

WEEK IN BRUSSELS

Week ending Friday 8 April

IEA urges greater cooperation on smart grids

Public-private sector collaboration on regulatory frameworks to support smart grid investments is the most decisive factor for deployment of the technology, according to a report published by the International Energy Agency (IEA). The report is the IEA's latest technology roadmap and recommends a series of actions and milestones for smart grid deployment between now and 2050. Smart grid expansion is being hindered by "a tendency on the part of governments to stay away from taking responsibility for actively evolving or developing new electricity regulations", says the IEA. This has led to a "diffusion of roles and responsibilities among government and industry actors", it adds. Smart grids will play a role in the transition towards a low carbon economy because a lot of other technologies depend on them: renewable energy and electric vehicles for example. Peak electricity demand is expected to increase between 2010 and 2050 in all four regions analysed (China, North America, Europe and Pacific), according to the roadmap. Smart grid development could reduce the predicted increase by 13-24%. In November, the European Commission said smart grids could reduce the EU's annual primary energy consumption in 2020 by almost 9%. It also said that the EU would spend €140bn on smart grid development over the next ten years. (Source: Ends Europe)

www.endseurope.com/25993/iea-urges-greater-cooperation-on-smart-grids



EU to launch new environmental implementation laws

The European Commission is believed to be publishing a policy paper in the autumn setting out plans to improve the implementation of the EU's environmental laws, Environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik recently said in a speech in Athens. The plans are still at an early stage. Mr Potočnik said proposals include improvements to the Commission's inspection systems and the information it keeps. Discussions on the next EU budget must take into account the need for co-financing to help member states meet their obligations, Mr Potočnik said. Implementation of green policies is often given less of a priority than other policy areas and many of the infringement proceedings the Commission takes relate to the environment. When Mr Potočnik took up his post last year, he said his priorities were biodiversity, resource efficiency and law implementation. He promised to address implementation gaps through discussions with member states and infringement proceedings. (Source: European Commission)

europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/11/241

UN climate talks in Bangkok off to a slow start

Delegates at the UN climate talks in Bangkok are struggling to agree agendas for the meeting's two main working groups as divisions continue between developing and developed countries. Tuvalu and other small island states insist the working group on the Kyoto Protocol must reach agreement on a second commitment period before the main international climate meeting in Durban, South Africa, in December. They want discussions in Bangkok and the next meeting in Bonn in June to focus on Kyoto, rather than a broader climate agreement. Japan, Australia and Russia, on the other hand, have refused to consider further commitment periods. Agreements

made last year in Cancún "can only become an important step forward for the climate if there is a responsible and clear way ahead on the Kyoto Protocol", UN climate chief Christiana Figueres told delegates. In the broader working group on long-term cooperative action, discussions have centered on whether to follow the approach set by the Bali action plan or to focus on strengthening the Cancún agreement. The 2007 Bali plan requires countries to work towards a global emission reduction goal. The Cancún deal includes a central commitment to keep global temperature rise below 2°C and emission reduction pledges from developing and developed countries. However, taken together, these pledges are not enough to meet the 2°C goal. Cancún also included commitments to establish centralised mechanisms for climate funding, technology transfer and adaptation to climate change. The first meeting of a committee in charge of the €100bn green climate fund is in Mexico later this month. (Source: United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) unfccc.int/2860.php

Portugal seeks EU bailout

Portugal's government has said it will seek financing from the European Union after having resisted a bailout for months despite deteriorating financial conditions. Portuguese Prime Minister José Socrates resigned on 23 March and warned of grave consequences for the country after the Portuguese Parliament rejected his government's latest austerity measures aimed at avoiding a bailout. Portugal's President Aníbal Cavaco Silva dissolved Parliament on 31 March and set a snap general election for 5 June, warning that the next government faced an "unprecedented economic crisis". After Greece and Ireland received EU-IMF bailouts last year to cope with their swollen public debts and deficits, Portugal was seen as the next candidate for a bailout. The EU has discussed a rescue plan for Portugal but it is dependent on Lisbon asking for the aid and making an official request to both the EU and the International Monetary Fund. It is believed the rescue loans could amount to 80bn euros (\$115bn; £70bn). (Source: Euractiv) www.euractiv.com/en/euro-finance/portugal-seeks-bailout-amid-political-crisis-news-503863

Week ahead

European Commission

Wednesday 13 April
Single Market Act Communication DG – Internal Market and Services

It will present a list of priority initiatives in key areas, seeking to unlock the Single Market's potential for growth and restore confidence in its benefits.

Wednesday 13 April

Review of the Energy Taxation Directive DG – Taxation and Customs Union

The College of Commissioners will discuss a proposal to restructure energy taxation to take into account CO₂ emissions and the energy content of energy products.

Council of Ministers

No relevant activity

European Parliament – Meetings of Committees (Brussels)

Monday 11 - Tuesday 12 April

TRAN – Cross-border enforcement in the field of road safety – Consideration of draft recommendation for second reading

Monday 11 - Tuesday 12 April

TRAN – The charging of heavy goods vehicles – Consideration of amendments and vote

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Interim evaluation of the seventh EU programme for research, technological development and demonstration – Consideration of amendments and vote

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Green Paper: From challenges to opportunities: towards a common strategic framework for EU research and innovation funding - Exchange of views

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Innovation Union: Transforming Europe for a post-crisis world - Vote

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Energy market integrity and transparency - Consideration of draft report

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Energy infrastructure priorities for 2020 and beyond - Consideration of amendments

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Review of the "Small Business Act" for Europe - Consideration of draft motion for a resolution

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April

ITRE – Analysis of options to move beyond 20% greenhouse gas emission reductions and assessing the risk of carbon leakage - Consideration of amendments

Monday 11 – Wednesday 13 April
IMCO - A New Trade Policy for Europe under the Europe 2020 Strategy - Consideration of amendments and vote

Tuesday 12 – Wednesday 13 April
INTA - State of play of ongoing trilogue negotiations - Exchange of views

Tuesday 12 – Wednesday 13 April
INTA - A New Trade Policy for Europe under the Europe 2020 Strategy - Consideration of amendments

Tuesday 12 – Wednesday 13 April
INTA – EU-Canada Trade relations - Vote

Tuesday 12 – Wednesday 13 April
INTA – Mercosur – Trade perspectives of the Association Agreement - Hearing

Tuesday 12 – Wednesday 13 April
INTA - EU market access to third countries: latest developments - Presentation by the Commission