so as to put the emerging trends and challenges in perspective and to check whether existing policies are consistent with them.

The **economic recovery** in Europe in 2006 – brought forward by growth in both productivity and employment – was widespread across countries and economic sectors. Although essentially cyclical, there is evidence that the upturn of productivity has also a structural component, linked with economic reforms.

Nevertheless, **comparisons with the US** show that a high productivity gap remains, most notably in the manufacturing of office machinery and computers, the wholesale and retail trade, air transport and financial services.

Overall, the Report notes that European industries, in both the manufacturing and services sectors, are

holding on to their positions on global markets better than their American and Japanese counterparts. In most manufacturing sectors, value added continued expanding while employment fell or remained stagnant.

However, some industries experienced a decline in both employment and output: leather and footwear, clothing, textiles, tobacco, mining, coke, refined petroleum and nuclear fuel. ≡

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/index_en.htm



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Machine intelligence helps Europe keep ahead of the competition

Safety first: Commission proposes strict new rules for toys

The European Commission has proposed to improve toy safety by strengthening EU-rules, especially those relating to the use of chemical substances in toys. The revision of the 20-year old Toys Directive 88/378/EEC of 3rd May 1988 has a threefold objective: first and foremost, there will be new and higher safety requirements to cope with recently identified hazards, secondly it will strengthen manufacturers' and importers' responsibility for the marketing of toys and finally it enhances the market surveillance obligations of Member States.

⇒ The proposal addresses a wide range of issues to improve the rules for the marketing of toys that are produced in, and imported, into the EU with a view to reducing toy-related accidents:

- **Prohibit** the use of chemical substances that are susceptible to provoke cancer, so-called **CMR** (Carcinogenic, Mutagenic or toxic for Reproduction) substances;
- **Reduce** the allowed limits of certain dangerous **chemical substances** like lead or mercury;
- Prohibit **allergenic fragrances**;
- Oblige toy manufacturers to issue appropriate **warnings** to improve the prevention of accidents;
- Strengthen the rules to prevent accidents due to **small parts** in toys;
- **Ban toys** which are firmly attached to a food product at the moment of consumption and which require food to be consumed before getting access to the toy;
- Require toy manufacturers to establish comprehensive technical information for all their toys to allow **Market Surveillance authorities**

to check the design and manufacture of the toy;

- Foresee testing of toys through **independent laboratories where no standards** for toys yet exist (e.g. for toys with magnets);
- Reinforce the **importer's responsibility** for ensuring that toys imported into the EU are safe;
- Enhance the **visibility of the CE mark** on the toy;
- Oblige Member States to **strengthen market surveillance and controls** on the spot and at the EU's borders,
- Oblige Member States to impose **penalties** if toy manufacturers/importers do not produce toys in line with the new safety requirements.

The Commission proposal will now be discussed with the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers with a view to an adoption in the co-decision procedure.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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

Easing cross-border investment by venture capital funds

In order to finance and stimulate innovation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the European Commission has tabled measures to promote cross-border investments by venture capital funds. These are a vitally important source of funding for small companies looking to grow and to put their ideas into practice. Unfortunately, for too many firms, different national regulations pose obstacles, preventing this form of finance from reaching a critical mass. To overcome this, the Commission is advocating a broad partnership with, and between, member states that would work towards mutual recognition of the existing national frameworks for venture capital funds

⇒ The venture capital market in the European Union is fragmented. Each member state has its own operating environment. The result is that in smaller or emerging venture capital markets, funds find it difficult to achieve the critical mass that will enable them to grow.

To overcome this hurdle and to encourage cross-border activities, the Commission believes that venture capital structures operating well in one member state could be adopted and recognised by others. It is, therefore, suggesting that when national authorities review existing, or adopt new, legislation they **consider the mutual recognition of venture capital funds**.

Under this arrangement, funds domiciled in another member state and operating in that market would be recognised as already subject to the regulatory regime of their home country. The solution implies that national authorities should have mutually acceptable levels of supervision and transparency for venture capital funds.

Venture capital for innovative small companies

Innovative SMEs are a relatively tiny proportion of small companies, but they have the potential to yield high benefits in creating new jobs and developing new technologies. A recent industry study by the European Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (EVCA) reported that companies in the EU

receiving private equity and venture capital created one million new jobs between 2000 and 2004.

Over 60% of these came from venture capital backed companies and employment in these companies grew by 30% per annum. In addition, innovative and growth-oriented firms supported by venture capital spend on average 45% of their total expenses on R&D. At an average of €50,500 per employee per year, this is six times higher than for the top 500 R&D spenders in the EU-25.

