

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 1 February

ACEA welcomes proposals to expand clean fuel infrastructure

ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, has voiced its support for the European Commission's proposals to expand infrastructure for alternative fuels as part of its 'clean fuel strategy'. In particular, ACEA welcomes the Commission's clear acknowledgement that there is no one single solution to the challenges of sustainable transport, but that there must be a wide range of options available. With the right framework conditions, alternative fuels have the potential to play a key role in improving air quality and reducing CO₂ emissions. ACEA states that the auto industry has put forward a number of solutions through its investments in cleaner technologies, and that it will only be possible for these solutions to bear fruit if there is full cooperation between utility providers, infrastructure companies, the energy sector, standardisation bodies and the automotive industry - with the full support of national governments and the European institutions. ACEA says this proposal takes a step in the right direction in fostering such synergies. Commenting on the 'clean fuel strategy', ACEA Secretary General, Ivan Hodac, stated: "The existence of a single common plug across the different member states will help kick start a stronger market uptake of electric vehicles, and gives clear direction for the future. This represents a real break-through in current discussions on the harmonisation of charging." ACEA further note that gas powered vehicles (both LNG and CNG) also have a strong role to play in bringing down CO₂ emissions, and that industry welcomes the Commission's statement underlining the necessity of ensuring the appropriate quality of gas for use in future vehicles. (Source: ACEA)

http://www.acea.be/index.php/news/news_detail/press_release_auto_industry_welcomes_proposals_clean_fuel_infrastructure

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-40_en.htm?locale=en

MEPs to vote on new noise limits for cars and lorries

New noise limits for cars and lorries will be debated by MEPs on Tuesday 5 February and voted on the following day. The Environment Committee has already welcomed the Commission proposals but is also calling for a new labelling scheme to inform consumers about the noise levels of new cars. The new noise limits would first apply to new vehicles being approved, with the new limits being lowered in two steps, namely two and five years after the new rules have come into force. For conventional cars the limit would be reduced from 72 decibels to 70 and finally 68, for heavy trucks it would be lowered from 81 to 80 and then 78. In addition the Commission wants to set standards for making electric vehicles audible to pedestrians. However, it will be up companies to decide if they want to equip their vehicle with a sound system to warn pedestrians that it is coming. The Environment Committee approved a report by Miroslav Ouzký, a Czech member of the European Conservatives and Reformists Group 18 December 2012. The Committee backed the Commission proposal, but also suggested there should be only one reduction six years after the new rules have come into force. (Source: European Parliament)

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/content/20130125STO05494/html/MEPs-to-vote-on-new-noise-limits-for-cars-and-lorries>



European commercial vehicle registrations fall 12.4% in 2012

Figures published by ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, show that new commercial vehicle registrations fell by 12.4% in 2012 to 1,695,173 units. The UK (-5.7%) and Germany (-7.0%) performed somewhat similarly, while the French market shrank by 10.3%, and the Spanish (-25.9%) and Italian (-31.7%) faced a more severe downturn. In December 2012, new commercial vehicle registrations continued the downward trend which prevailed throughout the year, amounting to 125,825 units. Demand reached its lowest level since October 2009, at -23.4%, with downturns in major markets ranging from -15.5% in the UK to -20.3% in Italy, -21.3% in France, -24.7% in Germany and -34.2% in Spain. (Source: ACEA)

http://www.acea.be/index.php/news/news_detail/commercial_vehicle_registrations_-12.4_in_2012_-23.4_in_december



Economic sentiment increases in the EU

In January the *Economic Sentiment Indicator* (ESI) increased by 1.4 points in the EU (to 90.6). Confidence improved in services, construction, retail trade and among consumers, while deteriorating slightly in industry. This is the third consecutive rise for the ESI but it remains well below its long-term average. Among the seven largest EU Member States, the ESI registered increases in Germany (+2.5), the Netherlands (+1.0), Spain (+0.5) and the UK (+0.5). It remained unchanged in Italy and broadly stable in France (-0.3), while deteriorating in Poland (-1.3). (Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-70_en.htm?locale=en

Week ahead

European Commission

No relevant activity

Council of Ministers

Monday 4 February

General Affairs Council

The Council will deal with subjects that cover numerous EU policy areas, with a particular focus on institutional affairs, environment, consumers and health at this meeting. It also coordinates the preparation and follow-up of European Council meetings.

Thursday 7/Friday 8 February

European Council

The European Council meets twice every six months. It provides the Union with the necessary impetus for its development and defines the general political directions and priorities thereof. The main focus will be reaching an agreement on the Multiannual Financial Framework (EU Budget).

European Parliament – Plenary Session (Strasbourg)

Monday 4 February

Improving access to finance for SMEs – Debate

Tuesday 5 February

Sound level of motor vehicles – Debate and vote