

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 10 February

2011 Innovation Union Scoreboard published

The European Commission has published the Innovation Union Scoreboard 2011 which shows that almost all EU member states improved their innovation performance last year. However, the scoreboard also illustrates that innovation performance growth is slowing down and the EU is not closing the persistent gap with global innovation leaders US, Japan and South Korea, where the largest gap for the EU remains in terms of private sector innovation. The EU still maintains a clear lead over the emerging economies of China, Brazil, India, Russia, and South Africa. However, China is improving its innovation performance and is catching up progressively. Within the EU, Sweden holds its position at the top of the overall ranking, followed closely by Denmark, Germany and Finland, with the UK in sixth place. The scorecard underlines that stimulating innovation cannot happen only by boosting financing, but that eliminating administrative burdens and red tape are also important. To catch up with the global innovation leaders, the Commission has stressed that member states need to improve their educational system and have more young people study science and technology. According to the Commission, countries at the top of the ranking share a number of strengths in their national research and innovation systems, including dynamic public-private partnerships. While there is not a single way to reach improve innovation, it is clear that innovation leaders perform very well in R&D expenditures, as well as in the commercialisation of their technological knowledge. Commenting on the announcement, Antonio Tajani, European Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship, stated that the results of the scorecard were “a clear warning that more efforts to boost innovation are needed. If we want to close the gap with our main economic partners and to overcome the current crisis, innovation deserves all our attention”. (Source: European Commission) <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/12/102&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



EU-India trade deal not yet in sight

European and Indian officials at the EU-India Summit in New Delhi, will assess progress on negotiations towards a Free Trade Agreement. The negotiations, on-going for four years, have been held back mainly by differences over industrial tariffs and market access. Officials on both sides said the talks are in the “closing stage and considerable progress has been made”. However there are numerous sticking points, with the EU particularly insisting on the reduction of tariffs on cars, wines and spirits, and dairy products. Auto manufacturers in India are concerned about the inclusion of finished cars (called Completely Built Units or CBUs), and are strongly opposed to any lowering of customs duties on CBUs under the proposed agreement. In addition, there is a strong fear in the domestic automobile industry that lower tariffs will prompt European car manufacturers to import finished vehicles instead of assembling them in India. The EU is India’s largest trading partner, accounting for approximately €86 billion in trade in goods and services in 2010. Bilateral trade in goods alone rose 20% between 2010 and 2011, with exports amounting to €33.4 billion and imports to €33.3 billion, with Germany, Belgium and the UK accounting for around 60% of exports to India. On the other hand, India accounts for 2.6% of the EU’s total exports and 2.2% of the EU’s total imports, indicating huge potential. (Source: EurActiv) <http://www.euractiv.com/global-europe/eu-india-trade-deal-sight-news-510711>

European Commission to deliver mid-term energy plan in 2013

European Energy Commissioner, Günther Oettinger, has announced that the European Commission will establish a post-2020 energy policy framework to give more certainty to investors by the end of next year. The framework, which will build on December's energy roadmap to 2050, will set clear milestones, and ideally binding targets, for 2030. Mr Oettinger warned that the EU is far from its long-term 2050 target of cutting emissions by 80-95%, despite commitments from several member states, and stated that all energy options, including nuclear, need to remain on the table, whilst carbon capture and storage (CCS) should be considered for gas- as well as coal-fired power plants. However, Mr Oettinger expressed concern over expansion of the EU's 2020 target on the share of renewable energy in transport, stating that this should only be considered if the biofuels available become more sustainable. The European Commission has also announced intentions to publish a green infrastructure plan that promotes an integrated and sustainable approach to land use. The plan, expected this autumn, will integrate recommendations by stakeholders and member states. The Commission defines green infrastructure as a network of green spaces that enhance ecosystem services. The development of a green infrastructure is foreseen in Europe's biodiversity strategy. (Source: ENDS)
<http://www.endseurope.com/28122/ec-to-deliver-midterm-energy-plan-in-2013?referrer=bulletin&DCMP=EMC-ENDS-EUROPE-DAILY>



Week ahead

European Commission

No relevant activity

Council of Ministers

Tuesday 14 February

TTE-Energy

Ministers are expected to discuss:

- A proposal for a Regulation on guidelines for trans-European Energy Infrastructure.
- The Europe 2020 Strategy which is expected to include a debate on the Energy Efficiency Directive (EED).

European Parliament

(Plenary Session - Strasbourg)

Monday 13 February

Office for Harmonisation in the Internal Market (Trade Marks and Designs) and protection of Intellectual Property Rights

Tuesday 14 February

- Creation of Unitary Patent Protection
- Unitary Patent Protection
- Jurisdictional System for Patent Disputes