Venture capital is becoming increasingly important for environmental sustainability (€1.25 billion was raised in 2006). Sustainable venture capital funds invest in the range of €1 - €5 million focusing on early-stage and typical investments in renewable energies and clean technologies. ≡

FOR MORE INFORMATION

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/financing/publications.htm>



Reducing paper work for freight carriers

The European Parliament has adopted the Commission's proposal to remove unnecessary administrative burdens on transport companies. Outdated information requirements contained on separate travel documents will disappear and the essential data that must still be provided will be collected in other, more efficient ways. This will considerably simplify procedures for more than 300,000 freight carriers across Europe, most of them SMEs, and save € 160 million.

⇒ As part of its Better Regulation strategy, the Commission has proposed rationalising outdated reporting requirements for freight carriers which date from the 1960s. Soon, they will no longer have to carry separate transport documents giving details of the frontier crossing points and routes they intend to use.


The information which will still need to be supplied on intra-community transport flows, such as name and address of the consignor, nature and weight of the goods and their delivery address, will be collected through other available means. The move aligns the remaining information requirements with those that exist in international conventions.

The initiative recently won the support of the European Parliament. The EU Member States are expected to adopt this proposal shortly, which will enable freight carriers to use **simpler means of documentation**. This will benefit more than 300,000 freight carriers in Europe, saving them an estimated €160 million, according to national administrative burden measurements. Of the businesses affected, about 100 are rail companies, 7,000 inland waterway operators and the remainder road freight carriers.

The 1960 regulation requires carriers of goods across EU borders to provide certain information on tariffs, agreements, price deals and transport conditions. It was introduced at a time when intra-EU transport was heavily regulated. With liberalisation of goods transport, much of this data is no longer needed.

The amendments the European Parliament adopted in January will both remove obsolete reporting requirements and avoid duplication to enable the freight transport sector to become more efficient.

At the same time, users will still have access to useful data, most of which can be found in carriers' accounts or on consignment notes that normally accompany goods when they are being transported.

This latest document-reducing exercise is part of the Commission's wider action programme to reduce the administrative burden on businesses in the EU by 25% by 2012. 

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/better_regulation/index_en.htm

Transatlantic Economic Council moves into action

The EU and the US made important commitments during the first meeting of the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC) in Washington on 9 November 2007. In a joint statement, they emphasised “the importance of our shared commitment to reducing barriers to international trade and investment to increase the standard of living of our citizens”.



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EU/US economic relations: full steam ahead

⇒ The political go-ahead for the landmark November meeting had been given almost six months earlier at the regular annual EU-US summit held in Washington in April 2007. There, transatlantic leaders had agreed a Framework for Advancing Transatlantic Economic Integration and set out policy priorities. It is the TEC's role to ensure these are implemented and to oversee progress towards integration of the world's two largest economies.

The importance of the November meeting can be gauged by the size of the EU delegation which was led by Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen. It included Portuguese Economy and Trade Minister Manuel Pinto and a quartet of Commissioners: Charlie McCreevy (Internal Market and Services), Peter Mandelson (Trade), Meglena Kuneva (Consumer Protection) and Laszlo Kovács (Taxation and Customs Union).

At the **inaugural TEC meeting**, the EU and US announced the launch of an investment dialogue between the European Commission and the US government. Its role will be to reduce barriers

to transatlantic investment and promote open investment policies around the world.

Other early concrete steps towards reducing the regulatory burden for transatlantic operators include an agreement on a common format for orphan drug designations, which will ease the administrative burden of introducing new medicines for rare diseases, and on compatible standards for pure biofuels.

A major breakthrough was achieved on accounting standards when the US Securities and Exchange Commission decided to abolish the reconciliation requirement to US Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) for foreign companies using International Financial Reporting Standards.

Practical progress

The day before the TEC meeting, EU and US regulators met to seek greater convergence in their approaches to product safety, risk assessment and impact assessment.

In a joint initiative, the US Office of Management and Budget and the European Commission issued for public comment a joint draft report by the OMB's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs and the Commission's Secretariat General. This covered the impact of their respective regulatory impact assessment guidelines on trade and investment to ensure that future assessments take this dimension into account.

Within days of the meeting another practical example of transatlantic regulatory cooperation,

The TEC has two co-chairs. Günter Verheugen, the European Commissioner for Enterprise and Industry, represents the EU. The first American co-chair was Allan Hubbard, Assistant to the US President for Economic Policy and Director of the National Economic Council.

