

Brussels, 24th January 2007

EU Action Programme starts cutting unnecessary administrative burdens

The Commission further steps up its efforts to reduce unnecessary burdens on businesses. An Action Programme, presented by the European Commission today, demonstrates in concrete terms the way in which the Commission intends to work with Member States to cut administrative burdens on businesses by a quarter by 2012. The Programme focuses on information obligations in thirteen selected priority areas including company law, employment relations, taxation/VAT, statistics, agriculture and transport. It's aims are to measure the cost of the administrative burden in these key sectors and identify information obligations for which proposals will subsequently be adopted to remove unnecessary burdens. In addition, the Commission has already identified ten concrete reduction measures, for unprecedented fast track action which could be decided upon at the March Spring Council. These measures alone could in one fell swoop, reduce the burdens on businesses by 1.3 billion euro on an annual basis.

Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen, responsible for enterprise and industry policy, said: *"Businesses should be free to spend their time producing and innovating – not filling in forms or reporting in overly bureaucratic ways. We propose an unprecedented campaign against red tape, and we encourage Member States to embark on similar undertakings at national level. With a first strike we can already get well underway and reduce burdens by 1.3 billion euro."*

The Action Programme is an immediate response to the June 2006 European Council conclusions and the November 2006 Better Regulation Package (see [IP/06/1562](#)). Cutting red tape by a quarter in the entire EU could increase EU GDP by €150 billion. The Action Programme also calls on all Member States to embark on similar exercises at national level as the majority of the administrative burdens still originate in national legislation.

In the short term action will be taken in the ten following concrete fields,

reducing paperwork for amongst others farmers and transport companies:

- Making information requirements voluntary for stockholders in case of merger and division
- Reducing the reporting obligations for farmers, collectors or processors of energy crops in order to receive support
- Easing the requirements of proof for receiving export funds for agricultural produce
- Reducing the frequency of certain agricultural statistics to once a year
- Lowering the number of statistical questions posed to businesses in the information society

- Removing outdated documentation obligations for transport companies within the EU
- Introducing electronic registers for the exchange of data in the transport sector, thereby reducing administrative burdens
- Simplifying administrative procedures and information obligations in the maritime sector
- Exempting small businesses like local butchers and bakers from certain hazard analyses in the field of food hygiene, without lowering standards, by taking a more proportionate approach and applying less burdensome requirements on small butchers, bakers etc compared to large supermarkets, without affecting the safety and health considerations imposed by the regulation.
- Simplifying administrative requirements for certain fishing vessels.

This Action Programme is not aimed at undermining the policy objectives or the level of ambition which have been set in EU legislation. It rather represents an important effort to streamline, modernise and make less burdensome the way in which policy objectives are implemented. In close cooperation with Member States, the Commission will thoroughly analyse information obligations that constitute the source of red tape. The analysis will cover obligations in EC legislation as well as the national measures used to implement them. All obligations will be attributed a price tag indicating how much time and money businesses spend complying with them, with a view to reducing requirements that are obsolete, contradictory etc. (see [MEMO/06/425](#)).

More information on the immediate actions in the Better Regulation campaign and the 13 identified priority areas are given in press memo ([MEMO/07/25](#)).

More information (including the Action Programme for reducing administrative burdens)

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