

## **Top News from the European Commission 13 October to 9 November 2008**

**Background notes from the Spokesperson's service for journalists  
The European Commission reserves the right to make changes**

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## **Tuesday 14 October: Speeding up the development of fuel cells and hydrogen technologies in Europe and enabling their commercialisation between 2010 and 2020**

### **The news:**

To mark the start of its Joint Technology Initiative (JTI) on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen, the Commission is organising the first Stakeholders General Assembly on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen in Europe. The JTI on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen will implement a target-oriented research and development programme to support the broad market introduction of fuel cell and hydrogen energy applications and infrastructure.

During the Assembly, some industries will showcase the latest fuel cell and hydrogen products ready for market.

### **The background:**

Hydrogen is a clean energy carrier. European research shows that hydrogen energy could reduce oil consumption in road transport by 40% by 2050. Fuel cells can be applied in a variety of products such as mobile phones and laptops, cars, buses, ships and planes, as well as stationary heat and power generators in the domestic and industrial sector.

The founding members of the Joint Technology Initiative on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen are the European Commission and a non-profit association of European industry interests composed by more than 60 companies.

The Commission is expected to fund 470 M€ from the Seventh Framework Programme over a period of six years which will be at least matched by industry contributions. The first call for proposals for research projects is expected this October.

### **The event:**

9:15 The Commissioner, Potočnik, and the representative of the European Industry Grouping for a Fuel Cells & Hydrogen JTI (NEW-IG), Herbert Kohler, will officially inaugurate the Stakeholder General Assembly of the JTI on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen, at the Autoworld Parque du Cinquanteaire in Brussels.

10:40 In a joint press conference, Commissioner Potočnik, and the representative of the European Industry, Herbert Kohler, will explain the major assets of the JTI on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen.

Journalists will be able to participate in the two day conference with the industrial stakeholders of the international Fuel Cell and Hydrogen economy and visit an exposition about the latest successes of research in this field.

### **The sources:**

[IP/08/299](#) on EU research on the impact of hydrogen energy on energy consumption:

[IP/08/825](#) + [MEMO/07/404](#) on Fuel Cells and Hydrogen

[IP/08/1285](#) on how to simplify the approval of hydrogen powered vehicles:

[IP/07/1468](#) + [MEMO/07/405](#) on EC initiatives to develop hydrogen cars:

[MEMO/07/570](#): Memo on the introduction of the hydrogen vehicle

EC's website on the European Hydrogen and Fuel Cell Technology Platform:  
[http://ec.europa.eu/research/energy/nn/nn\\_rt/nn\\_rt\\_hlg/article\\_1261\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/research/energy/nn/nn_rt/nn_rt_hlg/article_1261_en.htm)

The whole program of the "European Fuel Cell & Hydrogen Week" on:  
<http://www.hfpeurope.org>

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## Wednesday 15 October: Meeting consumer expectations on Quality of Agricultural Products

### The news:

The Commission will present a Green Paper on quality of Agriculture products. It will explore ideas for farmers and producers who want to valorise their production or orientate production towards quality and better meet consumer demand.

The document will ask for contributions and views for developing regulatory measures to facilitate production and marketing of products having particular qualities and characteristics. It will build on the outcome of the Food Quality Certification Conference from February 2007.

The Green Paper will seek also the views on the development of existing EC quality schemes for geographical indications and traditional specialities.

### The background:

Consumers, retailers and farmers rely increasingly on logos and certification schemes to help them identify and distinguish food produce. A wide range of quality certification schemes currently operate in Europe and their number continues to increase.

Over the last decade, European agriculture has made an important shift, emphasising quality and specialisation. Globalisation will only increase this tendency. Farmers and producers know and care about production and processing techniques, ingredients, and origin of raw materials. In the EU, they also have to follow high animal welfare and environmental standards that cannot be imposed in respect of imported foods. Certification schemes provide a means by which producers can inform their ultimate customers about the quality of their products.

Quality is about meeting consumer expectations. The quality debate concerns information – on product characteristics, on farming methods, and on origin – that a farmer wants to communicate and a consumer wants to know. Quality is an issue for every farmer and every buyer, whether dealing with commodities produced to 'baseline' standards or high-end quality products in which Europe excels.

