

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 20 January

Martin Schultz elected as new President of the European Parliament

MEPs have elected German Socialist, Martin Schultz, as the new President of the European Parliament at their plenary session in Strasbourg. Mr. Schultz is a member of the Socialists & Democrats (S&D), the second largest group within the European Parliament behind the centre-right EPP group. Mr. Schultz will serve as President of the European Parliament for the next two and half years, and his main role will be to chair debates and oversee all the activities of the Parliament and its constituent bodies, ensuring the Parliament's rules of procedure are applied. He is also required to sign legislation in order to implement most EU laws and the EU budget, and will officially represent the European Parliament internationally as well as within the EU. (Source: EurActiv)

<http://www.euractiv.com/future-eu/new-president-heralds-political-parliament-news-510202>



EU new car registrations down 1.7% in 2011

Figures released by ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, show new car registrations in the EU decreased by 1.7% in 2011, bringing the total number of units registered to 13,111,209, the fourth consecutive year that registrations were down. Most of the significant EU markets declined in 2011, down 2.1% in France, 4.4%

in the UK, 10.9% in Italy and 17.7% in Spain. Germany was the exception as demand for new cars grew by 8.8% over twelve months. It remained the largest market with a total of 3,173,634 new registrations, followed by France (2,251,669 units) and the UK (1,941,253 units). (Source: ACEA)

http://www.acea.be/index.php/news/news_detail/passenger_cars_registrations_drop_6.4_in_december_-_1.7_in_2011

Small companies create 85% of new EU jobs

A European Commission report has suggested that between 2002 and 2010, 85% of net new jobs within the EU were created by SMEs. This figure is considerably higher than the 67% share of SMEs in total employment. SME employment growth of 1% annually was higher than for large enterprises at 0.5%, a clear exception being in the trade sector, where employment in SMEs increased by 0.7% annually, compared to 2.2% in large enterprises, due to the strong increase of large trade enterprises, in particular in sales, maintenance and repair of motor vehicles. Within the SME size-class, micro firms (less than 10 employees) are responsible with 58% for the highest proportion of total net employment growth in the business economy. Secondly new firms (younger than five years) are responsible for an overwhelming majority of the new jobs. New enterprises operating in business services create more than a quarter (27%) of the new jobs, while the new firms in transport and communication contribute least (6%). Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, responsible for Entrepreneurship and Industry, stated: "In this critical time for European economy, we see small enterprises delivering and confirming their role as main generators of new jobs. Their significant share in job creation highlights the greater than ever economic relevance of SMEs and the need to support them at all levels. The small and new enterprises are clearly the key for restoring economic growth". (Source: Europa)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/20&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

European Commission proposes on-board diagnostic limits

The European Commission has put forward proposals requiring on-board diagnostic (OBD) limits before cars and light commercial vehicles complying with Euro 6 pollution standards can be type-approved. The OBD 'threshold' limits differ from the Euro 6 emission limits set for several air pollutants in 2007 EU regulation. They will be used to determine when on-board pollution control devices should indicate a fault. The Commission has not proposed limits for the number of particles emitted, citing technical reasons. A feasibility study on this issue will be conducted at a later stage. Another change, approved by an EU regulatory committee on motor vehicles on 19 December, consists of applying the same Euro 6 limit on the number of particles emitted to gasoline direct injection engines as for diesel engines. This limit would apply from September 2017. (Source: ENDS)

<http://www.endseurope.com/27973/proposed-changes-to-pollution-rules-for-cars>



EFSF credit rating cut

Standard & Poor has cut its credit rating of the eurozone's rescue fund, the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), stating its decision was inevitable following previous cuts to the creditworthiness of France and Austria, two of the EFSF's guarantors. The US ratings agency downgraded the fund by one notch to AA+ from AAA, but the move triggered little reaction from financial markets where it was widely anticipated. Japan, a major buyer of EFSF bonds, said they remained an "attractive" investment. (Source: Euractiv)

<http://www.euractiv.com/euro-finance/rescue-fund-credit-rating-drop-adds-euro-woes-news-510188>

Week ahead

European Commission

No relevant activity

Council of Ministers

Tuesday 24 January

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

European Parliament (Meeting of Committees - Brussels)

ECON – Sovereign Debt Crisis in Europe (23-24 January)

ENVI - Review of the 6th Environment Action Programme and the setting of priorities for the 7th Environment Action Programmes (23-25 January)

ITRE – Joint debate on the Horizon 2020 Package (23-25 January)

TRAN – Henrik Dam on Transport (23-25 January)

IMCO – A corporate governance framework for European companies (24-25 January)

BUDG – Multiannual Financial Framework for the years 2014-2020 (23-26 January)

EMPL – Employment and social aspects in the Annual Growth Survey 2012 (25-26 January)

INTA – Scheme of Generalised Tariff Preferences (25-26 January)

