

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION'S WORKING PROGRAMME 2008

The 2008 working programme of the European Commission is structured around 2 types of initiatives : the strategic initiatives (12) and priority initiatives (48).

Regarding the major fields of interest of RDAs, we identified the following list with eight initiatives :

- White Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change
- Green Paper on European territorial cohesion
- Communication « Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe »
- Communication and Action Plan on Sustainable Industrial Policy (SIP)
- Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPC) Action Plan
- Green Paper on developing agricultural product quality policy
- Council Regulation – Review of the Less Favoured Areas Scheme
- Communication on anticipating and managing change

Also noteworthy is that the European Commission will continue its work for the adoption of a general block exemption regulation under the legislation on regional aid in favour of SMEs, R&D, environment, employment and training.

The following is a brief description of the challenges as well as the roadmap for each of the initiatives that have come to our attention.

Brief description of the initiatives:

<p>White Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change</p>	<p>Policy statement covering measures to ensure adaptation to climate change in a broad range of areas fundamental to the EU way of life (e.g. industry, agriculture, energy, fisheries, forestry, tourism, social policy), reduce their vulnerability, increase their resilience to the inevitable negative impacts of climate change and anticipate and accompany those changes.</p> <p>The objective is to avoid significant effects on human health, biodiversity and habitats, and on EU citizens' quality of life. Measures in the White Paper will also imply changes in existing Community policies.</p>
<p>Green Paper on European territorial cohesion</p>	<p>The objectives of this action are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to analyse from an institutional, political and operational perspective the way in which Member States understand and apply the concept of territorial cohesion. This work will be mainly based on questionnaires and analysis of operational programmes. • to provide a common definition of the concept and to propose possible tools for a better integration of this territorial dimension in the Structural funds and in some sectoral policies having a territorial impact. <p>to initiate an in-depth dialogue between Member States and the Commission.</p>

<p>Communication « Small Business Act (SBA) for Europe »</p>	<p>The Small Business Act for Europe will combine a mix of general principles (for example, specific treatment for SMEs in legislation according to 'Think Small First' principle, reduce obstacles to go cross border, improved access to EU programmes and increase SMEs access to innovation and growth), legal actions (for example proposal for a European Company Statute) and concrete actions to be taken both by Member States and the Commission (for example improving SMEs access to public procurement).</p>
<p>Sustainability package: <i>a) Communication and Action Plan on Sustainable Industrial Policy (SIP)</i> <i>b) Sustainable Production and Consumption (SPC) Action Plan</i></p>	<p>The SIP/SCP initiative consists of an integrated strategy to help the EU economy become more environmentally sustainable and competitive. The strategy covers innovation, the internal market and the external dimension, including production and consumption patterns. This initiative will set out the approach, map out action plans for delivery and may include legislative proposals. A key element of the initiative will be the launch of a new product policy setting dynamic sustainability requirements, through an extension of the Energy-using products Directive, coupled with voluntary "performance standards". These will be leveraged internationally through international sectoral agreements. There will also be important measures to stimulate innovation (e.g. a European Environmental Technology Verification Scheme), stimulate smarter consumption (including through the revision of the Ecolabel) and measures to help Industry to make production processes more sustainable (including through the revision of the EMAS scheme and through the SME Environmental compliance programme) and initiatives towards more sustainable public and private procurement.</p>
<p>Green Paper on agricultural product quality policy</p>	<p>The Green Paper will explore ideas and options for farmers and producers who want to orient their production towards quality and thereby better meet consumer demand and add value to their production. The document will ask for contributions, views and proposals for developing measures and the appropriate legal framework to facilitate a shift to quality production and marketing. It will build on the outcome of the Food Quality Certification Conference (5-6.2.2007, Brussels) and respond to calls for EU agriculture to follow a path of greater market orientation. The Green Paper will also seek the views of stakeholders on the development of existing EC quality schemes for geographical indications and traditional specialities.</p>
<p>Council Regulation - Review of the Less Favoured Areas Scheme (delimitation of designated areas)</p>	<p>Support for Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) is granted with the objective to contribute through the continued use of agricultural land to maintaining the countryside, as well as to maintaining and promoting sustainable farming systems. It is a vital part of the Rural Development Policy. The initiative will result in an improved delimitation system for areas with handicaps, thus adjusting the measure to changed circumstances.</p>
<p>Communication on anticipating and managing change</p>	<p>The Communication will present a political overview of initiatives undertaken since the adoption of the Communication on Restructuring and employment (COM(2005) 120). The communication will launch a European partnership for the adaptation to change highlighting the role and responsibilities of main actors in change management (Commission, Member States, regions, sectors, enterprises, workers and social partners). The Communication will launch the second phase of consultation of European social partners on anticipating company restructuring.</p>

