

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 8 February

EU leaders meet to negotiate seven year EU budget

EU leaders are meeting in Brussels to forge a deal on the Union's 2014-2020 budget, following the failure to reach agreement in last year's November summit. The latest draft budget, presented by European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, caps the budget at €960 billion, down from the €972 billion proposed in November. The latest figure amounts to 1.01% of EU's gross national income, and is seen to represent a victory for those EU countries, including Britain, Germany and the Netherlands, calling for a reduced EU budget in the face of national austerity. Failure to reach agreement on the seven-year budget would result in the EU rolling over annual budgets - a method that would be more expensive and would complicate long-term projects. However, any one of the 27 member states can veto a budget deal - a fact which makes the negotiations difficult to conclude. If agreement is reached at the summit, the budget will still have to go through the European Parliament, a body seen as being in favour of increased EU spending. (Source: BBC)

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-21377378>

Commission approves UK Green Deal for energy-efficiency measures

The European Commission has found that the public support of £600 million to be granted by the UK in the context of its "Green Deal" policy is in line with EU state aid rules. The "Green Deal" is the central UK Government policy for improving the energy efficiency of buildings. Different state bodies and the UK Green Investment Bank (GIB) will provide support in various forms. These measures will support energy efficiency, in line with the EU's energy and climate change objectives, while keeping distortions of competition to an acceptable minimum. Under the "Green Deal", private companies may offer upfront energy efficiency investments to citizens and then recoup payments through energy bills. The Commission has found that

the scheme is aimed at an objective of common interest, namely improving energy efficiency, and that it is well-designed, making a significant contribution towards delivering this objective. Moreover, since most of the advantages derived from the scheme are passed on to end-consumers, the potential distortions of competition are limited as compared to the environmental benefits. Finally, the UK authorities have addressed initial concerns raised by the Commission about GIB's involvement in the Green Deal by committing to ensure that GIB will withdraw from this market to the extent that private investors step in, thereby preserving competition. As a result, the positive effects of the measure in terms of promoting and increasing energy efficiency clearly outweigh any potential distortions of competition brought about by the state support.

(Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-89_en.htm?locale=en



MEPs vote on new noise limits for cars and lorries

New noise limits for cars and lorries have been agreed by MEPs, after the European Parliament approved the report of Czech MEP Miroslav Ouzký, by 307 votes to 292, with 25 abstentions. The limits agreed in plenary are generally one to three decibels higher than those agreed in the committee. In addition, a 74-decibel limit for sports cars has also been introduced. MEPs did not alter the committee's 69db(A) limit for the lightest minibuses and vans, nor the 68db(A) limit for typical cars. Member states are

still debating the proposals in the Council of Ministers, with a recent presidency document indicating that they want to revise how vehicles are categorised but there is no agreement yet on limit values. (Source: ENDS) <http://www.endseurope.com/30559/parliament-votes-to-weaken-noise-limits-for-cars?referrer=bulletin&DCMP=EMC-ENDS-EUROPE-DAILY>

Industrial producer prices down by 0.2% in EU

Figures published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, show that industrial producer prices fell 0.3% in the EU in December 2012 compared with November 2012. Prices in total industry remained stable, but prices in the energy sector fell by 1.0%. In December 2012 compared with December 2011, industrial producer prices gained 1.9%. (Source: Eurostat)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STAT-13-20_en.htm?locale=en



Commission report states that chemicals in Europe have become safer

The European Commission has published a report stating that the use of chemicals in Europe has become considerably safer since the REACH regulation entered into force. The report states that more readily available information about chemical substances on the market and better targeted risk management measures mean that risks from substances registered under REACH have significantly decreased. This trend is expected to continue, as industry is continuously working towards finding substitutes for the most hazardous chemicals. The report acknowledges the costs related to the

administration of REACH and their impact on SMEs, but also recognizes the positive economic effects for business.. To further promote the competitiveness of the European chemical industry, the Commission will soon propose to reduce registration fees for SMEs. Commenting on the report, European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, and Janez Potočnik, Commissioner for Environment stated: "We are committed to maintaining a safe and sustainable chemical industry in Europe. REACH, the most comprehensive chemicals legislation in the world, can help us achieve this goal and ease the free circulation of chemicals in the internal market. With REACH, our chemical industry can become a world leader in innovation." (Source: European Commission) http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-85_en.htm?locale=en

Week ahead

European Commission

No relevant activity

Council of Ministers

Tuesday 12 February

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

The Council is due to adopt conclusions on; its priorities concerning the 2014 budget of the EU, the Annual Growth Survey 2013 in the context of the European Semester, the Alert Mechanism Report 2013 and the Fiscal Sustainability Report 2013.

Thursday 15 February

Education, Youth, Culture & Sport Council

The Council will be devoted to education issues only, starting with the adoption of conclusions on investing in education and training, which are a response to the Com-mission's communication "Rethinking Education" and to the education aspects of the 2013 Annual Growth Survey, as called for by the European Council of 13-14 December 2012.

European Parliament

No relevant activity