

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 13 May

European voices join to mark UN launch of Decade of Action for Road Safety

The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) has welcomed the launch of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety. The UN Decade will enable the EU to join forces in tackling road safety at a global level. The World Health Organisation predicts that road traffic injuries will rise to become the fifth leading cause of death by 2030 in the world. ETSC has prepared a short film featuring leading figures from across Europe, all calling for a strong decade of concerted action on road safety. Every year 1.2 million people are killed and 20 to 50 are million injured in road crashes around the world. In the WHO European Region alone, 120,000 people are killed and 2.4 million injured in road collisions each year. Europe is home to three countries with the safest roads in the world: Sweden, the UK and the Netherlands. (Source: ETSC)

www.etsc.eu/documents/ETSC_NEWS_RELEASE_UN_Decade_of_Action_11_May_2011.pdf

UNEP outlines options for curbing resource use

The amount of natural resources used annually worldwide will increase threefold by 2050 unless action is taken to reduce consumption, the UN's environment programme (UNEP) has said in a report. The UN agency estimates that 140 billion tonnes of minerals, ores, fossil fuels and biomass will be used annually by the middle of the century under a business-as-usual scenario, or 16 tonnes per capita for a predicted population of 9 billion. The report presents two possible scenarios for decoupling resource use and economic growth. In the first, industrialised nations would halve average per capita consumption to 8 tonnes, while other countries would rise to that level. This would lead to a total of 70 billion tonnes annually – a 40% increase from 2000 levels. Under this scenario global CO₂ emissions from resource extraction and use would more than double.

The report notes that only a handful of countries have achieved annual cuts in resource consumption and these reductions are far from sufficient. Under the second, more ambitious, scenario, developed nations would reduce per capita use by two thirds while other countries would stay at current levels. This would result in keeping annual consumption rates at 2000 levels, according to the report. The report's authors admit this scenario would be so restrictive that it would be politically difficult. However, even with such drastic measures global consumption levels would still be considered unsustainable by many scientists. The European Commission is set to issue an action plan on resource efficiency this summer. A consultation on the subject closed last week. (Source: UNEP) www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=2641&ArticleID=8725&l=en&t=long



Energy firms face new efficiency regime

Energy companies will need to make savings among final customers of 1.5% a year under a new regime of audits, inventories and savings obligations outlined in a draft directive seen by EurActiv. Energy efficiency is one of the EU's three 20-20-20 targets for the decade, along with increasing the use of renewable energies to 20% of its overall energy mix and reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20%. Unlike the other two goals, though, energy efficiency targets are not legally binding. Commission documents forecast average energy savings of around 10% by 2020, with the UK on track for 9% and Germany likely to hit 14%. Large electricity, coal, gas and fuel companies would face efficiency audits every three years, carried out "in an independent manner" by experts, according to the draft. "Effective, proportionate and dissuasive" penalties could then follow if requirements for energy savings, audits, or smart meters and billing information were not respected. The Commission would issue guidelines "on how to deal with the energy savings targets when final customers switch energy source, namely from fuel oil to gas, from gas to district heating or from gas to electricity". The draft directive is intended to help the EU reach its nominal target of a 20% increase in energy efficiency by 2020. It is now being examined by several Commission departments before publication in late June. (Source: Euractiv) www.euractiv.com/en/energy-efficiency/energy-firms-face-new-efficiency-regime-news-504711



Commission proposes reform of trade

The European Commission has adopted a proposal to cut the number of countries benefiting from EU trade

concessions. The proposal aims to focus the Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) scheme to around 80 of the world's poorest countries instead of the 176 countries and territories to which it currently applies. The GSP offers reduced or zero tariff rates and quotas to developing countries, many of which have become competitive exporters over the past decades. Karel De Gucht, the European commissioner for trade, said in Strasbourg that the global economic balance had "shifted tremendously" and that the GSP scheme was in need of updating. "If we grant tariff preferences in this competitive environment, those countries most in need must reap the most benefits," he said. The proposal does not include a full list of countries that will no longer be eligible for GSP trade preferences but diplomats suggested it includes Brazil, Russia and Saudi Arabia. Countries that the World Bank has defined as high-income or upper middle-income economies for three years running will drop out of the scheme. The proposal will now go to the member states and the European Parliament, whose endorsement is required. The reformed GSP is supposed to take effect in 2014. (Source: European Voice) www.europeanvoice.com/article/2011/may/commission-proposes-reform-of-trade/71020.aspx



IEA report on Co-Generation and Renewables

The International Energy Agency (IEA) has published a report on Co-Generation and Renewables: Solutions for a Low-Carbon Energy Future. The report, looking at the dilemma facing energy and environmental decision-makers and the challenges that face them, concludes that action is required now in order to ensure a more sustainable future. According to the report, more efficient use of, and cleaner primary energy sources can help to achieve this goal. Co-generation – also known as combined heat and power (CHP) – represents a proven, cost-effective and

energy-efficient solution for delivering electricity and heat. Renewable sources provide clean and secure fuels for producing electricity and heat. Co-generation and renewables: solutions for a low-carbon energy future shows that powerful synergies exist when co-generation and renewables work together. The report documents, for the first time, some of the complementary aspects of the two technologies. It also re-emphasises the stand-alone benefits of each technology (Source: IEA)

www.iea.org/papers/2011/CHP_Renewables.pdf

Week ahead

European Commission

No relevant activity

Council of Ministers

Monday 16 – Tuesday 17 May

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

Ministers are expected to adopt conclusions on:

- Financial assistance to Portugal
- Short selling and certain aspects of credit default swaps
- Commodity markets
- The review of the economic adjustment programme for Ireland.

Ministers will discuss:

- The draft EU general budget for 2012
- The Savings Taxation Directive
- Financial Transaction Tax.

European Parliament – Meetings of Committees
(Brussels)

Constituency Week