Public contracts: participation of European Economic Interest Groupings EEIGs

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European Economic Interest Groupings (EEIGs) are the Union's only legal vehicle for co-operation between companies and as such are an important instrument, particularly for SMEs who wish to participate in procurement or EU programmes since the mechanism gives members greater negotiating power then they could enjoy as individual entities. Yet despite the clearly identified advantages that can exist in establishing an EEIG, the Commission notes in a Communication there are currently only about 800 operating within the EU. To help overcome this the Commission Communication seeks to clarify the rules on EEIGs in order to "remove all uncertainty still preventing the maximum use of EEIGs in public procurement , access to credit, and participation in public programmes". Reporting for the Committee, Michael TAPPIN (PES, UK) supports the objectives laid down by the Commission, namely increasing the level of EEIGs participation in procurement and in programmes. However, he does believe that the Commission could do more to promote EEIGs amongst SMEs, for example by setting up a EEIG panel - made up of national and sectoral representatives, as well as the Social Partners - at EU level to advise and inform about EEIGs and related issues. Further, the Commission is called upon to further study the matter and present a follow-up Communication within two years suggesting, if necessary, modifications to the interpretative texts in the present Communication and possibly additional measures to promote EEIGs. Finally, the Committee calls on the Commission and the Member States to try to work out informal solutions to a number of outstanding problems relating to EEIGs, in particular problems of joint and sever liability, trans-national contracts, credit facilities and non-discrimination.