Roadmaps of the initiatives:

Further details on these initiatives (in English, except for the point entitled "Communication sur l'anticipation et l'accompagnement du changement").

<p>White Paper on Adaptation to Climate Change Expected date of adoption of the initiative: November 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition : This initiative was launched as part of the second phase of the European Climate Change Programme (ECCP) in October 2006 as envisaged in the Commission Communication "Winning the battle against climate change" (COM/2005/0035). Subsequently, ECCP working groups were established in early 2006 covering water, marine resources/coastal areas/tourism, human health, agriculture and forestry, biodiversity, regional planning/energy infrastructure/structural funds, urban planning, development co-operation, insurance, and national strategies of Member States (see http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/eccp_impacts.htm). On this basis and the recent IPCC reports of early 2007, the Commission issued a Green Paper "Adapting to climate change in Europe – options for EU action" (COM/2007/0354). This is followed by a public consultation phase until end November 2007 which should lead to a White Paper on adaptation. Adaptation to the inevitable effects of climate change touches on almost all EU policies.</p> <p>Main problems identified: Climate change impacts are becoming increasingly more severe, and represent a critical challenge in Europe, not just as an environmental issue affecting the economy and competitiveness of regions. Although actual planning measures are implemented at a local or regional level, in a number of areas there is a clear value added and there are economies of scale and scope for a European adaptation policy framework to be developed.</p> <p>Objectives of EU initiative :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assist member states reducing their vulnerability and increasing their resilience against the negative impacts of climate change. • Making Community policies and support programmes 'climate proof'. <p>The negative impacts of climate change could significantly jeopardise the results of Community policies (e.g. agriculture, fisheries, water, energy, transport). EU policies will have to anticipate the potential impacts of inevitable climate change and integrate the needs for adaptation in order to limit the potential damage. Adaptation to climate change is of geo-strategic importance for the EU as climate models predict in particular a significant increase in water scarcity in North Africa, Middle East, Black Sea region, and Central Asia.</p>
<p>Green Paper on European territorial cohesion Expected date of adoption of the initiative: 3rd quarter 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition: Debate on territorial cohesion has been going on since the beginning of the 90's with the publication of the Commission document EUROPE 2000. Member States reached a first consensus on this issue with the European Spatial Development Perspective adopted in 1999. The concept was first made operational at Community level with the INTERREG initiative and the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network.</p>

	<p>It received much attention during the constitutional debate with the addition of the word "territorial" to the economic and social cohesion. Since then, successive Presidencies have re-launched the discussion which culminated in the adoption by Ministers responsible for spatial planning and regional development of the Territorial Agenda in May 2007. In that context, Ministers invited the Commission to prepare a report on territorial cohesion.</p> <p>The Green Paper will therefore constitute the Commission's contribution to the Territorial Agenda, while simultaneously improving its internal thinking on an important dimension of the constitutional debate. It will further provide analytical and policy support for the assessment of the programmes co-financed under cohesion policy during the period 2007-2013.</p> <p>Main problems identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of a common definition of territorial cohesion in the Member States; • Diversity of governance systems (vertical and horizontal coordination) in the member states; • Low level of implementation of territorial cohesion issues in the programming under cohesion policy; • Lack of integration of the concept in sectoral policy designing. <p>Objectives of EU initiative:</p> <p>In the new Constitutional Treaty, territorial cohesion will be added, beside economic and social cohesion, as a shared competence. In this context, the policy objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide for a common definition of the concept at EU and Member States level; • to report on how the concept is implemented in the governance systems and in the programming under cohesion policy in the Member States; • to propose possible operational tools to better integrate this dimension in cohesion policy and in the sectoral policies having a territorial impact; • to initiate an in depth dialogue between Member States (on the basis of the Territorial Agenda) and the Commission.
<p>A Small Business Act for Europe Expected date of adoption of the initiative: June 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition:</p> <p>In November 2005, the Commission launched Modern SME policy to integrate SMEs in the renewed Lisbon Partnership for Growth and Jobs (COM(2005) 551). The principal objective of the policy is to mainstream SMEs' concerns into EU and national policies by applying the "Think Small First" principle. In addition, the Commission set out five priority areas where Member States and the Commission have made efforts to create a better business environment and to encourage more people to become entrepreneurs. These are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) cutting red tape (2) improving SMEs' access to markets (3) promoting entrepreneurship and skills (4) improving SMEs' growth potential (5) strengthening dialogue and consultation with SME stakeholders.