Mr Hubbard stood down at the end of last year and was replaced by Daniel M. Price, Assistant to the US President for International Economic Affairs.

The TEC is formally advised by three well-established EU/US bodies: the Transatlantic Business Dialogue, the Transatlantic Consumers Dialogue and the Transatlantic Legislators Dialogue.

under the auspices of the TEC, took place in Brussels when the European Commission hosted a workshop with the US Food and Drug Administration on 28 November.

This was part of the wider aim of promoting administrative simplification of regulations on medicinal products. It offered the pharmaceutical and biotechnology industries on both sides of the Atlantic an opportunity to suggest how to reduce administrative burdens without changing legislation or compromising on safety standards.

Proposals for **cutting red tape** through transatlantic and international collaboration and harmonisation focused on four areas: quality and inspections; pharmacovigilance; scientific collaboration; and guidelines, format harmonisation and electronic submission.

These are now being examined by EU and US regulators. The extent to which they can be implemented while respecting public health, legal and practical considerations will become clear when the two partners present priority roadmaps on administrative simplification by June.

These developments come on the heels of legislation proposed by the Commission to reduce costs for transatlantic trade by allowing imports into the EU of products labelled with both metric and non-metric measurements.

Next steps

Before the next EU/US summit in June, the US Federal Communications Commission will review items subject to its mandatory third-party testing system to allow suppliers to present self-declarations of conformity for products with a good record of compliance with relevant standards.

In addition, the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration will report on progress made to facilitate trade in electrical items with respect to conformity assessment procedures for product safety.

For its part, the Commission promised to try to resolve the long-standing issue over the imports into the EU of American poultry which have received pathogen reduction treatment. It will also table legislation allowing patients to access information on legal pharmaceuticals. ≡

EU/US

Annual bilateral trade: € 620 billion
Combined trade: 40% of world trade
Combined GDP: 60% of world GDP
Bilateral investments provide 14 million jobs

FOR MORE INFORMATION

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/inter_rel/tec/index_en.htm

News in Brief

The six most competitive manufacturing sectors in Europe

The six most competitive manufacturing sectors in the EU-25 are pharmaceuticals, machinery and equipment, aircraft and spacecraft, non-metallic mineral products, printing and publishing, and scientific instruments, concludes a new Commission study on EU industrial structure 2007 - Challenges and opportunities analysing the competitiveness of the EU economy from a sectoral perspective on the basis of export figures within the EU and to the wider world.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/competitiveness/2_indics/indics_compet.htm

European Commission proposes new competitive measures for defence industries and markets

The fragmentation of the European defence market and divergent national policies create red tape, hamper innovation and competitiveness and, ultimately, weaken the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). The European Commission has recently presented a package of initiatives to improve this situation. This "defence package" contains a communication with recommendations for fostering the competitiveness of the sector; a directive on defence procurement; and a directive on intra-EU transfers of defence products.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/regulation/inst_sp/defense_en.htm

EU businesses lead moves to low carbon economy

Without the engagement of business, there is no solution for building a global low carbon economy. This is the overarching message of the High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and Environment, which after two years recently ended its work at the conference "Towards a global low carbon economy". The Group has provided a blueprint on how to use integrated policies to address European-wide issues.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/environment/hlg/hlg_en.htm

Cleaner trucks and buses: Tighter limits for nitrogen oxides and particulate matter (Euro VI)

The Commission has proposed to reduce emissions from trucks and buses of nitrogen oxides by 80% and particulate matter by 66% compared to the Euro V stage. The new Euro VI standard will contribute significantly to a further improvement in air quality in Europe. It will also promote global harmonisation since it foresees limit values similar to those in the USA.

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/07/1989&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Improved flow of satellite data for better management of environmental and security crises

Natural and manmade catastrophes in Europe, America, Asia and Africa, coupled with increased security needs, have further reinforced the need for earth observation systems. The GMES (Global Monitoring for Environment and Security) ensures that crisis situations like floods, forest fires or earthquakes can be better anticipated and managed by monitoring the state of our environment. To supply space data in a seamless, integrated, timely and secure way to the GMES users, the European Commission and the European Space Agency (ESA) have signed a € 48 million grant for a coordinated provision of space-based observation data for GMES for its pre-operational phase 2008-2010. This new coherent and cost-efficient approach prefigures an operational service that will offer a comprehensive and sustained supply of space-based earth observation data.

