

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 21 February

Commission begins legal proceedings against UK on air quality

The European Commission has launched legal proceedings against the UK for its failure to cut levels of nitrogen dioxide. European legislation sets limits on air pollution and the NOx limits should have been achieved by 1 January 2010 unless an extension was granted until 1 January 2015. The UK Supreme Court has already declared that air pollution limits are regularly exceeded in 16 zones across the UK. The areas affected are Greater London, the West Midlands, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Teesside, the Potteries, Hull, Southampton, Glasgow, the East, the South East, the East Midlands, Merseyside, Yorkshire & Humberside, the West Midlands, and the North East. The Court also noted that air quality improvement plans estimate that for London compliance with EU standards will be achieved by 2025, fifteen years after the original deadline, and in 2020 for the other 15 zones. EU legislation contains flexibility as regards the deadlines for returning air pollution to safe levels. Although the original deadline for meeting the limit values was 1 January 2010, extensions have been agreed with member states which had a “credible and workable” plan for meeting air quality standards within five years of the original deadline, i.e. by January 2015. The Commission outlined that the UK had not presented any such plans. The Commission is therefore of the opinion that the UK is in breach of its obligations under the Directive, and a letter of formal notice has been sent. The UK has two months to respond. (Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-154_en.htm

European new car registrations up 5.5% in January 2014

Figures published by ACEA, the European Automobile Manufacturers Association show that in January 2014

demand for new passenger cars in the EU increased for the fifth consecutive month, with a rise of 5.5% in registrations. However, in absolute figures, the total of 935,640 units registered marked the second lowest result to date for a month of January since ACEA began the series in 2003 with the enlarged EU. In January 2014, most EU markets posted growth, as did all the major ones, from +7.6% in the UK and Spain, to +7.2% in Germany, +3.2% in Italy and +0.5% in France.

(Source: ACEA)

<http://www.acea.be/press-releases/article/passenger-car-registrations-5.5-in-january>



EU and US trade chiefs review progress towards Transatlantic trade deal

EU Trade Commissioner Karel De Gucht and his US counterpart, Ambassador Michael Froman, met in Washington D.C. on 18 February to review progress on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) negotiations that started in July 2013. The officials discussed how much headway had been made in the efforts to remove unnecessary trade barriers between the EU and the US markets without lowering the protection of people's health, safety, rights at work, privacy and financial security, and the environment. At the end of two days of meetings, Commissioner De Gucht said that the negotiations had made good progress and now needed to step up a gear. As part of its ongoing commitment to transparency in the TTIP negotiations, the Directorate

General for Trade will organise a stakeholder event on 12 March during the week of the fourth round of EU-US trade talks. This latest outreach event will give EU and US stakeholders the opportunity to give presentations explaining their views on different aspects of the TTIP. Registrations are open until 26 February. The negotiators will also brief stakeholders on how their talks are progressing.

(Source: European Commission)

<http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/press/index.cfm?id=1028>

2013 industrial structure report highlights need for industrial renaissance

A European Commission report published on the current status of EU industry has stated that most sectors have not regained their pre-crisis level of output and significant differences exist between sectors and member states. The "EU industrial structure report 2013: Competing in Global Value Chains" highlights the downward trend in manufacturing and outlines the mutually beneficial links between manufacturing and services as well as the importance of global value chains. The report ultimately underlines the growing need to mainstream industrial competitiveness into other policy fields.

These issues, recently highlighted by the Commission's Communication on a European Industrial Renaissance, will be directly addressed at the forthcoming Competitiveness Council meeting on 20-21 February. Commenting on the report European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship stated: "This report clearly shows that the 2008 crisis led to a significant acceleration of European industrial decline, and that industry needs targeted support to help it return to growth. Europe is still far from the 20% target of industry's share in Europe's GDP by 2020. To meet this goal we need to focus on reindustrialisation. I therefore call on Member States to support the new industrial compact at next week's Competitiveness Council."

(Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-150_en.htm