A Mid-term review on Modern SME policy (COM (2007) 592), adopted in October 2007, takes stock of the progress that the Commission and the Member States have made in implementing Modern SME policy. The Communication concludes that SMEs are now part of most Community policies, like competition, cohesion policy and research. The Commission has also increased the SME focus within major EU spending programmes for the period 2007-2013. The Commission has taken important steps towards creating a more SME-friendly regulatory environment by proposing, among others, ten fast-track actions in areas where such actions are likely to have the greatest impact, such as statistics and company law.

Member States have made efforts to deliver on the five priority actions requested by the 2006 Spring European Council, thus contributing to the implementation of the "Think Small First" principle throughout the European Union. In particular, the majority of Member States have established a one-stop-shop for setting up a company and most of them have reduced the time required to do so. Many of them have taken measures to develop entrepreneurial mindsets through education although progress is relatively slow.

Despite the progress made, more emphasis needs to be put on SMEs in the context of the next Lisbon cycle 2008-2011 to fully release their potential to grow and create new jobs. Therefore, the Commission will prepare a "Small Business Act" for Europe which will contain economically and politically significant initiatives tailored for SMEs according to the "Think Small First" principle. It will draw together SME elements present in various policies and laws, with the aim of reducing further the administrative burden on SMEs, increasing SMEs participation in EU programmes, increasing SMEs share in public procurement, improving SME access to standardisation and reducing obstacles to cross-border trade thus fostering further innovation and growth.

The Small Business Act was announced in the Commission discussion paper for EU Heads of State and Government at the Lisbon informal summit on 18-19 October. It is also part of the initiatives announced in the Communication "A Single Market review for 21st century Europe" (COM (2007) 724 final).

Main problems identified:

The roughly 23 million small and medium-sized enterprises which account for 99% of all business and represent two third of total employment have a strong potential to contribute to the growth and job creation in the EU. They encounter, however, proportionally more difficulties than large companies, for example in terms of coping with regulatory burden, running cross-border activities and accessing finance, innovation and skills. Also, the EU does not adequately exploit its entrepreneurial potential. 45% of Europeans state that they prefer self-employment compared to 61% in the USA. Europe generates fewer start-ups relative to the USA and after start-up enterprises demonstrate lower expansion rates. Overall, good progress has been made in implementing Modern SME policy.

