

Environment Commissioner sets out low-carbon economy plans

EU Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella has outlined that the EU is committed to being a low-carbon, circular economy with high quality ecosystems by 2050, under its 7th Environmental Action Programme. Last week, the Commission axed the Circular Economy package of waste, incineration, recycling and landfill laws as part of its drive for “better regulation”. It has promised to resubmit a “more ambitious” version of the package before the end of this year. The European Union’s transformation into a low carbon economy will be paid for by the private sector and, to a lesser extent, funds from the Juncker investment Plan, Environment Commissioner Karmenu Vella has said. According to the Commission’s own figures, moving to the 2050 low-carbon economy will cost an estimated €270 billion annually for 40 years. The Juncker Plan aims to unlock €315 billion over the next three years, by offering €21 billion in risk guarantees to private investors.

(Source: EurActiv)

<http://www.euractiv.com/sections/sustainable-dev/vella-private-sector-and-juncker-plan-cash-can-create-low-carbon-economy>



European Parliament - plenary debate on the Energy Union

Commission Vice-President for the Energy Union, Maroš Šefčovič, has presented the Energy Union Strategy to the European Parliament. According to the Commissioner, the Energy Union should deliver affordable, secure, competitive and sustainable energy to all in a just and fair way. Šefčovič also stressed that energy efficiency will be indispensable for a successful Energy Union, and called for it to be considered an energy source in its own right. Research and Innovation were also outlined as key to creating a successful Energy Union and maintaining Europe’s role as a world-leader in renewable technologies. MEPs generally welcomed the Energy Union, and some alluded to the Juncker Investment Plan in helping create it. Numerous MEPs also drew attention to the need for investments in infrastructure and building up interconnections in the EU. Although all speakers felt that an Energy Union is essential for Europe’s energy security, some, notably from the non-attached and EFDD groups, were disappointed by the proposal.

(Source: CBI)

Industrial Producer Prices drop – January 2015

Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, published recent figures of the industrial producer prices. In January 2015, compared with December 2014, industrial producer prices fell by 0.9% in the euro area (EA19) and by 1.2% in the EU29. In December 2014, prices decreased by 1.0% in the euro area and by 1.1% in the EU28.

(Source: Eurostat)

<http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/2995521/6719964/4-03032015-AP-EN.pdf/56cef7d8-75e6-47bd-a6f3-1460314e8021>

Competitiveness Council

Conclusions

This week, the Competitiveness Council met to discuss how to create a truly digital Single Market, the benefits that will bring to consumers and the ways in which a dynamic innovation policy can increase Europe's capacity to deliver economic growth and jobs.

The Main points of discussion:

- Adoption of conclusions setting out actions aimed at removing barriers in the single market and enabling a smooth and quick transition to the digital age.
- Outlines to create simpler and more predictable rules to facilitate investments. The purpose is to implement the proposed new investment plan for Europe (€315 billion over three years).
- Ministers discussed the digital transformation of the industry, wider use of digital tools and encouragement of digital entrepreneurship.
- Exchange of views on how Europe can better support and accelerate the transition towards a data-driven economy through open, networked and data-intensive research, within the context of the digital agenda for Europe.

(Source: CBI)

European Commission – Social Dialogue in Europe

The European Commission organised a high-level conference bringing together leaders of the European and national employers' and workers' organisations, Members of the European Parliament and representatives from the Latvian Presidency of the Council of the EU. This conference, called 'A new start for social dialogue', was seen as an important step forward in strengthening and deepening dialogue with a broad cross-section of social partners in order to better address the economic and social challenges faced in Europe, as set out in the Political Guidelines and Work Programme of the Commission. The conference aimed at identifying how social dialogue can contribute to six specific areas: 'the European semester', 'industrial relations and capacity building at national level', 'the EU's macro-economic strategy', 'social dialogue and better regulation', 'the digital single market', and 'skills, education and training needs in a changing working environment'.

(Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-15-4542_en.htm

Week ahead

European Council

Monday 9 March

- Eurogroup meeting – the Eurogroup will discuss the next steps following the decision to extend the financial assistance to Greece.

Tuesday 10 March

- Economic and Financial Affairs Council – the Council will be called on to agree on a proposal for a European fund for strategic investments.

European Parliament

Monday 9 March

- ENVI – Exchange of views with France
Timmermans, Vice-President of the Commission in charge of Better Regulation
- Monday 9 March – Wednesday 11 March
 - Annual report on EU competition policy report (9 March)
 - European long-term investment funds supplementary report (10 March)
 - Preparation for the European Council meetings (19-20 March) – Council and Commission statements – Joint Debate – European Semester (11 March)