Strategy for the simplification of the regulatory environment, implementing the Lisbon strategy

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PURPOSE : to put in place a strategy for the simplification of the regulatory environment in the framework of the Community Lisbon programme.

CONTENT : Following its Communication of March 2005 in which it identified simplification as one priority action for the EU, the Commission presents its strategy to simplify EU-legislation and enhance its quality. The stategy is fully embedded into the revised Lisbon strategy for achieving growth and jobs in Europe and therefore focuses on those elements of the acquis that concern the competitiveness of enterprises in the EU. Its overall objective is to contribute to a European regulatory framework that fulfils the highest standards of law making respecting the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. Following these principles, the EU should only regulate if a proposed action can be better achieved at EU level. Any such action should not go beyond what is necessary to achieve the policy objectives pursued.

The Commission emphasises that better regulation is not de-regulation. The review of the acquis must become a continuous and systematic process enabling the legislator to revise legislation taking all legitimate private sector and public interests into account. Accordingly, the Commission presents a rolling programme anchored in stakeholders' practical experience. The programme specifies those pieces of legislation that the Commission envisages reviewing and assessing with the view to simplifying them in the next three years. To pursue the evaluation of the acquis beyond the present simplification programme, the Commission will identify the need for simplification from a sectoral perspective.

Starting with a working programme based on input from the Member States and stakeholders, the Commission will develop its simplification priorities following:

- a comprehensive analysis of selected sectors regarding the impact of legislation, including economic, environmental and social aspects;

- a simplification method drawing on techniques such as repeal, codification, recasting and changing implementing methods;

- a legislative method entailing a clear preference for essential requirements rather than technical specifications, the increased use of co-regulation, the promotion and increased use of information technologies;

- an increased use, as appropriate and on a case by case basis, of regulations instead of directives as well as of review clauses;

In order to secure the implementation of simplification priorities on time, the Commission will streamline its internal working methods to ensure a comprehensive monitoring and follow-up of the simplification process, both at administrative and political level. In addition the Commission will continue to consult regularly with stakeholders on how the simplification programme should be further developed over the coming years.

Considering the need for shared commitment to simplification by the Institutions, the Commission invites the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions to react to this Communication.