	<p>However, there is still room for improvement, both at Community level and in the Member States, in particular in the following areas:</p> <p>The “Think Small First” principle and reducing the regulatory burdens</p> <p>Although the progress made in applying the “Think Small First” principle is encouraging, the objective is to make it a leading principle in all law and policy making that should be applied systematically when drafting new laws and policies. The benefits of better regulation need to be felt at all levels. It has been estimated that where a big company spends one Euro per employee because of a regulatory duty, a small business might have to spend on average up to ten Euros.</p> <p>To cut the burdens for SMEs who are disproportionately affected by such burdens, there should be a presumption that SMEs will not be covered by administrative requirements of EU legislation unless there is a clear need to do so and the issue can not be better tackled at national, regional or local level. Where SMEs are covered by EU legislation, special measures should be designed to help them. More generally, the EU needs to find ways to cut existing burdens wherever circumstances allow.</p> <p>SMEs access to markets</p> <p>SMEs have more difficulties than large enterprises to engage in cross-border activities. Only 8% of them are involved in export. The main constraints to exports are the lack of knowledge of foreign markets, the import tariffs/custom duties in the destination countries and the lack of capital.</p> <p>The Single Market is set to guarantee access for enterprises to a wide common market operating on a common set of rules. However, SMEs do not fully benefit from the opportunities provided by the single market largely because of the lack of information on business opportunities and applicable rules in another Member States.</p> <p>SMEs access to public procurement</p> <p>In 2005, EU SMEs obtained 42% of public procurement contracts above EU thresholds. More than half of these contracts were won by medium-sized enterprises which seem to be performing relatively well when considering their contribution in the economy. This however is not the case of micro- and small enterprises. There is, therefore, scope for action to encourage Member States to make a better use of the possibilities the European public procurement Directives offer to promote SMEs’ participation in public tenders. Training and awareness-raising measures could be used to improve the skills level and knowledge on procurement procedures.</p> <p>SMEs’ access to finance</p> <p>Innovative and high growth SMEs typically look for venture capital that can finance fast growth and quick market entry. However, the fragmentation of the European venture capital market along national lines seriously limits the growth of early-stage capital for innovative SMEs. Venture capital funds limited to their national markets face problems reaching the critical mass they need to spread their portfolio risk and cover their costs. It also hinders</p>
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	<p>efficient specialisation. Facilitating cross-border operations is necessary to overcome this hurdle and increase the overall supply of early-stage capital. Many start-ups do not promise very rapid growth and are not interesting for venture capital investors. Other SMEs cannot access (further) debt financing and not wish to dilute ownership via equity finance. Transfer of businesses benefits from financing that does not change the ownership structure. In all these cases mezzanine finance can be a practical solution. To improve SMEs' access to this type of finance, the crucial range of demand is between €100 000 and €1 million, where supply is not sufficient. Most entrepreneurs require only small amounts of external financing to get started, but accessing small amounts is often difficult. The SME guarantee facility (SMEG) has provided guarantees for microcredit (loans up to € 25 000) for financial intermediaries. It is important to find ways on how to strengthen the microcredit schemes in the EU.</p> <p>The Lisbon strategy re-launched in 2005 has placed competitiveness firmly at the centre of political attention. It calls for action to deliver growth and competitiveness and to make Europe a more attractive place to invest and work. When working towards these objectives, the activities proposed are based mainly on Articles 95 (Internal Market), 157 (Competitiveness) and Title XVIII (Innovation and Research) of the Treaty. Although most of the factors which determine the environment in which firms operate are the responsibility of national, regional and local authorities, the Commission has a complementary role in supporting coherence, addressing certain market failures, ensuring consistency in implementation and establishing a level playing field for SMEs throughout the EU.</p> <p>Objectives of EU initiative: The objective of the EU initiative is twofold:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to set out minimum requirements/common principles for the Member States and the EU in order to release the full potential of SMEs to create jobs, to grow and to contribute to economic and social cohesion in the EU. • to launch major initiatives with the aim to boost SMEs' competitiveness. <p>To this end, it will address the existing market gaps, improve the transparency and flow of information and strengthen the exchange of good practices in the areas which are the most relevant to SMEs, such as access to markets, finance, and better regulation.</p>
<p>Communication and Action Plan on Towards a Sustainable Industrial Policy. An industrial policy for a competitive low carbon economy Expected date of adoption: March 2008</p>	<p>Initial impact assessment screening: There are four main reasons for acting at European level. First, the challenge is European. GHG emissions are a clear example of environmental externalities. The impacts of Climate Change are supported by everyone and they do not respect borders. Second, innovation support for low Carbon technologies, products and services varies among Member States, resulting in some countries improving rapidly their Carbon profile, while some others continue lagging behind in their production processes. Critical mass for research requires action at EU level. Third, internal markets for more energy efficient, low carbon products and services in particular for environmental industries hardly exist.</p>

