



Brussels News Update

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Commission Climate & Energy Proposals

The European Commission has proposed a far-reaching package of proposals to fight climate change and promote renewable energy. The proposals set legally enforceable targets for each member state designed to dramatically increase the use of renewable energy in each country.

Major CO₂ emitters will be given an incentive to develop clean production technologies through a thorough reform of the Emissions Trading System (ETS) that will impose an EU-wide cap on emissions. The package seeks to deliver the European Union to reduce greenhouse gases by at least 20% and increases to 20% the share of renewable energies in the energy consumption by 2020, as agreed by EU leaders in March 2007. The emissions reduction will be increased to 30% by 2020 when a new global climate change agreement is reached.

The CO₂ reduction and renewable energy targets put forward by the Commission on 23 January have evoked a flood of reactions from member states, industry, NGOs and other stakeholders. A review is provided by Euractiv.com (link below).

Building on the EU Emission Trading System (ETS), the Commission proposes to strengthen the single, EU-wide carbon market which will include more greenhouse gases (currently only CO₂ is included), and involve all major industrial emitters. The emission allowances put on the market will be reduced year-on-year to allow for emissions covered by the ETS to be reduced by 21% from 2005 levels in 2020.

The power sector – forming the majority of EU emissions – will face full auctioning from the start of the new regime in 2013. Other industrial sectors, as well as aviation, will step up to full auctioning gradually, although an exception may be made for sectors particularly vulnerable to competition from producers in countries without comparable carbon constraints. In addition, auctions will be open: any EU operator will be able to buy allowances in any Member State.

In sectors not covered by the ETS such as buildings, transport, agriculture and waste, the EU plans to reduce emissions to 10% below 2005 levels by 2020. For each Member State the Commission is proposing a specific target by which it must reduce or, in the case of new Member States, may increase its emissions up to 2020. These changes range from -20% to +20%.

Source

Commission Press Release:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/80&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Links

Commission – Energy & Climate Change Proposals:

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/index_en.htm

Euractiv.com: Review of reactions to energy and climate change proposals

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/wrap-reactions-eu-climate-energy-package/article-169843>

Future of Research Funding – Beyond 2010

Speaking at a meeting of the Science Policy Bridge in Brussels, Zoran Stančič, Deputy Director General of DG Research, argued that there would be a strong case for research funding to continue to take a greater share of EU funding in the future and made it clear that DG Research is actively preparing for the mid-term review of the EU budget planned for 2010.

The current budget for FP7 is €54bn, plus the contributions of associated countries. Annual spending increases will start off small in the early years but accelerate in the second half of the period up to 2013.

During 2008, the European Commission will prepare a review of the entire EU budget. While the future of the Common Agriculture Policy and the UK rebate will grab the headlines, other budget holders will be seeking to position themselves for increases, especially from 2014 onwards. The Austrian government has already presented a paper to the Council which highlights the importance of research.

DG Research is already preparing its case. Evidence will come from the evaluation of FP6 being carried out this year as well as early indications from the implementation of the current programme. It is clear that it is also looking for support from the research community to get the message over to national and EU decision makers.

Trends in the development of the EU budget are positive for research, with funding for competitiveness and external actions, including research, rising from around 8% of the budget in the 1980s to 26% by 2013. By contrast, CAP expenditure will decline to 32% in 2013, from approximately 70% in 1985. Moreover, recent policy debates have centred on research and

innovation as the key driver of European competitiveness and a number of new priorities demonstrate this e.g. the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan.

DG Research is one of the most efficient and effective of the Commission services in spending its budget, with 99.7% of its 2007 allocation spent by the end of December. This is significantly better than some other key spending departments such as regional policy and agriculture and is seen as a particularly strong card for internal negotiations within the Commission. The high rate of oversubscription of FP7 calls, particularly the recent ERC call, supplement the case for more money.

However, it is very unlikely that the mid-term budget review will result in radical changes in funding. In response to a EuCheMS question on priorities within the FP7 budget, Mr Stančič indicated that energy and the SET Plan looked likely to be a high priority, and noted the near universal support at the meeting (from both science and industry representatives) for further funding for the ERC which he felt could perhaps receive a little more. While some rebalancing of priorities could take place in 2009, the key battle will be about positioning for much bigger changes in 2014. There is a strong expectation of further growth in the ERC budget in particular.

It is clear that the EU is not going to reach the Lisbon target of 3% of GDP going to research. Recent assessments suggest that, in the very best case scenario, with member states living up to all the commitments they have already made, it might just be possible to get to 2.7%.

