

**EU Policy Update**

**20th February 2008**

**Lancashire Brussels Office**

For an explanation of European jargon visit: [the EU’s Eurojargon Guide](http://europa.eu/abc/eurojargon/index_en.htm),

For explanations of technical and legal terms see: [the EU’s Technical Glossary](http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/index_en.htm)

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# Editorial

Welcome to the latest edition of the Lancashire Brussels Office policy update. In this issue you will find articles on such matters as the future transport policy of the EU, the mitigation of climate change and the new priorities for Youth and Education Policies. Also, there are a number of calls for proposals and partner searches which I hope are of interest to you.

Please check the diary section to see if you need any further information or a briefing note on the meetings that we have attended.

The next Policy Update is due out on 6 March; if you have any queries before then please do not hesitate to [contact us](mailto:assistant@lancashire-brussels.org).

Justyna Wojtczak

Assistant European Liaison Officer

20 February 2009

# Review & Outlook

**Review**

The last plenary session of European Parliament ended with several key votes including a regulation on the labelling of animal feed products. The European Parliament also adopted a new climate change resolution which is in line with the European Commission’s global climate change agreement produced recently and expected to be debated internationally at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December this year.

The UK received two warnings from the European Commission for lack of compliance relating to the Energy Services and Air Quality Directives.

Sustainable Energy Week 2009 took place last week. Around 140 events in 20 Member States were held. The topics included energy efficient housing and lightening, renewable energies, reductions of greenhouse emissions and sustainable energy for transport. The office staff attended a number of events in this regard in Brussels.

**Outlook**

Next two weeks will see a number of Committees’ meetings. The key topics will include discussion of the Employment Committee over the Commission’s proposal to extend the minimum length of the maternity leave from 14 to 18 weeks and the Budget Committee will vote on the mid- term review of the 2007- 2013 financial framework.

Also, the week ahead will be the constituency week for the Members of Parliament dedicated to the external parliamentary activities.

# Funding Opportunities and Consultations

## Commission allocates €1bn for investment in broadband

## The European Commission aims to achieve 100% high-speed internet coverage for all citizens by 2010 as part of the European Economic Recovery Plan. €1 billion has been earmarked to help rural areas get online, bring new jobs and help businesses grow.

The money will be injected into the existing Rural Development Programmes. This means that no new funding programme needs to be created and that they will be managed by the national rural development managing authorities. This will necessitate a modification of the Rural Development Programmes and Member States are called upon to do it by 30 June 2009 to allow projects to be identified and expenditure to be made available this year.

It is the responsibility of Member States and regions to select the projects that can best serve their areas and reflect the needs identified at national, regional and local level in the context of the National Strategy Plans for rural development.

## Call for proposal: the use of ICT by citizens, governments and businesses

The European Commission has opened 3rd call for proposals within the ICT Policy Support Programme (ICT PSP). The Programme aims at stimulating innovation and competitiveness through the wider uptake and best use of ICT by citizens, governments and businesses.

The 3rd call for proposal has a budget of 99.5 million EUR.

Application deadline is **2 June 2009**

For details, please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/ict_psp/participating/calls/call_proposals_09/index_en.htm).

## Call for proposal: Sustainable and inclusive cities

A new call has been issued by the European Commission under the URBACT II Programme which invites cities to create a Working Group which will focus on the Implementation of the Leipzig Charter[[1]](#footnote-2) by European cities. This Working Group will work closely with the group of Member States to develop a reference framework for sustainable and inclusive cities.

The URBACT II programme is structured around 2 thematic priority axes:

- Cities- The Engines of Growth and Jobs

- Attractive and Cohesive Cities

The proposal should include partners from the cities, towns, regions as well as universities and research centres.

The application deadline for the submission of the proposal is 21 March 2009.

For more details please click [here](http://urbact.eu/news-open-calls/urbact-news-events/single-news/article/call-for-proposals-for-the-creation-of-a-working-group-on-the-implementation-of-the-leipzig-charter.html?tx_ttnews%5BbackPid%5D=57&cHash=baa1fbd6ae).

## Call for proposals: Marco Polo Programme- sustainable freight transport

## The European Commission published the third call for proposals for improved freight transport services under the Marco Polo programme. Successful projects should fight congestion on European roads and improve the environmental performance of the freight transport system. Freight transport and logistics companies across the European Union are invited to submit proposals.

