

MIDDAY EXPRESS

*News from the Press and Communication Directorate General's midday briefing
Nouvelles du rendez-vous de midi de la Direction Générale Presse et Communication*

13 / 03 / 06

– **La Commission accueille favorablement les modifications apportées aux accords de distribution et de service après-vente de BMW**

La Commission européenne a clôturé son enquête sur les accords de distribution et de service après-vente de BMW après leur modification en vue de leur mise en conformité avec le règlement (CE) n° 1400/2002 de la Commission d'exemption par catégorie pour la distribution automobile (voir document IP/02/1073). Grâce aux modifications introduites par BMW, les concessionnaires et les réparateurs pourront désormais vendre des voitures de marques concurrentes ou en assurer le service après vente sans restrictions (multimarquisme), et tous les réparateurs satisfaisant aux normes qualitatives requises pourront devenir membres du réseau agréé. Une affaire analogue concernant General Motors a également été clôturée (voir document IP/06/303).

(pour plus d'informations: IP/06/302 - J. Todd - tel: 299 4107 - fax: 296 3038)

– **Commission welcomes changes to General Motors' distribution and servicing agreements**

The European Commission has closed its investigation into General Motors' (GM) distribution and servicing agreements following changes to bring them into line with the Commission's car distribution block exemption Regulation 1400/2002 (see IP/02/1073). The changes introduced by GM ensure that dealers and repairers are not restricted in selling or servicing cars of competing brands (multi-branding), and that all repair-shops who fulfill the necessary quality standards can become members of the authorised network. The case followed complaints from the French, German, Spanish and Italian Opel dealers' associations. A similar case involving BMW has also been closed (see IP/06/302).

(for more information: IP/06/303 - J. Todd - tel: 299 4107 - fax: 296 3038)

– **Commission clears merger between Toyota Tsusho and Tomen**

The European Commission has granted clearance under the EU Merger Regulation to a full merger between Toyota Tsusho Corporation (Toyota Tsusho) of Japan and Tomen Corporation (Tomen) also of Japan. Tomen Corporation is a general trading company active in a broad range of sectors including vehicles and chemicals. Toyota Tsusho is active in trading and logistics services and the wholesale and retail sales of vehicles. The operation was examined under the simplified merger review procedure.

(for more information: J. Todd - tel: 299 4107 - fax: 296 3038)

– **La première conférence sur le dialogue social réunit les représentants de 31 secteurs d'activité européens**

La première conférence sur le dialogue social sectoriel s'ouvre aujourd'hui au Palais d'Egmont, à Bruxelles ; elle accueillera au côté de Vladimir Špidla, commissaire à l'Emploi, aux Affaires sociales et à l'Egalité des chances, des représentants des syndicats et des employeurs des 31 secteurs d'activité - dont le textile, l'agriculture, la construction ou la chimie, par exemple - dans lesquels ont été créés des comités de dialogue social européen. Les participants se pencheront sur le rôle des partenaires sociaux dans la résolution de divers problèmes auxquels est confrontée l'UE, parmi lesquels les restructurations, les

insuffisances en matière de compétences et la modification des tendances démographiques.

(pour plus d'informations: IP/06/299 - K. Von Schnurbein - tél: 298 1408 - fax: 299 9863)

– **Cultural heritage : five projects to be awarded European prizes**

The European Commission and Europa Nostra announced today the five top prizes for the annual European Union Prize for Cultural Heritage/Europa Nostra awards. These awards were jointly launched in 2002 by Europa Nostra and the European Commission, in the framework of the Commission's Culture 2000 programme, to recognize best practices in heritage conservation on a European level. Prizes will be presented to the laureates late June in Madrid, during a ceremony which will be presided by the Queen of Spain.

(for more information: IP/06/300 - F. Vincent - tel: 298 7166 - fax: 295 1413)

– **Capitales européennes de la culture 2010 : réunion du jury cette semaine**

Le jury chargé d'évaluer les villes candidates au titre de "Capitales européennes de la culture 2010" va se réunir cette semaine à Bruxelles. Le rapport qui sera publié par la Commission ce printemps sera alors transmis au Parlement européen, au Conseil et au Comité des Régions. Le Conseil devrait prendre une décision finale lors de sa formation Culture sous présidence finlandaise au cours du deuxième semestre 2006.

(pour plus d'informations: IP/06/301 - F. Vincent - tél: 298 7166 - fax: 295 1413)

– **Drought in Mozambique : Commission allocates €2 million in humanitarian aid**

The European Commission is providing humanitarian aid worth €2 Million to communities affected by prolonged drought in southern and central Mozambique. More than 800,000 people are estimated to be particularly at risk. Among the most vulnerable are children and households headed either by children or by grandparents.

(for more information: IP/06/304 - A. Altafaj Tardio - tél: 292 0694 - fax: 298 4172)

– **Commission sends new letter to Microsoft on compliance with decision**

On 10 March, the European Commission sent a letter to Microsoft setting out its preliminary view on how Microsoft is still not in compliance with its obligations under the March 2004 Commission decision (see IP/04/382). In particular, the letter includes a report from the Monitoring Trustee (see IP/05/1215) that contains factual information supporting the Commission's objections outlined in a Statement of Objections (SO) of 21 December 2005 (see IP/05/1695). The SO indicated that Microsoft had not yet complied with the obligation, imposed by the Commission's March 2004 decision that Microsoft infringed EC Treaty rules on abuse of a dominant position (Article 82), to disclose complete and accurate interface documentation which would allow non-Microsoft work group servers to achieve full interoperability with Windows PCs and servers. This letter brings this information to Microsoft's immediate attention, in order to provide Microsoft the opportunity to make its views known in writing.

(for more information: IP/06/298 - J. Todd - tel: 299 4107 - fax: 296 3038)

– **Space policy : EU and Russia join forces and sign cooperation agreement**

The EU and Russia are getting closer in space activities. The Head of the Federal Space Agency of the Russian Federation (Roscosmos) Anatoliy Perminov, the Director General of the European Space Agency Jean-Jacques Dordain and European Commission Vice-President Günter Verheugen signed on 10 March a joint document to enhance bilateral cooperation in space activities. The enhanced cooperation encompasses space applications (satellite navigation, earth observation and satellite communications), access to space (launchers and future space transportation systems), space exploration and the use of the International Space Station (ISS) and space technologies development.

(for more information: IP/06/297 - G. Kreuzhuber - tel: 296 6565 - fax: 296 4284)

- **Competition : new report on car prices across Europe available**
This report is a service for consumers that the European Commission publishes twice per year to help them to compare car prices across Europe and to take advantage of the opportunities offered by the EU Single Market. This report covers the second half of 2005. During this period, car prices increased on average less than the general inflation rate. In particular, in some of the new Member States car prices even decreased significantly, while price differentials across the EU remained stable. The report and its main highlights are available at http://europa.eu.int/comm/competition/car_sector/price_diffs/
(for more information: J. Todd - tel: 299 4107 - fax: 296 3038)
- **Autre matériel diffusé**
 - Complaints against BMW and General Motors regarding contractual standards required from their dealers and repairers - questions and answers
(for more information: MEMO/06/120 - J. Todd - tel: 299 4107 - fax: 296 3038)
 - Preparation of Eurogroup and Economic and Finance Ministers Council
(for more information: MEMO/06/121 - A. Torres - tel: 295 4629 - fax: 295 1413 and/or V. Rampi - tel: 296 6367 - fax: 296 3003 and/or R. Soltyk - tel: 296 1619 - fax: 296 3000)

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