Speaking at the same meeting **Prof. Ernst-Ludwig Winnacker, Secretary General to the Scientific Council**, strongly endorsed the case for basic science as a key to European competitiveness.

He highlighted the different nature of ERC funding, with money going to individual scientists rather than teams or networks and its focus on excellence. On the subject of the European Research Area he argued that science has always been international, with scientists seeking out their peers, whatever their location. However, institutions (academic, legal and fiscal) have always been national, and this is where action to overcome barriers is needed.

Discussing the structure of the ERC and the creation of the new Executive Agency to manage its work (developments reported in the EuCheMS Brussels News for January) and the question of autonomy, Prof. Winnacker said that the Commission had made a promise - and kept its promise.

Other points included the desire of the Scientific Council to see applications in further rounds from scientist in corporate research centre, and the importance of infrastructures which he felt was not yet getting enough attention.

In the end, Prof. Winnacker said, good science requires good institutions, and this is well borne out in the results of the ERC first round of Starting Grants.

EuCheMS also presented a short paper setting out the EuCheMS approach to research funding. This particularly highlighted the importance of the ERC as a bottom-up initiative centred on excellence, and also called attention to the need for continued and extended funding for networking (especially SusChem) and science education (especially at the primary level). Subsequent discussion of this position among the participants highlighted the importance of ERC funding, not only in itself, but for its influence in encouraging further reform in national funding regimes, research conditions and careers, as well as institutions.

Link Science Business :

<http://bulletin.sciencebusiness.net/ebulletins/showissue.php3?page=/548/art/9765>

Code of Conduct for Responsible Nanosciences

The Commission has recommended to the Member States the adoption of a Code of Conduct to govern research in nanosciences. Based around 7 general principles covering issues such as sustainability, precaution, inclusiveness and accountability, the Code of Conduct invites Member States to take concrete action, involving universities, research institutes and companies, for the safe development and use of nanotechnologies.

The 7 principles are:

Meaning: N&N research activities should be comprehensible to the public. **Sustainability:**

N&N research activities should be safe, ethical and contribute to sustainable development.

Precaution: N&N research activities should be conducted in accordance with the precautionary principle,

Inclusiveness: Guided by the principles of openness and transparency

Excellence: N&N research activities should meet the best scientific standards, including integrity of research and good laboratory practices.

Innovation: Governance of N&N research activities should encourage maximum creativity, flexibility and planning ability for innovation and growth.

Accountability: Researchers and research organisations should remain accountable for the social, environmental and human health impacts of their work.

The Code of conduct also provides guidelines that implement these 7 principles under:

- good governance of research
- due respect of precaution
- dissemination and monitoring of the Code of Conduct

Source

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/193&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Taking Forward the ERA

The Commission has set out its plans for following up the green paper on the European Research Area (ERA). The five areas are:

1) Free Movement for Researchers. The Commission will issue a communication (policy statement) in May on moves to make it easier for researchers to move from country to country (researcher's passport) and develop means to promote the European code and charter for researchers and their employers.

2) Intellectual property code. The Commission will publish a communication in late Spring aimed at helping universities and businesses to reach agreement on IP.

3) Joint programming. The Commission plans a communication in the second half of 2008 on ways to coordinate R&D programmes among EU member states. The intention is to assist joint planning so that duplication is avoided.

4) Infrastructure. A new legal status is planned to facilitate the establishment of multi-national infrastructure projects

5) International cooperation. A communication is planned for September on ways to enhance R&D collaboration between the EU, its members and the rest of the world. The communication will look at ways of coordinating some R&D efforts at an EU level with third countries.

FP7 one year on

The EU's Seventh Framework (FP7), now one year into its seven-year life span, is a 'kind of transition programme', taking Europe's research community in the direction of the new instruments that were introduced last year, said EU Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik in an interview with CORDIS News.

Many of the new instruments have 'outsourced' management of research projects, to new Executive Agencies like that created to administer the ERC. When it comes to the next framework programme, FP8, the Commissioner would like to see further steps in this direction. The Commissioner's aim is that this will free up the staff at DG Research to take a 'more ministerial type approach'. Meanwhile the management will be done 'by specialists, in a more linear and faster way.'

On the budget for FP8, the Commissioner will only say that it should be larger than it is currently. Taking just one part of the current framework programme, the ERC, he says: 'If the ERC functions well, give me one good reason not to double the budget.'

