



Wednesday, 21 February 2007

No. 2007-06**US CONGRESS URGED TO SUPPORT DDA AND TRANSATLANTIC ECONOMIC COOPERATION**

On Monday 19 February, BUSINESSEUROPE Secretary General Philippe de Buck outlined the importance of concluding an ambitious deal in the Doha Round to a delegation of the US Congress in Hamburg, Germany. Mr de Buck was speaking at the US-German Roundtable organised by BDI, one of BUSINESSEUROPE's two German member federations. He listed the huge potential benefits in industrial goods and services and noted that the new situation of historically high commodity prices would seriously reduce possible adverse effects of a liberalising deal on the agriculture sector. BUSINESSEUROPE also urged Congress to support the German EU Presidency's initiative to strengthen the transatlantic economic relationship: the world's largest trade and investment relationship needs to be placed on a surer footing. [Read more](#) or contact: [Eoin O'Malley](#)

MEMBER STATES HOLD THE KEY TO REINVIGORATION OF THE SINGLE MARKET

Reacting to the Commission's interim report to the 2007 Spring European Council outlining the EU's single market vision for the 21st century, BUSINESSEUROPE considers these discussions fundamental for the progress and welfare of the European Union. The single market is the EU's most tangible success story and has brought substantial benefits for individuals and enterprises. Yet its full capacity has not yet been tapped, mainly due to a lack of enforcement and awareness. It is also challenged by increasing national protectionism and the need for adjustments to an enlarged Europe and globalisation. The revised internal market policy should look at completion of the main economically relevant legislative gaps; better law-making; timely and correct implementation of internal market laws, effective enforcement and better communication. [Read more](#) or contact: [Carlos Almaraz](#)

LABOUR MARKET REFORMS MUST CONTINUE TO IMPROVE EMPLOYMENT IN A SUSTAINABLE WAY

On 15 February 2007, BUSINESSEUROPE participated in a panel discussion with Commissioner Spidla and the European Trade Union Confederation on the green paper on labour law and flexicurity in Luxembourg. Welcoming the improvement in employment, Thérèse de Liedekerke, Director for Social Affairs, stressed the need to take advantage of the improved economic climate to continue labour market reforms and improve productivity. Europe must not repeat the mistake made at the end of the 1990s when excessive optimism stalled reforms. [Read more](#) or contact: [Thérèse de Liedekerke](#)

CUSTOMS AND SECURITY: NEED FOR THE RIGHT BALANCE

On 15 February BUSINESSEUROPE Customs Working Group met the European Commission Director in charge of customs policy, Mr Zielinski. The meeting was the forum for a fruitful discussion on the modernisation of EU customs and on the new security requirements including US measures on cargo scanning, which are of great concern for business. For BUSINESSEUROPE, security in trade facilitation should be mutually supportive. Security measures should be developed on an international basis in cooperation with bodies such as World Customs Organization. Contact: [Carlos Gonzalez-Finat](#)



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No. 2007-06**EP UNANIMOUS VOTE ON SHAREHOLDERS' RIGHTS**

On 15 February the European Parliament unanimously adopted in first reading MEP Lehne's report on the Commission proposal for a directive on shareholders' rights. This proposal aims at facilitating the cross-border exercise of shareholders' rights in listed companies and is based on minimum standards which would eliminate the main obstacles in the voting process and enhance other shareholders' rights. Important issues such as the period for convocation of both annual general meetings and extraordinary general meetings, the right to ask questions, counting of votes and post-general meeting information were of main concern for BUSINESSEUROPE, which has actively participated in the debate. Contact: [Marta Alegrias](#)

BUSINESSEUROPE SUPPORTS A STREAMLINED SYSTEM TO SET TRADEMARK FEES

In a recent letter to the President of the Office for the Harmonisation in the Internal Market (OHIM), BUSINESSEUROPE endorsed the Commission proposal to introduce a method of regular and automatic review of trademark fees to OHIM. This should be applied in circumstances of both budget deficits and budget surpluses, on the basis of a standard approach. It could allow fee reductions to address situations of budget surpluses in order to return the surplus to users from whom it was generated. BUSINESSEUROPE cannot support any suggested diversion to national offices or other bodies of money paid by users to OHIM. Bearing in mind that many national offices are not self-financing, this could also result in a diversion of funds to national budgets and ultimately an unacceptable cross-subsidisation. [Read more](#) or contact: [Ilias Konteas](#)

COMPANIES NEED SIMPLE WAYS OF PROMOTING MOBILITY DURING VOCATIONAL TRAINING

BUSINESSEUROPE participated in a seminar organised by the German social partners, BDA and DGB, together with the European Center for Vocational Training, CEDEFOP, in Thessaloniki on 12-13 February 2007. The purpose was to discuss a Commission proposal to facilitate mobility of people undertaking vocational training: the so-called ECVET, "European credit-transfer system for vocational education and training". While supporting the objective of the proposal, BUSINESSEUROPE pointed out that the envisaged credit points system could be unnecessarily complex and suggested ways to simplify it. [Read more](#) or contact: [Matthew Higham](#)