

NEWS FROM BRUSSELS 33/2022

Ursula von der Leyen holds State of the Union speech

On 14 September, EU Commission President von der Leyen held the annual State of the Union speech in Strasbourg. The main topic was the war in Ukraine and its consequences for the European continent. During her speech, von der Leyen also announced the launch of a new European law on critical raw materials to secure the European Union's supplies, as well as a new EU sovereignty fund. The Commission intends to introduce a 'European Critical Raw Materials Act', which is expected to be presented in the first quarter of 2023. Furthermore, von der Leyen suggested that the year 2023 would be the year of professional qualifications. New legal labour mobility partnerships are expected to be launched with several North African countries at the end of the year. Finally, von der Leyen announced a new package of support measures for SMEs, the 'SME Relief Package' with two main elements: - a proposal for a "single set of tax rules" - which has been dubbed 'BEFIT' - and a revision of the Late Payments Directive: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/SPEECH_22_5493

European Commission presents a package of three emergency measures to tackle rising energy prices

On 14 September, a few hours after the State of the Union speech, the European Commission published a proposal for an EU Council regulation with three key emergency measures to mitigate the impact of high electricity prices on households and businesses. The Commission proposes to: - cap the revenues of electricity producers with a cost below the wholesale market price ('inframarginal producers'); - introduce a "temporary solidarity contribution" to redistribute part of the windfall profits of certain fossil fuel companies; - set targets for reducing electricity demand: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_5489

EU Commission publishes proposal to ban products made with forced labour on the EU market

On 14 September, the EU Commission presented a proposal prohibiting products made with forced labour on the EU market. The proposal covers all products, namely those made in the EU for domestic consumption and exports, and imported goods, without targeting specific companies or industries. National authorities in the Member States shall implement the prohibition through a risk-based enforcement approach. SMEs are not exempted from the proposal, however the authorities must consider the size and resources of the economic operators concerned and the scale of the risk of forced labour before initiating a formal investigation: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_22_5415

European Parliament adopts report on Renewable Energy Directive (RED)

On 14 September, MEPs adopted by a large majority (418 votes in favour, 109 against and 111 abstentions) the draft report on the Renewable Energy Directive (RED) by Markus Pieper (EPP), which in particular provides for an increase - from 32 to 45% - in the EU's target for the share of renewable energy in the EU's energy mix by 2030, a target also backed by the Commission under its REPowerEU plan: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/economy/20171124STO88813/renewable-energy-setting-ambitious-targets-for-europe>

Sustainable transport: EU increases funding of projects for setting up alternative fuels infrastructure

The European Commission has selected 24 projects to receive EU funding to set up alternative fuels infrastructure. In total, these projects will receive EU grants of ca. €292m from the Alternative Fuels Infrastructure Facility (AFIF) to deploy relevant infrastructure along the Trans-European Transport Network (TEN-T) in 23 EU Member States. The projects selected are supposed to accelerate the creation of a comprehensive network of recharging and hydrogen refuelling infrastructure needed for the take-up of low- and zero-emission vehicles. AFIF combines grants from the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) of the preceding with support from financial institutions: https://transport.ec.europa.eu/news/sustainable-transport-eu-boosts-deployment-alternative-fuels-infrastructure-eu292m-funding-23-member-2022-09-13_en

EU Commission presents proposal for a Cyber Resilience Act

On 15 September, the EU Commission has presented a proposal for a new Cyber Resilience Act (CRA), which is supposed to tackle the inadequate level of cybersecurity inherent in many products, or inadequate security updates to such products and software. The proposal aims to introduce a framework of cybersecurity requirements governing the planning, design, development and maintenance of such products, with obligations to be met at every stage of the value chain. The proposed regulation announced in the 2020 EU Cybersecurity Strategy, would complement existing legislation, specifically the NIS2 Framework: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/de/node/11164>

The Alliance of European Car Dealers and Repairers (AECDR) represents and promotes the interests of 57,500 franchised dealers and authorised repairers. In total these companies employ 1.175,000 people.