

Council adopts amended Weights and Dimensions directive

Lorry and bus manufacturers will be allowed to exceed current length and weight limits to use designs that should improve road safety and fuel efficiency. These changes to the 1996 weights and dimensions directive were adopted by the Council on 20 April 2015. The Commission will propose the necessary changes to the current type-approval rules. The provisions concerning the rear devices will start to apply as soon as the technical and operational requirements have been adopted. The cab redesign provisions will begin to apply three years after the relevant type-approval rules are in place. Details include:

- Streamlined vehicle shape
- The use of clean fuels, such as electricity and hydrogen, will be encouraged by authorising a weight increase of up to one tonne for vehicles using such fuels.
- The maximum weight of buses will be increased by 1.5 tonnes.
- New rules on the length of vehicles transporting certain containers in the context of an intermodal operation will make it easier to combine road transport with other modes of transport which are less carbon intensive.
- Member states must take specific measures to check vehicles for overload. The vehicle-check provisions will apply six years after the entry into force of the directive.

The directive will enter into force twenty days after its publication in the EU Official Journal. After publication, member states will have two years to transpose it, i.e. adopt national provisions to comply with it. It will be reviewed three years after the transposition deadline.

(Source: Council of the EU)

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/20-safer-greener-lorries-approved/>

EU and Japan to hold 10th round of free trade negotiations

The European Union (EU) and Japan will hold their 10th round of negotiations toward a bilateral free trade agreement in Tokyo from 22 to 28 April. Mauro Petriccione, deputy director-general at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade, will lead the EU side, while the Japanese negotiating team will be headed by Ambassador Yasumasa Nagamine, deputy minister for foreign affairs. This negotiation round is expected to be the last before the next EU-Japan Summit, to be held in Tokyo on 29 May, attended on the EU side by European Council President Donald Tusk and European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and on the Japanese side by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

(Source: Delegation of the EU to Japan)

<http://www.euinjapan.jp/en/media/news/news2015/20150421/154825/>

Eurostat: Eurozone moves closer to balanced budgets

EU governments moved closer towards balancing their budgets in 2014, according to information released by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. The average government deficit in the eurozone fell from 2.9% in 2013 to 2.4% in 2014, well within the bloc's 3% limit in its stability and growth pact, and across the EU from 3.2% to 2.9%. In the euro area the average government debt to GDP ratio increased from 90.9% at the end of 2013 to 91.9% at the end of 2014, and in the EU28 from 85.5% to 86.8%. Eurozone finance ministers are set to discuss the bloc's system of making annual recommendations to improve the functioning of each country's economy, and the cohesion of the eurozone, at their meeting in Riga on Friday 24 April.

(Source: EU Observer)

<https://euobserver.com/news/128405>

Provisional agreement reached on Trade Mark System reform

The Latvian Presidency announced that a provisional agreement had been reached with the European Parliament after the trilogue discussions on the reform of the European Trade Mark System. The agreement must still be confirmed by the Committee of Permanent Representatives of the Council of the European Union. The main elements of the provisional agreement include:

- A new structure with a reduced level of fees to be paid by applicants and proprietors of trade marks in order to render the system more accessible to users and to balance OHIM's budget
- Set up an offsetting mechanism to cover expenses incurred by national industrial property offices resulting from the handling of procedures involving EU trade marks. 5% of the OHIM annual revenue is foreseen for the offsetting mechanism, with the possibility of increasing this amount by another 5% in case of a substantive budgetary surplus.
- Closer cooperation between national offices and the OHIM in projects to promote convergence of practices and tools in the field of trade marks and designs. The maximum amount of funding for cooperation projects is set at 15% of the yearly revenue of the OHIM.
- Improvement of the governance structure and the establishment of sound financial procedures in the OHIM.
- Renaming the OHIM to "European Union Intellectual Property Office".
- Implementation of efficient and expeditious administrative procedures by the national offices for revocation or declaration of invalidity of trade marks.
- Adaptation of the designation and classification of goods and services to comply with recent EU case law, in conformity with the international classification established by the Nice agreement.

(Source: Council of the EU)

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2015/04/21-trade-marks-reform-presidency-secures-provisional-agreement/>

Week ahead

European Council

Monday 27 April

- 5th ASEM Education Ministers' Meeting – the meeting will focus on the quality of higher education and recognition, industry involvement in education, balanced mobility and lifelong learning. The agenda can be found [here](#).

Monday 27 April – 29 April

- Riga Summit 2015 on the Multilingual Digital Single Market – government officials, business leaders, technology developers, and language researchers will come together in Riga to develop a unified vision for the multilingual Digital Single Market.

European Parliament

Monday 27

- ENVI – Exchange of views with Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy as part of the structured dialogue

Wednesday 29 April

- ENVI – Fuel quality directive and renewable energy directive Recommendation for second reading