	<p>In some Member States, the market penetration for these products is quite extensive, in some others quasi inexistent.</p> <p>Common minimum requirement and best performance benchmarks in terms of energy and environmental efficiency would facilitate the free circulation of products, provide the adequate uniformed information for consumers, create an internal market for this type of products and rewarding front-runners. Existing companies with a lead position in providing environmental services could play an important role in controlling environmental damage if the internal market was to function adequately. Fourth, international negotiations to facilitate level playing field for the different EU industries requires a common front to convince the partners from the rest of the world and achieve reduction of GHG emissions.</p> <p>Independent actions by Member States in these four areas would not only be less efficient but also would very partially contribute to the ambitious targets in GHG reduction, renewable energy and energy efficiency set by the EU 2007 Spring Council to respond to the worsening of the climate change situation. There is a need to complete the EU Climate Change and Energy package with a strong third pillar, the Sustainable Industrial Policy.</p> <p>This initiative aims at encouraging industry to attain the highest environmental profile through development and deployment of European low carbon, energy efficient technologies, products and services by removing obstacles, tackling market failures and furthering internal and external demand. It will comprise the following components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation for low carbon, energy efficient technologies • Make use of the internal market instruments to create a critical, dynamic mass of demand for low carbon and energy efficient technologies, goods and services, thereby reducing their cost through economies of scale • Exploit first mover advantages to export EU know-how in a low-carbon economy to external markets and create a level playing field for industry through global sectoral agreements. <p>It will be complemented by the Action Plan on “Sustainable Consumption and Production”. This action plan will extend the scope of SIP to cover most environmental impacts. It will comprise activities in the field of leaner and cleaner production and smarter consumption.</p> <p>There is a strong synergy between both Action Plans. It is clear that the objective of a Low Carbon economy will not be achievable if there are no changes in terms of production and consumption patterns. On the other hand, the latter will not be reachable without innovation and a stronger market for better products. Actions in the international arena are essential for the rightly valorisation of the EU effort in all these fields.</p> <p>The initiative will be launched though an Action Plan in the form of a Communication. No regulatory legal act will be included at this stage although proposals for amending existing Directives such as the EUP Directive might be proposed. To promote the most energy efficient, low carbon technologies, products and services,</p>
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	<p>several options have already been identified: market based instruments, use of minimum performance standards coupled with advanced performance benchmarks and labels, facilitation of the emergence of key markets for advanced performing products, promotion of sectoral agreements, risk sharing funding facility for innovation, enhanced use of CIP and FP7, use of IPR.</p> <p>The Communication is geared mainly to national and Community authorities and enterprises, depending on the actions foreseen (for instance, public procurement, IPR, minimum performance requirements and advanced performance benchmarks, innovation and export framework conditions to be dealt by public authorities whereas enterprises would need to act in the deployment of technologies). In terms of impacts, it will be necessary to analyse the economic and environmental effects of the Communication and its Action Programme. In the case of putting forward an amending Directive for the EUP Directive (scope, dynamism, incentives), a full impact assessment will be carried out.</p>
<p>Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) Action Plan Expected date of adoption of the initiative: February 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition: The decision to develop an SCP-Action Plan was taken by the Commission in its Proposal for a reviewed Sustainable Development Strategy (in Dec 2005). Furthermore, in June 2006, the Council adopted the renewed Sustainable Development Strategy and identified sustainable consumption and production as one of the seven key challenges, inviting the Commission to draw up an Action Plan on sustainable consumption and production. Finally, the Environmental Council in its conclusions on the Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources in October 2006 drew particular attention to the forthcoming SCP-Action Plan. The forthcoming SCP-Action Plan would help to identify and overcome barriers for SCP and to ensure better coherence between the different related policy areas, and to raise awareness among citizens and change unsustainable consumption habits. This Action Plan will be presented as a package including also the revisions of the Eco-label and EMAS Regulations, and a communication on Green Public Procurement. The SCP Action Plan builds further on existing SCP-related policies such as the Integrated Product Policy (IPP) Communication and the Thematic Strategies on Sustainable Use of natural Resource and Waste Prevention and Recycling.</p> <p>European and global consumption and production patterns exceed the carrying capacity of ecosystems, causing environmental degradation. Actions have to be taken at all levels, including the European level, according to their specific competencies. As a result of intra-Community and global trade, the environmental impacts related to consumption and production are likely to affect more than one country. Coordinated actions on SCP are thus needed at EU level in addition to initiatives at the international, national and local levels. This coordination will ensure policy coherence and synergies, and allow ensuring single market issues and simplification.</p> <p>Objectives of EU initiative: The main policy objective is to promote sustainable consumption and production by addressing social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation. Specific</p>

