

EDITORIAL

==== The Commission and the European Central Bank strongly support the initiative of European banking industry to create the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA) which was formally launched on 28 January 2008. On that day the first cross-border, credit transfer payments were made electronically in Europe using the new SEPA standards. Over the next three years a 'quiet revolution' is going to take place in the European payments landscape with the objective of making electronic payments in euros throughout the whole of the EU as easy, efficient and convenient as national payments are already today (see page 4).

==== A key goal of the Single Market Review was to identify areas where the Single Market can bring tangible benefits to citizens. Retail financial services are such an area. Following extensive study and consultation, the Commission published last December a White Paper on the Integration of EU Mortgage Markets. Better integration in this area could reduce the cost of home loans for the consumer and the White Paper presents a balanced 'package' of measures to improve the efficiency and the competitiveness of these markets which can work to the benefit of consumers, mortgage lenders and investors alike (see page 8).

==== One of the priority 'deliverables' of the Lisbon Agenda has been finalised by EU institutions with the adoption of the new Postal Services Directive. This Directive aims to ensure high quality postal services for EU citizens and businesses, and confirms 31 December 2010 as the date for the full opening of EU postal markets, with the possibility for some Member States to postpone full market opening by two more years as a maximum. The Directive foresees the abolition of the postal monopolies in all Member States whilst maintaining a high scope and standard of universal postal service at affordable prices for all users (see page 16).

==== Defence markets in the EU are currently organised on a predominantly national basis which hampers innovation, competitiveness and efficiency. Divergent national policies create excessive red tape and ultimately lead to excessive expenditure on defence, whilst weakening the European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP). To overcome existing fragmentation and make progress towards the establishment of a common European Defence Equipment Market (EDEM), the Commission has proposed a package of measures to foster greater competitiveness in the sector and to enhance openness in intra-European defence markets. Part of the package is a proposal for a Directive on procurement in the defence sector which will facilitate cross-border procurement of Member States (see Special Feature on page 11).



Jörgen Holmquist
Director General for
Internal Market and Services,
European Commission

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'J. Holmquist'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.