### The event:

A press release will be issued

### The sources:

[IP/07/142](#): Food Quality Schemes under the Microscope


[Fact Sheet](#): European Policy for Quality Agricultural Products

European Commission's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/foodqual/quali1\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/foodqual/quali1_en.htm)

Commissioner Mariann Fischer Boel's blog:

<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/fischer-boel/>

 EBS archive [I-036473](#) Food safety: Retrospective, Organic Agriculture and Biotechnology – 2001

 EBS archive [I-058048](#) Organic Farming: The Consumer's side - 2008

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## Wednesday 15 October: New EU legislation to combat illegal logging

### The news:

The European Commission will present draft legislation to prevent illegally harvested timber and timber products from being placed on the European market.

### The background:

Illegal logging causes considerable environmental damage and biodiversity loss. It has serious implications for climate change, often ignores the rights of indigenous peoples and can make forests more vulnerable to fires.

A significant proportion of timber from certain countries currently sold in the EU is thought to come from illegal sources. The proposed regulation will oblige traders to identify the country of origin of their timber, and ensure that timber they sell has been harvested according to the relevant laws of that country.

This will enable the EU to have a significant influence on illegal logging by sending a strong message to suppliers to the EU market. The proposal will increase the protection and preservation of forests, especially in developing countries that export forest products to the EU.

EU policy on illegal logging and related trade was set out in the 2003 Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. A key measure introduced was a voluntary bilateral licensing scheme with timber exporting countries to ensure only legally harvested timber products enter the EU.

### The event:

A press conference will be held by Commissioner Dimas at 12:30 in the Berlaymont press room following the adoption of the legislation by the Commission.



Available on EbS

### The sources:

Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT):

<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/forests/flegt.htm>

Council Regulation (EC) No 2173/2005 of 20 December 2005 on the establishment of a FLEGT licensing scheme for imports of timber into the European Community:

[http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type\\_doc=Regulation&an\\_doc=2005&nu\\_doc=2173](http://eur-lex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexplus!prod!DocNumber&lg=en&type_doc=Regulation&an_doc=2005&nu_doc=2173)

Commissioner Dimas' blog:

<http://blogs.ec.europa.eu/dimas/>

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## Wednesday 22 October: Georgia Donors' Conference

### The news:

The European Commission and the World Bank, together with the French and the Czech Presidencies of the Council, will host a Donors' Conference for Georgia at ministerial level in Brussels.

The purpose of the conference is to mobilise external assistance to support the country in the reconstruction of damaged infrastructure, reintegration of internally displaced people and in accelerating Georgia's recovery from the impact of the August 2008 conflict on its economy as well as improving the security of Georgia's energy infrastructure.

EU Member States, third countries, international financial institutions and international organisations will participate in the conference.

### The background:


The Commission has already proposed a comprehensive EC special assistance package to Georgia of up to € 500 million for the years 2008 – 2010 which is currently with the European Parliament for approval. This would be the overall framework for concrete EC programmes to be worked out based on the comprehensive needs assessment report coordinated by the World Bank.

Co-chaired by External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy Commissioner, Benita Ferrero-Waldner and World Bank Vice-President Shigeo Katsu, the conference will include key note statements by the Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and Georgian Prime Minister Lado Gurgenidze.

### The event:

"Georgia Donors' Conference", from 9ht30 to 17h00, Brussels, Charlemagne Building.

The introductory statements during the first part of the conference as well as the Press Conference at the end will be open to journalists accredited to the conference.

 EbS will cover the introductory remarks and the Press Conference. For details a separate media advisory will be sent out in due time.

### The sources:

European Commissioner's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/georgia/conference/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/georgia/conference/index_en.htm)

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/ferrero-waldner/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/ferrero-waldner/index_en.htm)

 Infoclip [I-058249](#) External Relations

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## Wednesday 22 October: The outermost regions, an asset for Europe

### The news:

The Commission will launch a communication on the outermost regions (OR). Aware of the vulnerability and particular exposure of outermost regions to the challenges faced by the EU and in order to gather input for its reflection on the development of a European strategy for outermost regions, the European Commission launched a wide-ranging consultation in September 2007 with the European institutions, Member States, outermost regions, socio-professional groups, research centres and universities, and organised an inter-institutional and partners' conference on 14 and 15 May 2008 in Brussels.