	<p>objectives of an EU policy on sustainable consumption and production should encourage to design or promote policies which lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • products that use less materials and energy and generate less emissions • production processes with material and energy efficient, low pollution technologies • consumption of eco-efficient products within the environment's carrying capacity
<p>Green Paper on Agricultural Product Quality Policy Expected date of adoption of the initiative: October 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition: Farmers and producers of agricultural products face increasing competition in the marketplace, (in general) downward pressure on farm-gate prices, and increasing demand from consumers for quality products. Those who can respond by improving quality and supplying quality markets should be able to better valorise production and improve their economic performance and prospects. The Green Paper is a first step towards a possible revision of policy. It will build on the conclusions to the Food Quality Certification Conference (Brussels, 5-6.2.2007) and will cover development of existing EU marketing standards and quality instruments for protected geographical indications, protected denominations of origin and traditional specialities guaranteed, as well as the increasing number of private and national schemes and initiatives.</p> <p>The Green Paper will seek views of stakeholders on any developments needed in the legal framework, such as labelling, as well as measures to assist farmers and producers both pre- and post-farm gate to improve quality production and successfully market product on the basis of quality characteristics.</p> <p>Main problems identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • increased competition and, in general, downward pressure on prices; • difficulties in communication by farmers about the quality attributes of products to final consumers through the food chain; • difficulties for farmers (usually small businesses) to make improvements in quality production and secure access to markets for quality products; need to ensure consumer confidence in the increasing number and variety of claims concerning farm • production qualities of products and foodstuffs; need to ensure the smooth operation of quality schemes in the single market. <p>EU action is justified as measures and the legal framework applicable to farmers fall within the Common Agricultural Policy and to ensure the functioning of the single market. However, much action should take place at the level of private operators, representative organisations, or regional and national authorities.</p> <p>Objectives of EU initiative: The objectives of the Green Paper are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to seek views on the development of existing EU quality schemes;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to consult stakeholders on the challenge of improving quality production and marketing of agricultural product and foodstuffs. • to hear views on possible options for the evolution of agricultural product quality policy, marketing rules, and initiatives for development of measures and the legal framework.
<p>Review of the method to delimit Less Favoured Areas (Article 37 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 Expected date of adoption of the initiative: December 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition: Support for Less Favoured Areas (LFAs) is granted with the objective to contribute through the continued use of agricultural land to maintaining the countryside, as well as to maintaining and promoting sustainable farming systems. In accordance with Article 93 of Council Regulation (EC) No 1698/2005 the current provisions with regard to the delimitation of LFAs shall be repealed with effect from 1 January 2010, subject to an act of the Council. There are doubts as to whether the criteria used to delimit LFAs are still justified. There seems to be a risk that criteria applied at present do not result in an optimal LFA delimitation which could have consequences for the success of the policy objective to maintain the countryside and to promote sustainable farming systems</p> <p>Main problems identified: Support for LFAs has been in place since 1975. Over time the precise criteria to delimit LFAs has evolved. The Commission has been requested to update indicators used to delimit LFAs with a view to ensure the coherent application of delimitation criteria.</p> <p>Support for LFAs is common policy and is (partly) community financed. Therefore, the establishment of common rules is justified.</p> <p>Objectives of EU initiative: The initiative is necessary to evaluate the delimitation criteria used in the Member States. If and to adjust them with a view to ensure a coherent delimitation of LFAs.</p>
<p>Communication sur l'anticipation et la gestion du changement (2ème phase de consultation des partenaires sociaux) Expected date of adoption of the initiative: Juillet 2008</p>	<p>Context and problem definition : Différents facteurs tant internes (politiques communautaires) qu'externes (progrès technique, évolution de la demande, globalisation,...) créent le besoin d'adaptations rapides des entreprises européennes. Ces adaptations entraînent des restructurations ou des réorganisations au sein des entreprises dont certaines peuvent avoir des effets non négligeables dans certaines régions, secteurs ou catégories de travailleurs. Ce type de répercussions peut se traduire par un sentiment de rejet des adaptations à réaliser freinant d'autant les nécessaires changements de l'industrie européenne et dans bien des cas par une perte de capital humain. Il apparaît donc opportun de compléter les actions précédemment mises en oeuvre au niveau européen.</p> <p>Plusieurs actions passées de la Commission sont en relation avec la présente initiative. On peut citer la mise en oeuvre du Fonds européen d'ajustement à la mondialisation, la nouvelle période de programmation des Fonds structurels, la politique industrielle et bien évidemment la stratégie de Lisbonne. Plusieurs autres débats actuels peuvent également s'inscrire dans le cadre de la présente initiative comme celui sur la flexicurité. Concernant directement le</p>