<http://www.gmes.info/>

Upcoming events

FEBRUARY 2008

12/02/2008 – Brussels

European ICT standardisation policy at a crossroads: a new direction for global success

Given the critical importance of an efficient European ICT standardisation policy, the Commission is organising an open meeting to present and discuss the recommendations of a recent study on "The specific policy needs for ICT standardisation".

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/itemlongdetail.cfm?item_id=964

15/02/2008 – Milan

European fashion and innovation in tandem with EU values: a win-win formula

The European textile and clothing industry can be proud of its world leadership in fashion, design, quality and innovative products. The conference will demonstrate how EU values and innovation can create the conditions within which the European textile and clothing industry can prosper in the future.

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/textile/conf_tc200802_en.htm

21/02/2008 – Brussels

European Business Summit (EBS)

European Business Summit (EBS) is an annual event which brings business and political leaders together, this year around the theme *Greening the Economy. New energies for business.*

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

MARCH 2008

5/03/2008 – Brussels

Entrepreneurial Diversity in a Unified Europe – Migrant Entrepreneurship/Ethnic Minority Entrepreneurship

Migrant entrepreneurs and entrepreneurs from ethnic minorities play an increasingly important role in European economies. Their initiative contributes to

the competitiveness of Europe, generates growth and provides jobs. The one-day conference will present and discuss good practices cases in the promotion and support of migrant and ethnic minority businesses.

For more information, please see DG ENTR website below.

APRIL 2008

14/04/2008 – Brussels

Workshop on pre-registration and registration processes under REACH

This workshop aims to alert companies that, starting on 1 June 2008, they have six months to ensure pre-registration of the chemicals they want to continue to manufacture, import, or use. It will explain the key elements of the pre-registration and registration processes under REACH, focusing on practical aspects and examples.

For more information, please see DG ENTR website below.

MAY 2008

14/05/2008 – Portoroz (Slovenia)

Climate Change - Bridging the gap 4

High-level, three-day conference on climate change entitled "Bridging the Gap 4". It will focus on existing gaps, and ways to address them, regarding knowledge, communication and political/stakeholder action.

Details on this and other conferences, can be found on the DG ENTR webpage

<http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/newsroom/cf/newsbytheme.cfm?displayType=calendar>

Ten ways in which Europeans have benefited from the Single Market

⇒ **Increased prosperity:** over the last 15 years the Single Market has increased the EU's prosperity by 2.15% of GDP. In 2006 alone, this meant an overall increase of € 240 billion - or € 518 for every EU citizen - compared to a situation without the Single Market.

More jobs: 2.75 million extra jobs have been created over the period 1992-2006 as a result of the Single Market.

Easier to travel and shop: EU citizens can travel across most of the EU without carrying a passport and without being stopped for checks at borders. Shoppers have full consumer rights when shopping outside their country and there are no limits on what they can buy.

More opportunities to live, work and study abroad: more than 15 million EU citizens have moved to other EU countries to work or to enjoy their retirement, benefiting from the transferability of social benefit, while 1.5 million young people have completed part of their studies in another Member State with the help of the Erasmus programme.

Wider choice of products and services: 73% of EU citizens think the Single Market has contributed positively to the range of products on offer, while the establishment of common standards has led to safer and environmentally friendlier products, such as food, cars and medicines.

Lower prices: the opening up of national markets and the resultant increase in competition has driven down prices of, for example, internet access, air travel and telephone calls.

Less red tape: rather than adding to red tape, Single Market rules often replace a large number of complex and different national laws with a single framework, reducing bureaucracy for citizens, and compliance costs for businesses. It has also become easier to start or buy a business: the average cost for setting up a new company in the former EU-15 has fallen from €813 in 2002 to €554 in 2007, and the time needed to register a company administratively was reduced from 24 days in 2002 to about 12 days today.

Huge potential market: any business in the EU automatically has close to 500 million potential customers on its doorstep. This allows larger businesses to benefit from enormous economies of scale, while new markets have been opened up to small- and medium-sized companies which previously would have been dissuaded from exporting by the cost and hassle.

Much easier to do business: trade within the EU has risen by 30% since 1992. Before the frontiers came down, the tax system alone required 60 million customs clearance documents annually. These are no longer needed.

Better value for taxpayers: as a result of more open and competitive public procurement rules, governments have more money to spend on priorities such as health and education. For example, the price of railway rolling stock has dropped, with studies pointing at savings from 10% to 30%. ≡

For more information see:
http://ec.europa.eu/internal_market/index_en.htm