The general aim of the Marco Polo programme is to support companies during the start- up phase of the projects which aim to introduce services that shift freight off the road onto short-sea shipping, rail and inland waterways. The top-ranked projects will be offered grant contracts of up to six years providing that they can survive on the market after they cease receiving EU financial support.

The full call text including information on how to apply for a grant is available on the [Marco Polo website](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/marcopolo/calls/2009_en.htm).

Application deadline is 8 May 2009

## Consultation: Green Paper on Trans-European transport networks

The European Commission adopted a Green Paper setting out the future challenges of its policy for a trans-European transport network (TEN-T). It considers future political and economic challenges such as the achievement of climate change objectives, further economic growth, economic and social cohesion as well as the strengthening of Europe's international role.

Based on 15 years of experience with the TEN-T policy and in the light of the new challenges, the Commission sets the following objectives for the future TEN-T development:

* combining all transport modes
* making best possible use of fully interoperable intelligent transport systems (ITS)
* assimilating new transport and energy technologies.

The Commission invites a broad range of stakeholders to express their views on three proposed options for TEN-T development and on the wider policy objectives.

Consultation deadline is **30 April 2009**

For more information, click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/infrastructure/consultations/2009_04_30_ten_t_green_paper_en.htm).

Please, see also the information on the Future of Transport conference on page 7 which will form a part of the debate on Ten-T policy.

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# Partner Searches

**If you would like to circulate your own partner search, please** [**contact us**](mailto:assistant@lancashire-brussels.org?subject=Partner%20Search)

## Novel energy plants - Czech Republic

Cross Czech A.S. is looking for partners for a project to further examine potential utilization of herbal crops under different climate and soil conditions to determine the most suitable ways of processing the biomass acquired from their plantation.

Over the last few years Cross Czech’s experts have identified several promising herbal energy crops and successfully tested them in certain climates and soil conditions of the Czech Republic. In some cases, agricultural techniques were defined for specific local conditions.

If you are interested in the project, please contact:

Petr Koran, Project Manager - [petr.koran@crossczech.cz](mailto:petr.koran@crossczech.cz)

## Sustainable tourism- Portugal

INTELI - Inteligência em Inovaçao from Portugal- is looking for partners for a project which aims to promote better environmental and energy performance in the tourism industry.

This aim would be achieved through the study and implementation of best practices in the tourism industry including the creation of a carbon offset programme and the international promotion of the participating regions as carbon neutral destinations. As a final objective, this project aims to encourage tourists to consider their energy consumption and carbon footprint in their choice regarding accommodation, transportation and other aspects of the tourism.

The following types of organisations are sought as possible partners:

* Regional energy agencies
* Tourism associations
* SMEs operating in the tourism sector, energy sector or carbon offset sector
* Transport companies

Please contact:Miguel Pinto - [mpinto@inteli.pt](mailto:mpinto@inteli.pt) for more information

Deadline for this partner search is: **3 March 2009**

## Europe of Towns

The town of Dębica located in Podkarpackie Voivodship (Poland) is seeking partner towns and cities for their project, which aims to create a network of European partner towns in order to enable the towns’ authorities and the citizens to cooperate in various fields, like:

* Economy- e.g. cooperation between companies from our towns; trade exchange; providing investment services (Dębica is proud of its Tyre Company ‘Dębica S.A.’ which is the biggest producer of tyres in Poland and one of the most valuable Polish brands)
* Culture- e.g. inviting all kinds of music groups, folk bands, theater groups, organizing art exhibitions)
* Education- e.g. student and teacher exchanges
* Sport- e.g. inviting sports teams from a partner town; playing matches and games
* Social matters- e.g. exchanging experience in health care, town safety

A great number of projects mentioned above will be financed by the European Union Funds.

The person responsible for coordinating the project "The Europe of Towns" is Mrs Katarzyna Rokosz: Tel: 0048/ 14 683 82 39

Email: <katarzyna.rokosz@umdebica.pl>

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# Conferences

## Future of Transport

The Commission intends to launch a debate on the main challenges and opportunities for the transport sector in the long term (20 to 40 years). The aim is to produce a Communication on the Future on Transport, to be adopted by the Commission in June 2009.

One of the actions which will contribute to this debate will be a High Level Conference, taking place on **9 and 10 March**, giving stakeholders the possibility to express their views on the future development of transport in Europe.

