WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 27 September

European commercial vehicle registrations down 4.4% in August

Figures published by ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association, show that in July, European demand for new commercial vehicle was slightly up (+2.8%), mainly due to a calendar effect, as the month counted on average one more working day across the EU compared to July 2012. The UK market slipped by 0.9%, while the Italian shrank by 13.3%. France (+3.2%), Germany (+4.0%) and Spain (+25.8%) contributed positively to the overall upturn. In August, Spain (+10.3%) and the UK (+15.3%) performed better than in the same month last year but negative results in France (-5.4%), Germany (-8.5%) and Italy (-19.5%) led to a 4.4% downturn in the whole region. From January to August, new commercial vehicle registrations decreased by 5.5% in the EU, compared to the same period a year earlier. The UK was the only market to post growth (+6.7%), while Spain (-0.5%), France (-7.6%), Germany (-8.2%) and Italy (-18.5%) all saw their market contract
http://www.acea.be/index.php/news/news_detail/commercial_vehicle_registrations_-_5.5_over_eight_months_-4.4_in_august

Commission publishes reports on industrial competitiveness

The European Commission has published two industrial competitiveness reports that highlight that member states have made progress in improving business environment, exports and sustainability, but that many problems still remain. The report states that while industrial performance has stabilised, industry's share in Europe's GDP has declined from 15.5% of GDP one year ago to 15.3% in summer 2013. European Commission Vice President Antonio Tajani emphasised that Europe's economy needed a strong industrial base, that manufacturing has strong spill-over effects on the rest of the economy and especially on overall productivity and that industry generally is seen as main source of innovation representing the knowledge and technology base of the whole economy. The report stated that there was a need to pursue the following priorities:

- Reducing the costs of producing in Europe, (e.g. energy and raw materials);
- Opening markets for European companies both within the internal market and in third countries;
- Facilitating investments into new technologies and innovation, focusing in particular on 6 priority areas identified in the 2012 Industrial Policy Communication;
- Making sure that the skills and availability of Europe's work-force matches the needs of the 21st century economy.

(Source: European Commission)
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-862_en.htm

September 2013: Economic Sentiment rises further in both the euro area and the EU

In September the Economic Sentiment Indicator (ESI) increased by 1.6 points in the euro area (to 96.9) and 2.4 points in the EU (to 100.6). The sharp increase in the EU brought the indicator above its long-term average for the first time since July 2011. In the euro area, the strong increase resulted from markedly improved confidence across all business sectors, whereby improvements in construction and retail trade were particularly pronounced. Economic sentiment improved in three of the five largest euro area economies, namely in Spain (+2.5), Italy (+2.5) and France (+1.6). Sentiment in Germany remained

broadly unchanged (+0.3), while it worsened somewhat in the Netherlands (-0.9). In the wider EU, the improvement in sentiment was even more pronounced than in the euro area (+2.4). On a sector basis, the increases in industry, services and among consumers were stronger than in the euro area, while comparatively less pronounced in retail trade and construction. On a country basis, the main reason for the sharper increase was markedly improving confidence in the largest non-euro area EU economy, the UK (+6.9). The EU financial services confidence indicator improved at a slightly lower pace than in the euro area (+5.5).
(Source: European Commission)
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-885_en.htm?locale=en

EU programmes for research and small firms in 2014-2020 approved

Industry and Research Committee MEPs have approved the research and innovation programme Horizon 2020 and the SMEs programme COSME. Parliament's negotiators ensured that a part (€817 million) of the Horizon 2020 budget would go to measures to widen the group of researchers participating in the programme, e.g. by attracting new applicants or promoting networking of research institutions. Public-private partnerships would also be opened up to new members, so as to avoid building "closed clubs". Parliament's negotiators also ensured that €462 million will go to measures strengthening science's role in society. MEPs made it a target that at least 11% of the Horizon 2020 budget should go to small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). Moreover, there would be a specialised SMEs department to ensure the programme's calls for tenders are SMEs-friendly. COSME (Competitiveness of Enterprises and small and medium-sized enterprises), the other approved programme, is entirely dedicated to these firms. For this programme, MEPs managed to reduce bureaucracy and earmark 60% of its budget for risk-capital or loan guarantees, which are the programme's main tools to help SMEs with financing. To further EU climate goals, MEPs earmarked 85% of the Horizon 2020 energy budget (€5.9bn) for non-fossil fuel energy research. Of this, 15% should go to energy efficiency research. MEPs also stepped up controls on EU funding for public-private-partnerships (PPPs) and made sure that all EU-funded scientific publications would be accessible to the public. Finally, they ensured that the European Institute of Technology (EIT) would have a budget of its own (€2.7bn). The final votes in Parliament's plenary session and the Council of Ministers will take place once the EU's long-term budget has been finally approved. The budgets for the new programmes are expected to be €77bn for Horizon 2020 and €2bn for COSME for 2014-2020.

Experts to explore one of the options for EU ETS structural measures

DG Climate Action will host a panel of experts on 2 October to discuss technical aspects related to the possible creation of a reserve mechanism to render auction supply in the EU ETS more flexible. This option for a structural reform of the EU ETS has emerged from the consultation on the options set out in the Report on the state of the European carbon market of November 2012. The purpose of the expert meeting is to explore from a technical perspective the merits and drawbacks of such a mechanism, as well as key design features. The panel will comprise experts from industry, power generation, finance, research, market analysis and non-governmental organisations. The meeting will take place from 1400 to 1700 CEST and will be web-streamed. Those following the discussion online will have the possibility to send questions via e-mail to CLIMA-ETS-STRUCTURAL-MEASURES@ec.europa.eu. If time and the discussion in the room allow, some of these questions may be put to the experts present.
To watch the meeting via web-streaming, please e-mail CLIMA-ETS-STRUCTURAL-MEASURES@ec.europa.eu to register and obtain a password.
(Source: European Commission)

Week ahead

European Commission
Wednesday 2 October
Making EU law fit for purpose: results and next steps in smart regulation - The Commission will take a further step in ensuring that EU legislation is fit for purpose by setting out where it will take further action to simplify or withdraw EU laws. It will publish the results of a screening of the entire stock of EU legislation and set out the next steps.

European Parliament (Committees - Brussels)
No relevant activity