Source

<http://cordis.europa.eu/fp7>

Link

http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/potocnik/

Potocnik Supports 'Sensible' Biofuels Production

'The environmental performance of biofuels depends very much on the different production pathways. If produced and used sensibly, biomass used for fuel can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. It can also be used to reclaim degraded land, reduce erosion, stabilise slopes and improve water retention and water quality,' says EU Science and Research Commissioner Janez Potocnik.

The statement follows various reports in the media on the negative environmental impact of biofuels, and a meeting between Mr Potocnik and the European Biofuels Technology Platform.

Some 17 environmental non-governmental organisations recently wrote to the European Commission warning that pursuing biofuels could threaten important ecosystems, increase food and feed prices and lead to water shortages. EU Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas reacted by saying that it would be better for the EU to miss its biofuels targets, agreed last year, than to risk harming the environment.

'It is well known that the increased use of biofuels will need to be accompanied by technological developments. In particular we discussed the balance of existing 'first generation' biofuels and future 'second generation' biofuels, which can be produced more efficiently, with far fewer emissions and from a wider range of agricultural products,' reads Mr Potocnik's statement.

Source

http://cordis.europa.eu/fetch?CALLER=EN_NEWS_FP7&ACTION=D&DOC=14&CAT=NEWS&QUERY=1202678651681&RCN=29036

Link

<http://www.biofuelstp.eu>

Piebalgs Responds to Biofuels Criticism

Energy Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs, responding to the report of the House of Commons which calls for a moratorium on biofuels, said: " The Commission strongly disagrees with the conclusion of the Environmental Audit Committee of the British House of Commons report, where it says that the overall environmental effect of existing biofuels policy is negative. On the contrary, it is delivering significant greenhouse gas reductions, compared with its alternative, oil.

The Commissioner believes that there are currently only three ways to reduce greenhouse emissions in the transport sector: the shift from polluting modes to more energy efficient ones (i.e. rail, short sea shipping, collective transport); the promotion of less consuming road vehicles, by establishing CO₂/km targets; and biofuels.

The Commission is actively promoting the first two (white paper on transport; proposal to limit the CO₂ emissions from cars 19/12/07 COM/2007/0856 final), but biofuels ought to be supported as well. This is of critical importance in a context where rising transport emissions are wiping out the hard-earned reductions of greenhouse gases achieved in other sectors.

Source

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/64&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Improved European System for Environmental Information

Commission proposes to improve and streamline the European system for collecting, analysing and reporting environmental information.

Timely, reliable and relevant information on the state of environment is essential for sound policies. This includes information on how the climate is changing, whether European waters are improving and how nature is reacting to pollution and changing land use. The Commission proposes to establish a European Shared Environment Information System. The objective of this system is to tie better together all existing data gathering and information flows using modern tools such as the internet and satellite technology.

A detailed implementation plan for SEIS will be presented some time in 2008. It will be built on efforts already being undertaken including the Water Information System for Europe (WISE) and the European environment information and observation network (EIONET), the 2007 INSPIRE Directive on access and interoperability of spatial data, and the Global Monitoring for Environment and Security (GMES) initiative on Earth monitoring data from satellites.

Source

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/185&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Limited Progress on Energy Savings

The European Commission's first assessment of National Energy Efficiency Action Plans (NEEAP) submitted in July 2007, suggests a lack of political commitment from member state governments.

The Plans present national strategies on how Member States intend to achieve their adopted energy savings target by 2016. According to the Commission, although the Action Plans provide some encouragement, there appears to be a gap between the political commitment to energy efficiency and the proposals aimed at facing up to these challenges.

The Plans essentially represent a practical demonstration of the commitment of Member States to energy efficiency, a means for sharing of best practices among Member States, and the various players in energy efficiency, as well as for developing synergies among the strategies and measures adopted.

Among the 17 National Energy Efficiency Action Plans reviewed by the Commission, several present comprehensive strategies that are likely to deliver important savings. While most seem to present a business-as-usual approach, some are more progressive, but without a clear definition as to what the new measures will be and how they will be implemented.

Source

Commission Memo:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=MEMO/08/32&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/energy/eu-falters-energy-savings-objective/article-169945>

EU Carbon Storage Proposals

Improved clarity regarding state aid rules and inclusion into the EU's carbon-trading scheme were among the features of new proposals on carbon capture and storage (CCS) put forward by the Commission in its climate and energy package last week. But doubts remain as to the effectiveness of the expensive technology in reducing the bloc's CO₂ emissions.

The Commission presented several communications related to CCS on 23 January, as part of its climate and energy package:

1. A draft proposal for a directive on a legal framework for CCS (current EU laws do not permit the use of the technology);
2. A communication on CCS demonstration projects;
3. Revised state aid guidelines, which pave the way for state support of CCS, and;
4. A draft impact assessment on CCS.

