

Brussels, 6 December 2001

## **The Commission wishes to reduce the volume of Community legislation by at least 25% by January 2005**

*The European Commission today adopted a communication on simplifying and improving the regulatory environment. The document is intended for the Laeken European Council and is designed to send a strong political message to the Community institutions and the Member States about the way Community laws and regulatory instruments are prepared and applied. The Commission is aiming to reduce the volume of Community legislation by at least 25% before the end of its term of office. It has also decided to withdraw a hundred or so pending legislative proposals which it does not regard as being of topical interest.*

The Edinburgh European Council of December 1992 made the task of simplifying and improving the regulatory environment one of the European Union's top priorities. Nine years on, it has to be said that the results still fall short of the objectives, because the task is complex and there is a lack of real political support. Various specific measures have been taken (e.g. the SLIM programme and the programme for the simplification of agricultural legislation), but the results are very limited.

The Commission felt that the method had to be changed and has asked, initially, for a political commitment from the Community institutions to simplify existing legislation and, at the same time, improve the way in which Community law is drawn up in future.

Over the years, Community laws, rules and regulations have come to fill some 80 000 pages of the Official Journal. This figure represents about 10% of existing bodies of law at national level. The Commission would like to reduce this volume by at least 25% by January 2005.

The Commission has already proposed, in its White Paper on European Governance, a series of guidelines aimed at improving regulatory work in the European Union. The Commission itself has, for example, undertaken to increase consultation before drawing up proposals, to reflect carefully on the most effective way of achieving the desired objective and to choose the most appropriate instrument. Furthermore, the White Paper proposes the use of new instruments, such as co-regulation to reconcile the need for legal certainty in connection with general regulation and for quicker, more flexible measures on the part of the players most closely concerned.

Any unilateral action by the Commission will not, however, have the desired effect unless the other Community institutions, more particularly the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, make a firm political commitment of their own. For this reason, the Commission does not want, at this stage, to draw up a detailed plan of action before embarking on a political dialogue with the European Parliament and Council with a view to formulating a common strategy. Depending on the reactions of the European Parliament and the Council to this communication and the results of inter-institutional discussions, the Commission intends to draw up a plan of action for June 2002.

The need for an inter-institutional dialogue to formulate a coordinated strategy does not mean that the Commission cannot already give a firm political signal to tidy up the Community legislative system. This is why the Commission has decided, in principle, to withdraw at least a hundred or so pending legislative proposals which it believes no longer have any topical interest.