# Units of measurement: approximation of the laws of the Member States (amend. Directive 80/181 /EEC)

2007/0187(COD) - 10/09/2007 - Legislative proposal

PURPOSE: to update Council Directive 80/181/EEC on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to units of measurement.

PROPOSED ACT: Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council.

BACKGROUND: Directive 80/181/EEC harmonised within the EU the legal units of measurement for expressing quantities, in accordance with the metric “International System of Units” (SI) adopted by the General Conference of Weights and Measures set up by the Metre Convention signed in Paris on 20 May 1875. The SI metric system is recognised under WTO/TBT as the international standard. The Directive ensures a common approach, removing the barriers to trade within the Internal Market due to units of measurement in line with the international standard.

Directive 80/181/EEC requires the United Kingdom and Ireland to fix a date for ending the exemptions, where they are still being applied, in respect of pint for milk in returnable bottles and beer and cider on draught, mile for road signs and speed indications, and troy ounce for transactions in precious metals. However, experience has shown that, given the local character of those exemptions and the limited number of products concerned, the maintenance of the exemptions would not lead to the imposition of a non-tariff barrier to trade, and as a consequence there is no longer a need to put an end to those exemptions

The Directive authorises the use of supplementary indications in addition to the legal units laid down in Chapter I of the Annex to that Directive until 31 December 2009.

CONTENT: following a wide consultation of stakeholders and an impact assessment, the Commission proposes updating the Directive 80/181/EEC to include consumer protection and environment in its scope, to include as a legal unit the new SI unit for catalytic activity (katal) to allow the use of supplementary indications indefinitely and no longer to require the UK and Ireland to end the limited local exemptions for pint, mile and troy ounce where they are still in use.

The exemption of the acre for land registration however is no longer in use, because of changes in administrative procedures in both Member States.

Lastly, the Commission clarifies the scope of the directive as being applicable to all domains covered by the current Treaties. It is therefore no longer necessary to single out certain fields of applicability.

Stakeholders were consulted during the 10-week period up to 1 March 2007. The proposal follows the unanimous recommendation of industry to lift the sundown clause for the United Kingdom and Ireland and to permit indefinitely the use of supplementary indications.