

Cancun hosts United Nations Climate Change Conference

The UN Climate Change Conference (COP16) began on Monday in Cancun. The international discussions will continue for two weeks, concluding on Friday 10 December. Following the agreement of the Copenhagen Accord last year, the 2010 negotiations in Mexico are widely expected to focus on making progress in a number of key areas with a view to achieving a fuller international climate change deal in South Africa in 2011. The European Parliament has sent a 15-strong delegation to Cancún, including five EPP members, four from the S&D group, two from ALDE and one Green. They will be there for the two-week duration of the conference. In a resolution adopted last week, MEPs said they wanted "tougher" EU action, including a commitment in Cancún to move from the current 20 per cent emissions reduction target to a 30 per cent target by 2020. Ahead of the conference, Connie Hedegaard, European commissioner for Climate Action, said: "Cancún can take the world a significant step forward by agreeing on a balanced set of decisions covering many key issues. It is crucial that Cancún delivers this progress, otherwise the UN climate change process risks losing momentum and relevance, and so far no one has been able to point to an alternative forum that can deliver more. Therefore Cancún must deliver progress on substance, and it can, if all Parties show political will." (Source: European Commission)

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/10/1620&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>



European Commission may increase green funding levels

The EU may increase its financial contribution to eco-innovation projects in future to attract more private investors into these projects, two senior officials from the European Commission told a conference held in Brussels on Tuesday. The commission usually contributes 50% of a project's financial needs, however Georgios Floros of the commission's finance department told delegates it may revisit the parity principle, meaning that private investors would have to provide less funding. The idea was backed by Timo Makela of the environment department. The EU executive is considering new financing instruments and delivery mechanisms as part of a review of rules governing the EU's LIFE+ environmental financing programme. Other sources of green funding include structural funds and the competitiveness and innovation framework programme (CIP). Demand for funds is currently outstripping supply with many innovative SMEs face funding problems, the conference heard. Many are struggling to attract venture capital. Those that do secure such funds fairly easily tend to develop new energy solutions. Banks on the other hand have become risk averse and are often not familiar with eco-innovation projects. Firms increasingly resort to debt financing and small-scale loans of less than €300,000 as alternatives, according to early results from a survey of SMEs and financiers presented by Oxford Research. Other lessons from Tuesday's conference include the need to cut red tape and tackle skills shortages in engineering and eco-finance expertise, and the importance of a stable policy framework to drive innovation. The discussions will influence the commission's work a new eco-innovation action plan due at the end of February. (Source: European Commission)

ec.europa.eu/environment/ecoinnovation2010/2nd_forum/

EEA releases fourth Environment State and Outlook report

The European Environment Agency (EEA) has released its fourth Environment State and Outlook report — SOER 2010 — an assessment of how and why Europe's environment is changing, and how Europe can do something about it. SOER 2010 concludes that a fully integrated approach to transforming Europe to a resource-efficient green economy can not only result in a healthy environment, but also boost prosperity and social cohesion. The assessment shows that global demands for natural resources to feed, clothe, house and transport people are accelerating. These mounting demands on natural capital are exerting pressure to ecosystems, economies and social cohesion in Europe and elsewhere. However, SOER 2010 confirms that well-designed environmental policies continue to improve Europe's environment without undermining Europe's growth potential. (Source: EEA)

www.eea.europa.eu/pressroom/newsreleases/butterflies-or-business-europe-can



EU transport ministers sign deal to save lives on Europe's Roads

A political agreement on road safety and the Cross Border Enforcement Directive has been adopted at the Transport Council by EU transport ministers. The main purpose of the new Directive is to introduce a system of exchanging information to enable the follow up of road safety related traffic offences committed by non-resident drivers. According to the Commission, the adoption of the Directive would introduce equal treatment of foreign and resident drivers and save lives on Europe's roads. In their conclusions, ministers also endorsed the new target to reduce road traffic deaths by 50% by 2020. Ministers also adopted conclusions in response to the European Commission's "Road Safety Policy Orientations 2011-2020". Transport commissioner Siim Kallas said: "Many people seem to think that when they go abroad the rules no longer apply to them. My message is that they do apply and now we are going to apply them." (Source: EUobserver) euobserver.com/9/31407

Week ahead

European Commission

Wednesday 8 December

Energy market integrity and transparency Regulation - It will set standards for energy market behaviour and oversight mechanisms to detect and deter market misconduct on Europe's wholesale energy markets.

Council of Ministers

Tuesday 7 December

Economic and Financial Affairs Council
Ministers will discuss strengthening of economic governance, bank levies and harmful tax competition in the EU. The Council will try to reach political agreement on a directive on strengthening administrative cooperation in the field of direct taxation.

Friday 10 December

Competitiveness Council

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions on the Single Market Act and "An integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era"

European Parliament – Committee Week in Brussels

Thursday 9 December

ITRE - "An integrated industrial policy for the globalisation era" – consideration of amendments