

## WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 7 March

### Fourth round of EU-US trade talks to continue in Brussels

A fourth round of EU-US trade talks for a Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will kick off in Brussels on Monday 10 March 2014. The talks aim to help pave the way for a future trade and investment deal which facilitates trade between the European Union and the United States. Negotiators will discuss a wide range of topics covering different aspects of the agreement. EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht recently stated that the EU and the US now start “to get into the heart of the negotiations”. In tandem with next week’s talks, the EU will host a series of meetings for stakeholders including business, labour, environmental and consumer groups in Brussels on Wednesday 12 March 2014. This is part of the Commission’s ongoing efforts to hear from as wide a range of interests as possible. On Friday 14 March, the EU and US chief negotiators will hold a closing press conference to debrief about the progress made.

(Source: European Commission)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/midday-express-06-03-2014.htm>

### Report finds Europe more innovative but that regional differences persist

The European Commission’s Innovation Union Scoreboard 2014 and the Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2014 have shown that Europe is closing its innovation gap with the United States and Japan but differences in performance between EU member states are still high and diminishing only slowly. At a regional level, the innovation gap is widening, with the innovation performance having worsened in almost one fifth of EU regions. Overall progress has been driven by the openness and attractiveness of the EU research system as well as business innovation collaboration and the commercialisation of knowledge as measured by licence and patent revenues from

abroad. However, growth in public R&D expenditure was offset by a decline in venture capital investment and non-R&D innovation investment in companies. The Innovation Union Scoreboard 2014 places member states into four different performance groups:

- Denmark (DK), Finland (FI), Germany (DE) and Sweden (SE) are “Innovation Leaders” with innovation performance well above that of the EU average
- Austria (AT), Belgium (BE), Cyprus (CY), Estonia (EE), France (FR), Ireland (IE), Luxembourg (LU), Netherlands (NL), Slovenia (SI) and the United Kingdom (UK) are “Innovation followers” with innovation performance above or close to that of the EU average
- The performance of Croatia (HR), Czech Republic (CZ), Greece (EL), Hungary (HU), Italy (IT), Lithuania (LT), Malta (MT), Poland (PL), Portugal (PT), Slovakia (SK) and Spain (ES) is below that of the EU average. These countries are ‘Moderate innovators’
- Bulgaria (BG), Latvia (LV) and Romania (RO) are “Modest innovators” with innovation performance well below that of the EU average.

(Source: European Commission)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_IP-14-198\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-198_en.htm?locale=en)



## Commission states there is no evidence to support the safety concerns over MAC

The European Commission has published a scientific review of the research regarding the safety aspects of the use of refrigerant R1234yf in Mobile Air Conditioning (MAC) systems concluding that there is no evidence of a serious risk in the use of this refrigerant in MAC systems under normal and foreseeable conditions of use (according to the existing legal framework on the general safety of products). The review reinforces the conclusions by the German market surveillance authorities the KBA (Kraftfahrt Bundesamt), which stated that there is no sufficient supporting evidence of a serious risk that would entail the intervention of the authorities. The review of the 2013 KBA testing procedures was conducted as a confidence-building measure that the Commission had proposed to the member states. In practical terms this assessment reaffirms the position of the Commission that automotive manufacturers have the means to mitigate the inherent risks of the use of the refrigerant, which are known and have been studied. Although not part of the working group's mandate, some measures to further improve MAC safety have also been presented. Examples such as release valves in MAC circuits, fire extinguisher, reduction of hot surfaces (thermal insulation) and additional ventilation were discussed on different occasions during the working group meetings. This review will be debated with the member states on 1 April 2014 in the Technical Committee Motor Vehicles. (Source: European Commission)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-14-168\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-168_en.htm)



## Industrial producer prices down by 0.4% in the EU

Figures published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, show that in January 2014, compared with December 2013, industrial producer prices fell by 0.3% in the euro area and by 0.4% in the EU. In December 2013 prices increased by 0.2% in both zones. In January 2014, compared with January 2013, industrial producer prices decreased by 1.4% in the euro area and by 1.2% in the EU.

(Source: Eurostat)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release STAT-14-32\\_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STAT-14-32_en.htm?locale=en)

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## Week ahead

### Council of Ministers

Tuesday 11 April

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

Exchange of views on the economic elements of the EU 2030 energy and climate framework

Friday 14 March

Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council

Policy debate on the Commission's Communication titled "Together towards competitive and resource-efficient urban mobility", which forms a key element of the Urban Mobility Package.

### European Parliament (Plenary session, Strasbourg)

Tuesday 11 March

Roadworthiness tests for motor vehicles and their trailers; Roadworthiness of commercial vehicles; Registration documents for vehicles - vote