

## WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 25 January

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### David Cameron delivers speech on the future of the European Union

UK Prime Minister, David Cameron, has delivered a speech at Bloomberg's headquarters in London setting out his vision for Britain and its place in the European Union. In the speech, Mr Cameron promised to give the British people "their say" on Europe - in the form of an in/out referendum to be held before 2018, stating that at the next election in 2015 the Conservative party would offer people a "simple choice" between staying in the EU under new terms, or leaving union altogether. MPs will get the opportunity to debate the plan in the House of Commons on Wednesday 30 January. Also key in Mr Cameron's speech, was his call to remove the paragraph in the European Treaty, committing the member states to "lay the foundations of an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" stating: "We understand and respect the right of others to maintain their commitment to this goal. But for Britain - and perhaps for others - it is not the objective. And we would be much more comfortable if the Treaty specifically said so freeing those who want to go further, faster, to do so, without being held back by the others."

(Source: Number 10)

<http://www.number10.gov.uk/news/eu-speech-at-bloomberg/>

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### EU launches clean fuel strategy

The European Commission has launched a package of measures aimed at ensuring the build-up of alternative fuel stations across Europe with common standards for their design and use. The Commission states that clean fuel is being held back by three main barriers: the high cost of vehicles, a low level of consumer acceptance, and the lack of recharging and refuelling stations. This has resulted in a 'vicious circle' where refuelling stations are not being built because there are not enough vehicles, vehicles are not sold at competitive prices because there is not enough demand and consumers do not buy the

vehicles because they are expensive and the stations are not there. The Commission has therefore proposed a package of binding targets on member States for a minimum level of infrastructure for clean fuels such as electricity, hydrogen and natural gas, as well as common EU wide standards for equipment needed. The Clean Power for Transport Package consists of a Communication on a European alternative fuels strategy, a Directive focusing on infrastructure and standards and an accompanying document describing an action plan for the development of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) in shipping. Commenting on the package, European Commission Vice President Siim Kallas responsible for Transport stated. "Developing innovative and alternative fuels is an obvious way to make Europe's economy more resource efficient, to reduce our overdependence on oil and develop a transport industry which is ready to respond to the demands of the 21st century. Between them, China and the US plan to have more than 6 million electric vehicles on the road by 2020. This is major opportunity for Europe to establish a strong position in a fast growing global market." (Source: European Commission) [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-40\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-40_en.htm?locale=en)



### Commission launches new legal approach to improving air quality

The European Commission has enlarged the scope of the legal action permitted against member states who fail to ensure good air quality for their citizens. In the

past, the Commission has successfully taken Italy, Portugal, Slovenia and Sweden to Court for failing to ensure good air quality for citizens. But the Court rulings that resulted only covered the failure to comply with air quality limit values in the past, providing little incentive for member states to act on future exceedances. The Commission's aim now is to urge member states with on-going air quality problems to take forward-looking, speedy and effective action to keep the period of non-compliance as short as possible. The Commission is particularly concerned with cases where non-compliance with EU law has lasted for more than 5 years and is forecast to continue in the future. Under EU law, member states are obliged to take all the necessary measures to improve air quality, and to make this information available in form of air quality plans. Failure to do so will result in legal action. The full list of Member States concerned by PM10 exceedances is Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece, Spain, France, Italy, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Poland, Romania, Sweden, Slovakia and Slovenia. (Source: European Commission)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-47\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-47_en.htm?locale=en)

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## Commission widens search for expert advisors for Horizon 2020

The European Commission has launched a call asking experts from all fields to participate in shaping the agenda of Horizon 2020, the European Union's future funding programme for research and innovation. This marks the first time that the Commission has launched such a call for its research programme. Advisory groups will aim to provide high quality and timely advice for the preparation of the Horizon 2020 calls for project proposals. Groups will be set up on topics of major concern for European citizens, such as climate change, making renewable energy more affordable, ensuring safe food or coping with the challenges of ageing. The groups will encourage dialogue between all levels of government, civil society and business from all EU Member States, and influence the direction of EU research and innovation funding from now until 2020. The expert advisory groups will start their work during spring of this year to provide advice in time for the first Horizon 2020 calls, which are expected to be launched by the end of 2013. Individuals and actors wishing to be considered for the first advisory groups have until 6 March 2013 at 5 p.m. Brussels local time to register.

The call for expressions of interest will stay open for the lifetime of the Horizon 2020 programme in order to accommodate the renewal of groups at the end of each mandate. Commenting on the announcement, European Research, Innovation and Science Commissioner Máire Geoghegan-Quinn stated: "Introducing this transparent and inclusive call for Horizon 2020 means we are reaching out to the entire European research and innovation community. I would in particular like to encourage women and individuals with the right expertise but who have not been involved in the past to show their interest." (Source: European Commission)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-13-43\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-43_en.htm)



## Week ahead

### European Commission

29 January

Hearing on 'The internal market and State aid for the regions' -The Section for the Single Market, Production and Consumption is organising a Public Hearing in the framework of the elaboration of its own-initiative opinion on "The internal market and State aid for the regions".

### Council of Ministers

No relevant activity

### European Parliament – Group Week/ Committee Week (Brussels)

No relevant activity