

Community legislation: simplifying and improving the regulatory environment

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The present Communication is the first interim report on implementation of the Framework for Action launched in February 2003 on "Updating and simplifying the Community acquis". This initiative implements one of the actions of its "Better Regulation" initiative of June 2002 and aims to secure a clear, understandable, up-to-date and user-friendly body of secondary Community law and responds also to the objective to improve the regulatory environment in which business operate to enhance competitiveness as one of the goal set out in the Lisbon strategy. Overall, the key actions of reducing the volume of legislation, making it simpler and of making it more accessible and meaningful are well underway, building on the Framework for Action launched in February 2003 and earlier initiatives: - a horizontal policy for legislative simplification is emerging. Commission services are now screening nearly 20 policy sectors for simplification potential which could result in future simplification proposals for Parliament and Council. Around 170 directives and regulations have already been identified as confirmed or potential candidates for simplification and are currently under active examination by the Commission services. Of 23 planned simplification proposals for Phase I (February - September 2003), 14 have been adopted and 4 more are planned before the end of 2003. 4 additional simplification proposals have been adopted in Phase I although not included in the February engagement. - a vast programme of consolidation was launched in 1996 and completed in June 2003 as planned. - the even more demanding codification programme launched in November 2001 is now at cruising speed and is set, despite significant obstacles, to be completed by the end of 2005 as planned. During Phase I the Commission adopted 7 codified Commission acts and 15 proposals for codified acts to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council. During Phase II (October 2003-March 2004) it plans to adopt or propose some 150 codifications. - the reinforced efforts to remove obsolete legislation through formal repeal or by an additional instrument of "declaration of obsolescence" is beginning to give concrete results, although delays have occurred: Phase I efforts should shortly result in elimination of 30 obsolete legal acts and some 600 more are under consideration and could in part be implemented during Phase II. - the initiative to develop a more reliable and user-friendly organisation and presentation of Community law is being taken forward. Measures to offer a more user-friendly access to consult and use Community law will be enacted before the end of 2003. Subsequent measures include a more focused presentation of the secondary legislation actually in force and of general applicability. The Commission also reports on important obstacles in implementing the above actions, in particular for simplification and codification work. However, the Commission is satisfied that the process launched in February 2003 is set to continue to produce benefits for citizens and other users of Community legislation in the future. The Commission welcomes that the February Framework for Action is confirmed as the first global and coherent initiative for a policy of maintenance of Community legislation. It is particularly encouraging that efforts are not concentrated in a few 'stakeholder' sectors but cover a wide range of policy areas.