The Conference will be centered on four workshops focusing on urban, freight and passenger transport and on the challenge of sustainable mobility. There will also be an exhibition on innovative transport technologies with stands and information materials.

For more information on the Future of Transport Strategy and the conference please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/strategies/2009_future_of_transport_en.htm).

## Creativity & Innovation: best practices from EU programmes

The European Commission is organising a major European conference on creativity and innovation on **2 and 3 March 2009** in Brussels.

The event will explore and identify examples of best practice among projects that have received funding through several European Union programmes.

This conference will be accompanied by the exhibition showing the results of 20 star projects from around Europe which show how the EU's contribution can make a difference. The projects were chosen for being creative and innovative, in line with the theme of the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009.

For more information, please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/valorisation/conferences_en.html).

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# EU General

## Economic sentiment weakens further in both the EU and the euro zone

## In January, the Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) for the EU and the euro zone (the term given to the grouping of Member States using the Euro currency) declined again, but less sharply than in the last three months of 2008. The indicators for both regions stand at their lowest levels since the ESI was launched in January 1985.

The fall in the ESI for both the EU and the euro area is attributed to a general decline in confidence in all 5 sectors examined by the ESI, except for the retail trade sector which remained unchanged. Services (-4.9 points in the EU and -4.8 in the euro area) and construction (-4.0 and -3.3, respectively) declined the most among all the five sectors. The industrial confidence indicator dropped by 1.8 points in the EU and by 0.4 in the euro area, while consumer sentiment dropped by 2.3 points in the EU and by 0.8 in the euro area.

Overall, most Member States recorded a fall in confidence. The drop in economic sentiment in the euro area reflects worsening confidence in Germany, Italy and France, while that of Spain increased somewhat. Outside the euro area, confidence fell significantly in Poland, the UK and several other countries, thus explaining the larger drop in the EU indicator compared with that for the euro area.

The next Business and Consumer Survey is due to be published on 26 February 2009.

Full tables are available on:

<http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/db_indicators/db_indicators8650_en.htm>

Source: [EU Press Release](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/162&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

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# Agriculture and Rural Affairs

## New legislation on animal feed

New rules on the authorising and labeling of animal feed will be introduced following a European Parliament vote in favour of the legislation. The regulation for feed labeling is regarded as necessary to prevent feed and food scandals. It aims to preserve the customer's right to information while safeguarding the industry's intellectual property rights.

**Labeling and other information requirements clarified**

Existing legislation in this field set out a requirement to state all raw materials used in the animal feed by simply listing all of the ingredients in decreasing order by weight. Producers would also have to provide, at the consumers' request, quantitative data in a range within +/- 15% of the exact quantity, but have the right to refuse the request with reference to their intellectual property rights.

Under the new rules, the right to refuse data to customers has been removed and customers can demand additional information in the event of health and environmental emergencies. Moreover, manufacturers must notify immediately, via an on-line register, the use of new feed materials if they are not listed in the EU catalogue of feed materials. Also, at MEPs' request, the new legislation will include a list of materials banned in animal feed.

The new legislation is now awaiting the approval from the Council and it will enter into force in 2010.

For more details, please click [here](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/032-48474-033-02-06-904-20090204IPR48473-02-02-2009-2009-false/default_en.htm).

Source: European Parliament

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# Education and Culture

## Early childhood education and care in Europe

## The European Commission presented a new report on early childhood education and care in Europe including the study on the measures taken to improve participation in education of children from the most disadvantaged social groups. Examining national policies in 30 countries, the study explores how early childhood education and care is organised in Europe, what are the benefits of the different systems, and what is needed to provide effective education and care to the youngest.

**Key findings indicate that:**

* 87% of 4 year olds attend an educational institution in Europe.The European Commission’s target is that 90% of 4 year olds should participate in pre-primary education by 2020.
* The combination of several social, cultural and economic factors may create a serious risk of educational failure for children. However, poverty has the strongest impact. Nearly one in six European households with a child under the age of six lives on the poverty threshold. This is of special concern in Estonia, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal and the United Kingdom.
* High-quality pre-school education brings major benefits: it provides all children with a good basis for lifelong learning and helps to close the educational gap for children at risk. Yet ethnic minority children who belong to underprivileged families as well as children of single-parent families appear to participate least in early childhood education and care.
* Apart from countries which have implemented a universal right to early childhood education and care (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Spain and Slovenia) there is a significant shortfall in capacity for the youngest children in Europe.

