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In February of this year, Michel Barnier was sworn in as the new Commissioner for Internal Market and Services. At his Hearing before the European Parliament, Mr Barnier convinced Members that he is ready to face the challenges involved in a relaunch of the Single Market, one of the key areas of the Commission's recently launched 'EU 2020 strategy' (see page 18 on role of the Single Market in the EU 2020 strategy). In this issue of Single Market News, Commissioner Barnier explains what inspired him to follow his 'fil bleu' for Europe; how he hopes to bring the Single Market closer to citizens; how he will be visiting European capitals and regions and what priorities he sees as essential to reinstate citizens' trust in the Single Market. (p.8)

The 2009 SOLVIT and the Citizens Signpost Service (CSS) annual reports show that the Commission too is making progress in reaching out to more citizens and businesses. A growing number of Europeans are turning to the EU's advice and assistance services to find concrete answers and fast solutions to questions and problems they encounter in the Single Market. By offering fast and pragmatic solutions, SOLVIT has clearly established itself as an effective alternative to longer infringement procedures. (p.12)

The ripple effect of the economic and financial crisis forces the Commission to closely examine the effectiveness of policies. One of the areas under scrutiny is public procurement. For example, we are looking at the need to enhance methods of financing public infrastructures and services. We have seen a lot of interest in increasing financing through public-private partnerships. Now there is a need to clarify ways in which EU procurement disciplines can support these forms of delivering public services and infrastructure even more. (See p.14 for more background on public procurement)

I am happy to be able to report progress towards an enhanced patent system in Europe. An EU unified patent system would reduce considerably patenting costs, thus stimulating innovation, and supporting growth and employment in the EU. The reform will allow innovators to save billions of euros each year. (p.6)

You can read about DG MARKET's new stakeholder initiative in SMN's 'stakeholders' corner' (p.16). For its new 'Single Market Informal Dialogue Group', DG MARKET has invited both traditional and non-traditional stakeholders, including consumer groups, trade unions, business representatives (including SMEs), NGO representatives in social and environmental fields and regional representatives to discuss general Single Market Issues. At its second meeting at the end of March, the group met Professor Mario Monti for an exchange of ideas on the relaunch of the Single Market. Mr Monti has been commissioned by President Barroso to produce a report on this topic by the end of April 2010.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Holmquist'. The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.