sujet traité par cette initiative, la Commission a lancé en janvier 2002 une première phase de consultation des partenaires sociaux qui leur demandait de définir et de mettre en oeuvre des bonnes pratiques en matière d'anticipation, de préparation et de gestion des restructurations. En 2003, les partenaires sociaux ont présenté des orientations de référence dans ce domaine, toutefois sans mécanisme de mise en oeuvre et de suivi. En mars 2005, la Commission a adopté une Communication qui présentait une série d'actions permettant notamment de renforcer la coordination de nos politiques et de favoriser l'anticipation et l'établissement de partenariats en insistant auprès des partenaires sociaux qu'ils développent et mettent en oeuvre les orientations de référence 2003.

Les principaux problèmes identifiés résident dans la nécessité de réaliser des adaptations et de la peur que ces dernières peuvent générer, compte tenu des conséquences sociales qu'elles peuvent entraîner quand elles sont mal anticipées, préparées et gérées. Il est donc essentiel de pouvoir offrir un climat et des outils aptes à faciliter les nécessaires adaptations et de réduire les pertes en capital humain. Cette problématique a tout récemment été rappelée dans plusieurs études et documents émanant par exemple de l'OCDE, du FMI ainsi que de la Commission. Plus particulièrement, il importe de renforcer l'implication des partenaires sociaux au niveau européen sur cette question. A cet égard, on se doit de constater que les orientations de référence présentées par les partenaires sociaux en 2003 n'ont pas pu être adoptées formellement par l'ensemble de ces derniers par manque de mécanismes de mise en oeuvre et de suivi. En second lieu, l'anticipation, la préparation et la gestion des restructurations nécessitent une pleine coopération et coordination de l'ensemble des acteurs concernés (les entreprises, les travailleurs, leurs représentants et les autorités publiques (locales, régionales, nationales et européennes)) si l'on désire qu'elles soient socialement acceptables. Or, on constate que trop souvent la coordination entre les différents acteurs est insuffisante lors de restructurations. L'établissement de partenariats ayant pour objet de favoriser la coopération, tel qu'en discussion dans le secteur automobile au niveau européen, constitue donc un autre besoin.

Les enjeux, les facteurs déclencheurs et les moyens de traitement dépassent les cadres nationaux. Plusieurs politiques communautaires mises en oeuvre depuis longtemps entraînent elles mêmes des restructurations (marché intérieur, politique commerciale, politique de concurrence,...). Tandis que d'autres permettent à la fois d'exploiter le potentiel positif des changements en cours (politiques industrielle, d'innovation et de R&D,...) ou de pallier à leurs impacts problématiques (politiques structurelle et d'emploi). La poursuite de l'action dans ce domaine respecte donc le principe de subsidiarité.

	<p>Objectives of EU initiative :</p> <p>Les principaux objectifs de cette initiative sont :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• de faciliter les changements dans un contexte socialement acceptable et permettant de préserver le capital humain;• de faire le bilan des actions développées depuis la Communication de mars 2005;• de renforcer ou de mieux cibler les instruments précédemment mis en place. <p>Cette initiative permettra de renforcer des domaines stratégiques existants compte tenu du fait que l'objectif principal est de faciliter l'introduction des changements.</p>
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