Services: internal market strategy

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PURPOSE: to present a Commission Communication on an Internal Market Strategy for Services.
CONTENT: The Commission seeks to allow services to move across national borders as easy as within a Member State. This Communication sets out a two step approach to achieving this objective. First, within the next 12 months, the Commission will accelerate a number of initiatives in specific problem areas, whilst, in parallel, rigorously analysing the persistent barriers to free movement of services across national frontiers. It will encourage the Council and the Parliament to come to agreement early in 2001 on initiatives already scheduled. Second, in 2002, the Commission will bring forward a further package of initiatives, setting a precise timetable for Member States to dismantle any specific barriers identified from the analyses carried out in the previous twelve months. This package will also comprise of non-legislative supporting measures, and specific or horizontal harmonisation instruments, together with additional legislative measures to dismantle remaining barriers and prevent the emergence of new ones, whilst ensuring a high level of protection of public interest objectives is maintained. The Strategy for Services seeks to tackle the barriers by building on five basic principles: it should be comprehensive; it should make cross-border activities as easy as acting within a Member State; it should ensure business and consumers secure benefit from the new opportunities open to them; it should keep pace with change and finally, it should be coherent with other policies. Against this background, this Communication sets out a two stage strategy: Stage 1 - Actions for 2001: first, within the next 12 months, the Commission will launch a first wave of initiatives of both a legislative and non-legislative nature targeted at particular problem areas. Second, the Commission will also review the existing directives that relate to the free movement of services. Third, a number of non-legislative flanking measures will be brought forward. Fourth, the Council and the European Parliament are called upon to agree a number of major Internal Market initiatives that impact on services. The Commission needs to pave the way for a horizontal approach to free movement of services with a view to its implementation in 2002. For the first time since 1962, the Commission will undertake an all-embracing and systematic analysis of the persistent barriers to free movement of services and their spill-over effects across economic sectors. Stage 2 - Actions for 2002: 2001 is a year for action and analyis. the following year will be a further package of initiatives on the basis of this analysis. These initiatives will take three basic forms: actions to tackle barriers which can be moved by the direct application of the Treaty; actions of a non-legislative nature; and, thirdly, actions that make use of targeted harmonisation to remove barriers. In conclusion, the Commission would welcome comments from interested parties by 1 June 2001.