

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 8 March

European Commission identifies most burdensome EU laws for SMEs

The European Commission has published the results of a consultation into identifying the ten most burdensome EU laws for SMEs. The aim of the consultation was to check where EU regulation might be impeding jobs and growth and to identify areas or issues which would require further examination and action where necessary. The results indicate that SMEs see the biggest difficulties and costs as a consequence of the rules regarding the REACH chemical legislation, value added tax, product safety, recognition of professional qualifications, data protection, waste legislation, labour market related legislation, recording equipment for road transport, public procurement and the modernised customs code. The Commission, while recognising the overall necessity of having European-wide rules in these areas, will now address these concerns via the new Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT) launched in December 2012. Through this programme, the EU's regulatory acquis is being screened for burdens, gaps and inefficiencies in order to evaluate and if appropriate revise those laws where the assessment points to a need for action. The Commission will announce follow up actions by June 2013, also taking into account the outcome of the ongoing legislative processes. Commenting on the announcement, European Commission Vice-President Antonio Tajani, responsible for Industry and Entrepreneurship, stated: "SMEs which are creating the lion's share of all new jobs in Europe are the key to get out of this crisis. Our legislation needs to be designed with SMEs (and especially new entrepreneurs) in mind: it must be smart, it must be simple and it must be stable. The better we listen to SMEs concerns, the better they can help us to return to growth."

(Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-188_en.htm?locale=en

EU industrial producer prices up by 0.6% in January 2013

Figures published by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, show that in January 2013, compared with December 2012, the industrial producer price index rose by 0.6% in the EU. Prices in total industry excluding the energy sector increased by 0.2% in the EU, whilst prices in the energy sector gained 11.5%. Durable consumer goods rose by 0.3%, capital goods and non-durable consumer goods by 0.2% and intermediate goods by 0.1%. In January 2013 compared with January 2012, industrial producer prices gained 1.8% in the EU.

(Source: Eurostat)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STAT-13-32_en.htm?locale=en



EU and Thailand launch negotiations for Free Trade Agreement

European Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, and the Thai Prime Minister, Yingluck Shinawatra, have launched negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the European Union and Thailand. The ambition is to conclude a comprehensive agreement covering tariffs, non-tariff barriers and other trade related issues, such as services, investment, procurement, regulatory issues, competition, and sustainable development. The

launch of FTA negotiations marks an important step in EU-Thai relations, already strengthened by a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. The first negotiating round is expected to take place before the summer break. Thailand is the EU's third largest trading partner inside ASEAN (the Association of Southeast Asian Nations) and the EU is Thailand's third largest trading partner, trade between them in 2012 reaching nearly €32 billion. The EU is also one of the largest investors in Thailand with investment stocks worth over €14 billion in 2011. The FTA with Thailand aims to deliver substantial economic gains and put the EU on par with partners who have already concluded FTAs with Thailand (China, India, Japan, Korea, Australia and New Zealand). Thailand is the latest in a series of ASEAN countries to negotiate an FTA with the EU. At the end of 2012, the EU successfully concluded negotiations with Singapore and has been negotiating with Malaysia and Vietnam since 2010 and 2012 respectively. (Source: European Commission)

[http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release MEMO-13-179_en.htm?locale=en](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-13-179_en.htm?locale=en)



Aberdeen and Zagreb win EU sustainable mobility awards

The European Commission has announced the winners of the 2012 European Mobility Week Award (Zagreb) and of the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans Award (Aberdeen). The cities were presented with their awards by European Commissioners Siim Kallas and Janez Potočnik at a joint award ceremony in Brussels, Belgium (Théâtre du Vaudeville) on 6 March. Commenting on the awards, Vice-stated: "Aberdeen, the winner of this year's Sustainable Urban Mobility Award, and the other finalists are at the forefront of an EU-wide drive to incorporate sustainability into urban mobility planning. The urban mobility plans devised by cities and local authorities today are crucial to boosting efficiency and

competitiveness. In line with the 2012 theme, the finalists boast a strong role for citizens— a key factor in long-term urban planning success." (Source: European Commission)

http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-13-202_en.htm

Week ahead

European Commission

No relevant business

Council of Ministers

11 March

Transport, Telecommunications & Energy Council
The Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council comprises of the Ministers responsible for either transportation, telecommunications or energy. At this meeting Ministers will discuss Clean Power for Transport.

14-15 March

European Council

During this European Council EU leaders will conclude the first phase of the 2013 European Semester. The overall progress made by member states in implementing the 2012 country-specific recommendations will also be assessed. Leaders will also provide guidance to member states on the 2013 Stability and Convergence programmes, and on the implementation of Europe 2020 "flagship initiatives".

5 March

Economic and Financial Affairs Council

The Council will take note of progress on a draft directive on bank recovery and resolution. It will also examine a package of measures aimed at combating VAT fraud—the "quick reaction mechanism" and the "reserve charge mechanism" and will be called on to adopt conclusions

European Parliament (Plenary session - Strasbourg)

Monday 11 March

Energy Roadmap 2050 – debate

Greenhouse gas emissions – joint debate

Wednesday 13 March

Composition of the European Parliament with a view to the 2014 elections – debate

EU – China relations - vote