Full text of the study:"[Early childhood education and care in Europe: tackling social and cultural inequalities](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/about/eurydice/index_en.htm)"

Source: EU Press Release

## New priorities for the Youth and Education Policies

New priorities have been discussed at the recent meeting of the Council of Ministers (forum for Member State ministers) on the issues of Youth Affairs and Education. The discussion was held in the context of the vulnerability of young people in the current economic crisis and the potential of education to contribute to a speedy economic recovery.

The key messages adopted at the Council, which will be presented to the Spring European Council, include:

**Youth Policy**

* The need for improved implementation and greater visibility of the European Youth Pact. Member States should strengthen their efforts to facilitate a smooth transition for young people from education, inactivity or unemployment to employment, while dealing with the specific challenges posed by the economic downturn. High priority should be given to young people with fewer opportunities and those living in poverty as they are likely to be among the first to suffer in the current economic crisis. Account should also be taken of gender-specific challenges and possible solutions.
* Coordination and coherence between national, local and European measures as well as coordination cutting across various policy fields are key for an effective youth policy. Moreover, the involvement of young people in the formulation of the policies that concern them was underlined.

**Education and Training**

* The new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training for the period until 2020 was debated. Among the five existing benchmarks regarding European cooperation in education and training, only one has so far been achieved, namely the number of tertiary graduates in mathematics, science and technology. The remaining four benchmarks - the participation of adults in lifelong learning, the number of early school leavers, and the number of low achievers in reading and completion of upper secondary education- should be further retained in order to build on the progress already made.
* Six additional benchmarks - mobility, employability, creativity and innovation, languages, pre-primary education and investment in higher education- were discussed. Many Member States queried whether they were realistic and achievable. Further work on the number, content and scope of the benchmarks would be undertaken at the next Education Council in May 2009.

Source: [Council of the European Union](http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/educ/106094.pdf)

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# e- Europe and Information Society

## New Europe Direct information network

## A second generation of Europe Direct information centres for 2009—2012 has recently been launched by the European Commission. The new network will extend possibilities for citizens to get practical information and advice on exercising rights in the European Union. The general public will be able to turn to one of the 500 information centres to get their specific questions on EU matters answered. The Europe Direct centres will also provide feedback from citizens to the EU institutions and actively promote local and regional debate on EU topics.

The services of the centers are free to the general public.

Europe Direct Lancashire is based within the North & Western Lancashire Chamber of Commerce:

9/10 Eastway Business Village,

Olivers Place, Fulwood, PR2 2SX, Preston

[europedirect@lancschamber.co.uk](mailto:europedirect@lancschamber.co.uk)

01772 653000

For more information please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/europedirect/index_en.htm).

## Safer Internet Day 2009- campaign against cyber-bullying

## More than half of Polish teenagers and 34% of Belgian and UK youngsters have been the target of cyber-bullying – harassment over internet sites or mobile messages. That is why the European Commission held a Safer Internet Day on 10 February. The Safer Internet Day saw the launch of a campaign against cyber-bullying which is supported by social networking companies across Europe.

The figures show that the UK registered the highest usage of social networking websites in 2007 with an average of 5.8 user hours spent on such sites compared to France, which averaged 2 hours per month. Germany averaged 3.1 hours, while Spain and Italy averaged 1.8 hours. Also, Eurobarometr Survey 2008 indicates that only 40% of UK parents are worried that their child might be bullied online.

Cyber-bullying is a new problem emerging rapidly in most EU countries. The European Commission feels that to tackle it efficiently it is important to be aware of the problem and share good practices as well as to come up with common strategies, like the campaign’s [video clip](http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/video_prod_en.cfm?type=detail&prodid=8520&src=1) produced for this year's Safer Internet Day.

To mark Safer Internet Day 2009, 17 major social networks signed the first European agreement to self-regulate in order to keep young people safe online. The European Commission will closely monitor the implementation of this agreement and will assess actions that have been taken after a year*.*

For more information**:**

<http://ec.europa.eu/saferinternet>

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

<http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/activities/social_networking/index_en.htm>

Source: [EU Press Release](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/09/58&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

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# Employment and Social Affairs

Sorry, no articles in this edition

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# Enterprise

## Fight against tax fraud: two new measures to allow better cooperation between tax authorities

The European Commission adopted two proposals for new Directives aimed at improving mutual assistance between Member States' tax authorities in the assessment and the recovery of taxes. One of the key elements of the proposals is that Member States would no longer be able to invoke bank secrecy in order to refuse cross border co-operation.

