



## WEEK IN BRUSSELS



Week ending Friday 5 November 2010

- 1. Brussels to focus on implementation of EU environmental laws**
- 2. EU's new transport strategy to put price on pollution**
- 3. EU calls on trading partners to honour their commitments**
- 4. UK and Germany resist attempted EU control over trade**
- 5. EU looks to alternative fuels for 'green' cars**
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### **1. Brussels to focus on implementation of EU environmental laws**

The European Commission is preparing an EU strategy to improve implementation of the bloc's environmental rules. The plans include stricter inspections on the ground and a greater role for national judges in promoting compliance. The initiative is listed in the annex of the Commission's work programme for next year, adopted on 27 October. The initiative will take the form of a 'Communication on implementing EU environmental law and policy'. It will "address the shortcomings in implementing environmental legislation" and proposes a "strategic way forward" to improve the current implementation gaps. During his confirmation hearing at the European Parliament in January, EU environment commissioner Janez Potočnik said that implementation would be high on his agenda. But he acknowledged that the "true power lies at member-state level" and therefore capacity would need to be built at national level to help governments do the job themselves. (Source: European Commission)  
[ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2011\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/atwork/programmes/docs/cwp2011_en.pdf)

### **2. EU's new transport strategy to put price on pollution**

The European Commission wants to make transport users pay for emissions, noise and other harm they cause as part of proposals according to a draft White Paper on Transport. The draft policy paper, which lays down the European Commission's plans for the next decade, envisages a different transport system by 2020, with a single European transport area, open markets, greener infrastructure and low-carbon technologies. Transport emissions rose by 24% between 1990 and 2008, as a result, the transport sector will have to reduce its emissions by at least 45-60% below 1990 levels if the EU is to keep up with its climate change objectives for 2050, the document argues. For road transport, the paper suggests revising the EU's Energy Taxation Directive to introduce a minimum tax on the CO<sub>2</sub> content of fuel, arguing this would "send a more visible price signal to the users". Alternatively, trading schemes can put a price on road pollution by setting a cap on emissions, the draft says. (Source: EurActiv)  
[www.euractiv.com/en/transport/eus-new-transport-strategy-put-price-pollution-news-499273](http://www.euractiv.com/en/transport/eus-new-transport-strategy-put-price-pollution-news-499273)

### **3. EU calls on trading partners to honour their commitments**

A new report published by the European Commission shows that more than 330 trade restrictive measures have been taken by the EU's major trade partners since the financial crisis in 2008. Despite the economic recovery and contrary to the G20 commitment, 10% of those measures have been removed in the meantime. Ahead of the G20 summit in Seoul, the European Commission called on its trading partners to remove the remaining restrictions in order not to undermine the recovery. The report covers thirty of the EU's trading partners over the two-year period from October 2008 to September 2010. The measures found range from classical trade barriers such as import bans or tariff increases to "buy national" and other behind-the-border policies. The report finds that many of the new barriers are rapidly becoming permanent features of the world trading

system and risk undermining the economic recovery. EU trade commissioner Karel De Gucht said: "With the economic recovery still fragile, the world's major economies must remove the trade restrictive measures that put a break on growth. For the world economy to move forward, we have to roll back these barriers." (Source: EUBusiness)

[www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/economy-trade-g20.6or/](http://www.eubusiness.com/news-eu/economy-trade-g20.6or/)

#### **4. UK and Germany resist attempted EU control over trade**

A European Commission proposal to reduce member states' influence on the EU's decision-making is facing resistance from a group of countries led by Germany and the UK, who are insisting on keeping a say on trade policy. EU diplomats are meeting to discuss a Commission proposal to review the 'comitology' procedure. The procedure's main advantage is that it is much faster than the normal legislative machinery but it bypasses Parliament on decisions that sometimes carry high significance. A coalition led by Germany, the UK and Scandinavian countries has been lobbying to remove trade policy from the comitology review. After months of deadlock, the Belgian EU Presidency came out with a compromise proposal last week. The compromise waters down the Commission's proposed review. According to the compromise, member states will still be able to block proposed anti-dumping and other trade measures by simple majority. In such cases, "the Commission shall conduct consultations with the member states" and propose new draft measures for approval by committees of national experts. (Source: Euractiv)

[www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/uk-germany-resist-attempted-eu-power-grab-trade-news-499463](http://www.euractiv.com/en/future-eu/uk-germany-resist-attempted-eu-power-grab-trade-news-499463)

#### **5. EU looks to alternative fuels for 'green' cars**

The EU needs a long-term strategy on alternative fuels to decarbonise its transport sector by 2050, according to a draft report from the European Commission. A draft report by the European Expert Group on Future Transport Fuels assesses Europe's options for substituting oil in the transport sector. The group, comprising industry associations, NGOs and Commission officials, was put together by the Commission to provide advice on developing political strategies for alternative fuels. The report identifies electricity via battery or hydrogen fuel cells and biofuels as the main options for substituting oil in transport. In addition, natural gas and bio-methane could be used as back-ups, while synthetic fuels could bridge the transition from fossil fuels to renewables, it says. Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) could supplement the energy mix with a limited market share of up to 10%. Biofuels and synthetic solutions would technically be able to fuel all transport modes, but feedstock availability and sustainability considerations would in practice put constraints on their availability, the paper argues. Alternative fuels generally tend to be less energy-efficient than fossil fuels, but they also reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from transport. They will be promoted in the European Commission's upcoming White Paper on Transport, expected in December, which is scheduled to launch an EU strategy for transport policy in the next decade. (Source: Euractiv)

[www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-looks-alternative-fuels-green-cars-news-499456](http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-looks-alternative-fuels-green-cars-news-499456)

#### **6. Week ahead**

##### **European Commission**

Wednesday 10 November – Energy Strategy 2020

Presentation of the new strategy for European Energy policy up to 2020

Tuesday 9 November - New Agenda for Future Trade Policy

The discussion paper builds on Europe's commitment to an open, fair and rules-based trading system and analyses how trade is an engine for economic growth and job creation.

**Council of Ministers**

Thursday 11 November - Economic and Financial Affairs Council (Budget)

Ministers will provide guidance to the Belgian Presidency ahead of a meeting of the Conciliation Committee on the 2011 EU budget taking place the same day. In case the Conciliation Committee reaches agreement, the Budget Council will be called upon to endorse the compromise.

**European Parliament** (Committees Brussels)

8/9 November – Employment Committee - An Industrial Policy for the Globalised Era, consultation on draft opinion, exchange of views

8/9 November – Employment Committee - Youth on the Move: a framework for improving Europe's education and training systems

8/9 November – ITRE Committee - "A New and Integrated Industrial Policy for Europe", mini-hearing

8/9 November – ITRE Committee - Mid-term review of the European satellite navigation programmes: implementation assessment, future challenges and financing perspectives, exchange of views

9 November – INTA Committee - Free Trade Agreement between the EU and the Republic of Korea, consideration of draft report

9 November – INTA Committee Foreign Direct Investment – transitional arrangements and future European International investment policy, hearing

**European Parliament** – Plenary Session (Brussels)

Wednesday 10 November – Innovation partnerships, oral question