

EU plans to publish a “digitising industry” Strategy

Günter Oettinger, Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, hosted a meeting with stakeholders to flag legal and regulatory barriers in preparation for his upcoming ‘digitising industry’ strategy. According to a preparatory document for the meeting, the Commission is looking at four unsolved legal issues:

1. First, who to consider liable when robots take charge, as autonomous machines cannot be considered simple tools anymore. This poses a challenge to existing liability rules where a legal entity (person or company) is ultimately responsible when something goes wrong.
2. Second, the Commission is assessing how to better integrate robotics in the work place. While the previous generation of robots required heavy safety measures and specific legislation due to health and safety concerns, the progress made on artificial intelligence (AI) and sensors allow machines to slow down or stop when a worker is nearby. Thus, the Commission is considering whether new product safety regulation is needed for the AI-based robotic era, as has been the case for drones.
3. Third, the executive wants to improve the protection for citizens and businesses in case of malfunctioning software.
4. Finally, the introduction of “intelligent” machines may pose fresh challenges in terms of data protection, as robots could potentially monitor workers’ performance to adapt the manufacturing process. Although much of this information may not be stored, this new source of data is not covered by the digital single market in the making.

The executive is currently assessing whether new legislation is needed. Oettinger has already met three times with public authorities and representatives of the industry aiming at presenting his action plan during the Hannover Fair on 25 April. The strategy is also expected to prioritise the creation of regional digital innovation hubs to ensure that all firms, in particular SMEs, can complete the transition to the digitised factory, or Industry 4.0. (Source: [Euractiv](#))

PM sets out terms for ministers in EU referendum debate

David Cameron has announced arrangements for UK government ministers in relation to the forthcoming referendum on the UK’s membership of the European Union. In a letter to ministers, the Prime Minister set out the terms of what he called “a wholly exceptional arrangement”, which details the circumstances in which government ministers are able to speak out following his efforts to renegotiate the UK’s membership. David Cameron noted that the arrangement would be in place after the EU talks had been concluded. “Until that point [...] all ministers should continue to support the position set out in our manifesto and say or do nothing that will undermine the government’s negotiating position,” he said, referring to Conservative Party’s election manifesto to renegotiate Britain’s ties with the EU.

(Source: [Number 10](#))

British EU deal possible in February

A deal on reforms that the UK is seeking to stay in the European Union will be put in writing by early February for EU leaders to discuss later that month. British Prime Minister David Cameron has said he is reasonably confident of an accord for the changes in four key areas, ahead of a referendum on the UK’s membership of the EU, which could be as early as mid-2016. EU leaders will hold a summit in Brussels on February 18 and 19 at which they have said they hope to reach a deal. (Source: [EU Business](#))



ACEA – passenger car registrations: +9.3% in 2015

Figures released by the European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA), show that in December 2015, the EU passenger car market posted a very strong uplift (+16.6%), amounting to 1,109,927 units and marking the 28th consecutive month of growth. This is the highest percentage increase since the beginning of this positive trend. All major passenger car markets ended 2015 strongly, contributing significantly to the full-year positive result. Spain (+20.7%), Italy (+18.7%) and France (+12.5%) posted double-digit percentage gains during the month, followed by the UK (+8.4%) and Germany (+7.7%), which also performed better than in December 2014. In 2015, new passenger car registrations significantly increased (+9.3%), totalling 13,713,526 units. Nevertheless, this result is only now passing levels registered in 2010, immediately after the economic crisis. In other words, the trend is positive but, in absolute terms, volumes remain low. Looking at the five EU major markets, Spain (+20.9%) and Italy (+15.8%) had the strongest growth in demand during the year, followed by France (+6.8%), the UK (+6.3%) and Germany (+5.6%), which posted a robust performance in 2015.

(Source: [ACEA](#))



Week ahead

European Council

Monday 18 January

- General Affairs Council – Ministers will start preparations for the European Council on 18 and 19 February;
The Dutch Presidency will present its work programme for the Semester

European Parliament – Plenary Session

Monday 18 January

- Debate: Annual Report on EU Competition Policy
- Debate: Objection pursuant to Rule 106 on RDE test procedure

Tuesday 19 January

- Debate: Council and Commission Statements – review of the Luxembourg Presidency
- Debate: Towards a Digital Single Market Act
- Debate: European Council and Commission statements – conclusions of the European Council meeting (17-18 December 2015)
- Joint debate: Internal Market harmonisation

Wednesday 20 January

- Council and Commission statements – Programme of the Dutch Presidency

Thursday 21 January

- Vote: Commission Regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 692/2008 regarding emissions from light passenger and commercial vehicles (Euro 6)

European Parliament

Monday 18 January

- INTA – Commercial relationship between the EU and China and Market Economy Status