1. **Administrative cooperation in the assessment of taxes**

The proposal aims to help Member States to cooperate more closely at the international level, in order to overcome the increasing difficulties that they are experiencing in properly assessing taxes due. The proposal provides clearer and more precise rules in the area of cooperation. In particular, it sets up common rules of procedures, common forms, formats and channels for exchanging information.

For more information, click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/resources/documents/common/whats_new/COM(2009)029_en.pdf).

1. **Mutual assistance in the recovery of taxes**

The proposal to improve mutual assistance in the recovery of taxes aims at reinforcing and improving recovery assistance between the Member States. The Commission proposes in particular to:

* Cover all taxes and duties levied by the Member States and their administrative subdivisions, as well as compulsory social security contributions;
* Introduce compulsory exchange of information concerning refunds of taxes made by national tax authorities to non residents;
* Allow officials of one country to actively participate in administrative enquiries on the territory of another country;
* Simplify and rationalise the procedures to be used when requesting or providing mutual assistance;

For more details, click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/taxation_customs/resources/documents/common/whats_new/COM(2009)028_en.pdf).

Source: European Commission

# Environment

## UK and 19 other EU States still not in compliance with Energy Services Directive

The Commission sent a reasoned opinion to twenty Member States who have failed to communicate their transposition of the Energy Services Directive[[2]](#footnote-3). The Directive aims to strengthen and improve energy end-use efficiency by providing a framework for incentives and energy services.

Despite a letter of formal notice sent to the Member States in question in July 2008, they have not yet informed the Commission of full transposition of the Directive into national legislation. The Commission has therefore initiated the second stage of the infringement procedure against Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Slovakia, Sweden and the United Kingdom. If a Member State fails to comply with the reasoned opinion, the Commission may decide to bring the case before the European Court of Justice.

The Directive applies to the buildings, transport, agriculture and industry sectors and establishes a framework within which Member States can create a business climate and infrastructure for energy efficiency throughout the economy.

Source: [EU Press Release](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/208&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

## Air pollution: UK and 9 others EU Member States do not conform with the Air Quality Directive

Ten Member States have failed to comply with the EU's air quality standard for dangerous airborne particles known as PM10. These particles, emitted mainly by industry, traffic and domestic heating, can cause asthma, cardiovascular problems, lung cancer and premature death.

The new Air Quality Directive[[3]](#footnote-4), which entered into force in June 2008, allows Member States to request time extensions to meet the PM10 standard under certain external circumstances. However, Cyprus, Estonia, Germany, Italy, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and the UK have not notified requests for extra time to meet the standards in the air quality zones where the PM10 limit values are being exceeded. As a result, the European Commission has issued first warning letter against these Member States.

For more information, please click [here](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/174&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en).

## Climate Change: 2050 - the future begins today

## The European Parliament adopted a key report on the integrated policy on climate change. The main objective of the report is to keep the global average temperature increase below 2°C. Furthermore, the EU should set a medium-term target of a 25-40% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2020 and a long-term reduction target of at least 80% by 2050, compared to 1990 emissions totals.

The Parliament’s resolution is fully in line with the European Commission Communication on the global climate change agreement which is expected to be adopted at the UN climate change conference in December in Copenhagen.

**Detailed recommendations for tackling climate change**

The report sets out in detail a broad range of measures **which should be** incorporated in all spheres of activities and policies **of Member States. Measures proposed in the report include:**

•a binding goal of 20% improvement in energy efficiency by 2020

•the creation of solar energy partnerships with third countries

•net zero-energy performance in new residential buildings by 2015 and in new commercial and public buildings by 2020

•smart investment in technologies such as hydrogen, electric, fuel cells, hybrids or advanced biofuels

•reduction targets for GHG emissions from the agricultural sector

•establishment of the European Climate Fund and/or corresponding funds in the Member States

• incentives for citizens to reduce emissions in an affordable way

**Highest priority in EU spending should be climate change**

The new resolution also provides that in the next EU budged period (2013- 2020), the highest priority must be given to measures, which will combat climate change including more funding for developing counties in tacking climate change.