Source

<http://www.euractiv.com/en/climate-change/eu-carbon-storage-proposals-get-mixed-reviews/article-169892>

Link

Commission – Draft Proposal for Directive on CCS:

http://ec.europa.eu/environment/climat/ccs/pdf/com_2008_18.pdf

Pesticides 'Crucial' for EU Food Supply

An industry-funded study has suggested that stringent EU rules on pesticides will lead to a decline in European agricultural self-sufficiency, ever-increasing food prices and job losses in the agri-food sector, but this is rejected by environmental groups.

In July 2006, the Commission proposed a new regulation to tighten pesticide usage and authorisation rules in Europe, and MEPs will soon vote on the proposed regulation. In its first reading on the package, in October 2007, the European Parliament voted to expand the scope of substances banned from use in EU pesticides production (see December issue of EuCheMS Brussels News)

Source

Euractiv.com <http://www.euractiv.com/en/environment/study-suggests-pesticides-crucial-eu-food-supply/article-170069>

Link

Commission: Sustainable Use of Pesticides <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ppps/home.htm>

New Rules for Toys

The Commission wants to strengthen EU-rules, especially those relating to the use of chemical substances in toys. The proposal aims at enhancing the safety of toys replacing and modernizing the Toys Directive 1988. The revision proposes new and higher safety requirements to cope with recently identified hazards, secondly it will strengthen

manufacturers' and importers' responsibility for the marketing of toys and finally it enhances the market surveillance obligations of Member States.

The proposal addresses a wide range of issues to improve the existing rules for the marketing of toys that are produced in and imported into the EU in view to reducing toy related accidents and to achieving health benefits. It will, in particular:

- Prohibit the use of chemical substances that are susceptible to provoke cancer, so-called CMR (Carcinogenic, Mutagenic or toxic for Reproduction) substances;
- Reduce the allowed limits of certain dangerous chemical substances like lead or mercury;
- Prohibit allergenic fragrances;
- Require toy manufacturers to establish comprehensive technical information for all their toys to allow Market Surveillance authorities to check the design and manufacture of the toy;
- Oblige Member States to lay down and impose penalties if toy manufacturers/importers do not produce toys in line with the safety requirements of the Directive.

The Commission proposal will now be discussed with the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers with a view to an adoption (the co-decision procedure). The proposal has received a cautious welcome from European consumer organisations amid fears that they do not ensure adequate protection for children.

The revision of the Directive has been subject of a wide-ranging public consultation including all stakeholders concerned. The Commission received more than 1500 replies to its questions.

Source

Commission Press Release:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/91&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Links

Public Consultation on Toy Safety: http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/toys/index_en.htm

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/health/commission-proposes-strict-limits-chemicals-toys/article-169891>

Commission proposals on food labelling

The European Commission has adopted a proposal to make food labels clearer and more relevant to the needs of EU consumers. The aim of the draft Regulation is to modernise and improve EU food labelling rules, so that consumers have, in a legible and understandable manner, the essential information they need to make informed purchasing choices.

Under the proposal, pre-packaged food will have to display key nutritional information on the front of the package. General requirements on how nutrition information should be displayed on food labels are also set out, although there is room for Member States to promote additional national schemes provided they do not undermine the EU rules.

Food manufacturers and retailers immediately expressed serious concerns over the proposal, describing it as "unworkable".

The proposal will now go to the Council and Parliament under the co-decision procedure and depending on the length of discussions in Parliament and Council, could be adopted before the next elections in June 2009.

Source

Commission press release:

<http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=IP/08/112&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

Link

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/health/industry-bashes-commission-proposals-food-labelling/article-169973>

Ethics - Cloning Animals for Food

The European Group on Ethics of science and new technologies (EGE) has issued an Opinion on ethical implications of cloning animals for food supply. The opinion states that considering the current level of suffering and health problems of surrogate dams and animal clones, the EGE has doubts as to whether cloning animals for food supply is ethically justified.

At present, the EGE does not see convincing arguments to justify the production of food from clones and their offspring. The Consultation on the European Food and Safety Agency (EFSA) draft opinion closes on 25 February and EFSA's final opinion is likely to be published in May 2008.

Source

European Group on Ethics of science and new technologies (EGE):

http://ec.europa.eu/european_group_ethics/activities/docs/press_release_opinion23_en.pdf

Link

Euractiv.com: <http://www.euractiv.com/en/science/eu-ethics-group-advises-cloning-animals-food/article-169644>



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