Click [here](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/infopress_page/064-48340-033-02-06-911-20090204IPR48324-02-02-2009-2009-false/default_en.htm) for more information.

Source, European Parliament

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# Health and Consumer Protection

## Energy, banking, and urban transport "underperforming" for consumers

Three areas of services – energy, banking and transport (trains, buses and trams) – are causing the most problems for consumers according to a new EU Report published by the European Commission. The 2nd EU Annual Consumer Markets Scoreboard Report screens 19 goods and services sectors (including food, clothing, footwear, financial services, energy and telecoms) against 5 key consumer indicators – prices, switching, satisfaction, complaints and safety. The aim is to identify where markets have a high risk of failing consumers.

**The main results**

The most problematic sectors for consumers (measured against 5 indicators) are services, particularly energy, transport and bank services.

* Electricity and gas supply services- score particularly badly in terms of reported price increases and comparability of offers and ease of switching. Energy was the sector where consumers are least likely to switch. One of the key findings of the Scoreboard Report is that in markets with higher switching rates (such as car insurance, internet and mobile phone) consumers are less likely to report price increases.
* Transport- consumers using transport services (buses, trains, trams) experience the least satisfaction and the highest number of problems. The main causes of dissatisfaction in the transport market are the price levels and the attractiveness of commercial offers.
* Banking**-** both bank fees and interest rates are highly differentiated among the Member States, in a way not easily explained. Banking is particularly problematic in terms of comparability of offers, ease of switching and actual switching.

**The next steps**

Of the three sectors identified as causing most problems for consumers, energy is the one on which consumers spend most (5.7% of their household budget) and within energy, electricity takes up the highest part of consumer spending (2.1%). The retail electricity market will be the target for the follow up market study for 2009 to further investigate comparability of offers, unfair commercial practices and billing.

To access the 2nd EU Annual Consumer Markets Scoreboard Report, please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/strategy/docs/2nd_cons_scoreboard_en.pdf).

Source: [EU Press Release](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/202&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

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## No more dimethylfumarate (DMF) in consumer products

The use of the biocide DMF - which has caused severe allergic reactions in hundreds of consumers, because of its use in every day consumer products such as sofas and shoes - will be banned across the EU. Member States voted in favour of a draft European Commission Decision to ensure that consumer products, such as leather furniture or footwear, containing DMF are not placed on the market in the EU. If already on the market, these products will have to be recalled and withdrawn without delay.

DMF is already banned for use in the manufacture of goods in the EU. However, manufacturers outside the EU may use these unauthorised biocides and then export their products to the EU.

The new Commission Decision protecting EU consumers against the risk of DMF in imported products will be submitted for consultation to the European Parliament before final approval.

**Background**

DMF is used by producers as a biocide to kill moulds that may cause furniture or shoe leather to deteriorate during storage and transportation in a humid climate. Placed in sachets, which are fixed inside the furniture or added to the footwear boxes, DMF evaporates and impregnates the leather, protecting it from moulds.

However, it can seriously affect consumers who are in contact with the products. In countries such as France, Finland, Poland, Sweden and the UK, consumers exposed to products containing DMF, have experienced serious health problems including skin itching, burns and, in some cases, acute respiratory difficulties.

Source: [EU Press Release](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/190&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

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# Justice and Home Affairs

## Parliament calls for a stop to sexual exploitation of children and child pornography

The European Parliament has called for the criminalisation of all types of sexual abuse of children including “grooming” on the Internet.

The European Parliament has also called for Europe-wide measures to ensure those whose work involves regular contact with children should be obliged to report situations where abuse is suspected and applicants to certain posts working with children should undergo criminal records check. Moreover, EU citizens who commit a sex crime inside or outside the EU should be subject to uniform criminal legislation.

**The EU should fund prevention programmes**

The European Parliament called on the European Commission to create national management systems for sex offenders including risk assessment and intervention programmes and therapies to minimise the risk of repeated offenses. Such programmes could be funded from the EU's general budget.

Source: European Parliament

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# Regional Policy

## Urban Atlas: new tools for sustainable development of the cities

## This year, for the first time, 185 cities from all 27 EU Member States, will benefit from the Urban Atlas, which has been produced by the European Commission and Member States with the support of European space technology. Compiled from thousands of satellite photographs, the Urban Atlas provides detailed digital mapping, ensuring that city planners have the most up-to-date and accurate data available on land use and land cover.

## The Urban Atlas will enable urban planners to better assess risks and opportunities, ranging from threat of flooding and impact of climate change, to identifying new infrastructure and public transport needs. It will provide opportunities for mutual learning from a land use perspective and help cities to make more informed investment decisions.

## All cities in the EU will be covered by the Urban Atlas by 2011.

For more information, please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/gmes/index_en.htm).

Source: European Commission

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# Research

Sorry, no articles in this edition

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# Transport

## Commercial road transport: harmonised rules on enforcement and new tachograph regulation

**Categorisation of infringements to social rules in road transport**

The European Commission has adopted a new directive that establishes a common grading of the most common infringements to the ‘social rules’ that govern driving hours and rest periods of professional drivers in the EU. Establishing a typology of infringements on the basis of their seriousness will put an end to the present situation where the same infringement may be considered a minor infringement in one country and a more serious infringement in another country. This decision is the response of the Commission to concerns voiced by the road transport industry over the lack of harmonised rules in this area, which undermines fair competition and the smooth operation of businesses.

The new categorisation distinguishes three levels of infringements: minor infringements, serious infringements and very serious infringements. The severity of an infringement depends on its influence on road safety. Actions that make monitoring compliance with social rules impossible such as fraud on the tachograph are classified as very serious.

One of the main benefits of the common categorisation is that it will facilitate the exchange of information between Member States and that the companies committing infringements abroad will be controlled more closely.

**Digital tachograph for commercial road transport**

The European Commission also adopted a package of measures aimed at detecting and preventing abuses of the tachograph system.

This package of measures aims to significantly improve the methods used by control authorities in detecting and preventing the use of devices intended to defraud the tachograph system, whilst at the same time keeping unnecessary delays and inconvenience to law-abiding operators and drivers to an absolute minimum.

Moreover, the new legislation aims to enable the use of dedicated, type-approved adaptors for light vehicles. Before, it was technically not possible to for some light vehicles (M1 and N1 class) to install the equipment in such a way that it meets all of its functional and security requirements. The new Commission Regulation now corrects this technical shortcoming by allowing the use of a dedicated, type-approved adaptor for these vehicles.

For more details on the new Regulations, please click [here](http://ec.europa.eu/transport/road/social_provisions/social_provisions_en.htm).

Source, [EU Press Release](http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/197&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en;%20http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/09/80&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en)

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# Diary

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| --- | --- |
| 27 January  2-5 February  3-5 February  3 February  4 February  5-6 February | European Policy Centre: Briefing on Eurostars and Eurocities: free movement and mobility in an integrated Europe. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  In Preston to attend meetings with LCC colleagues. For more information, please contact [tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org)  Preston City Council’s ‘European Hubs for Growth’ Conference. For more information, please contact [tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org)  First founding meeting of the European Network on Financial Instruments  Wielkopolska Region Brussels Office. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  Marco Polo Information Day. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  2nd University- Business Forum. For more information please contact [assistant@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:assistant@lancashire-brussels.org) |
| 6 February  9 February | European Economic and Social Committee hearing on The Global Financial Crisis. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  Creating Smart Climate Cities – the Birmingham Way. Event organized by the Birmingham City Council. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org) |
| 10 February  10 February  11 February  12 February  16-17 February | STEER and MARCO POLO: funding opportunities for your sustainable transport projects. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  Meeting with Georgi Dimitrov, DG Education and Culture to discuss Lancashire visit following UCLan’s Innovation conference hosted by the LBO.  Benchmarking local climate policies. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  Intelligent Energy Europe – Info Day. For more information please contact [jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:jayesh.patel@lancashire-brussels.org)  Regions for Economic Change conference. For more information, please contact [tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org) |
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| 18 February | Meeting with potential Open Days 2009 event partners. For more information, please contact [tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org) |
| 19 February | Meeting with potential Open Days 2009 event partners. For more information, please contact [tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org](mailto:tanja.siggs@lancashire-brussels.org) |
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1. The Leipzig Charter (signed by the Member States in May 2007) is a charter on Sustainable European Cities which brings together common principles and strategies for urban development policy. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Directive 2006/32/EC [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Directive 2008/50/EC [↑](#footnote-ref-4)