Recognition of the specific characteristics of the OR has resulted, since 2007, in the adoption of new programmes and measures targeted at them. The numerous contributions received during the consultation reflect the high level of engagement and interest in the strategy, especially at the regional and local level.

Since 1999, the European Union has recognised that outermost regions face different geographical and economic conditions compared to other regions of Europe: insularity, remoteness, small size, economic dependence etc. The new strategy seeks to overcome these handicaps while at the same time emphasising how Europe can make the most of the special assets that OR offer: their remarkable biodiversity and wealth of marine ecosystems, their geostrategic impact, their ideal location for experimentation to combat the effects of climate change and high-quality laboratories.

### The background:

The Commission's communication was requested by the European Council in December 2007 and follows a public consultation carried out by after a previous communication in September 2007.

The European Union comprises seven outermost regions which form part of three Member States (France, Portugal and Spain). They are the four French overseas departments (DOM): Guadeloupe, French Guiana, Reunion and Martinique, together with the autonomous regions of the Azores and Madeira and the Canary Islands.

For example, the EU support the development of " sea sciences" in the Island of Reunion (biodiversity, marine ecology..), the Oceanography and Fisheries Department of the University of the Azores, the Canary Islands Astrophysics Centre (IAC) and a observation project of the Amazonian and Caribbean environment in French Guiana (SEAS).

### The event:

The communication will be presented by Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hübner, at a press conference in the pressroom of the Berlaymont building, at 11:30.

 Available on EbS

### The sources:

[IP/08/743](#): Conference in Brussels on the outermost regions, May 2008

[IP/07/1305](#): *"Development and assessment of the strategy for the most remote regions "*

[COM/07/507](#): Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions - Strategy for the Outermost Regions: Achievements and Future Prospects.

The site of the public consultation:

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/rup/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/rup/index_en.htm)

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## Thursday 23 – Friday 24 October: First European Heritage Forum on "Heritage and Dialogue"

### The news:

The first European Heritage Forum, organised within the context of the European Heritage Days as a joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Commission, will take place in Brussels, on 23-24 October 2008. It will mark the 20th Anniversary of the European Heritage Days in Belgium, and contributes to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue 2008.

### The background:

The idea is to organise these new Forums in a different country each year, on a date as close as possible to the European Heritage Days. The theme of the 1<sup>st</sup> Forum in 2008 will be "Heritage and Dialogue", linking it to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue. In 2009, the emphasis may shift towards 'heritage and creativity', in line with the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009.

### The event:

The Forum will be opened on 23 October by Jan Figel', European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, Director General - Education, Culture and Heritage, Youth and Sport, at the Council of Europe, and Guido Fonteyn, journalist, on behalf of the Belgian Regions.

 Coverage by EbS (tbc)

Venue: Bedford Hotel, rue du Midi 135-137, 1000 Brussels

The format of the Forum consists of interactive dialogue between the participants on the theory and practice of heritage. All the participants will have the opportunity to participate in round table discussions.

### The sources:

Programme Forum:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/aware/ehd/DGIV\\_PAT\\_JEP\\_2008\\_7\\_E\\_programm\\_eFORUM\\_23-24oct\\_030908\\_.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/aware/ehd/DGIV_PAT_JEP_2008_7_E_programm_eFORUM_23-24oct_030908_.pdf)

Council of Europe:

[http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/aware/ehd/events2008\\_FORUM\\_fr.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/cultureheritage/aware/ehd/events2008_FORUM_fr.asp)

European Commission Culture web site:

[http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/index_en.htm)

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## Thursday 30 to Friday 31 October: Improving European coordination to effectively combat Alzheimer's disease

### The news:

Politicians, experts and patient organisations will discuss ways to fight against Alzheimer's disease and degenerative illnesses at a conference in Paris.

The event will focus on patient-care, social support, on the development of specific skills and on the adaptation of professions based on patient needs. It will also address researchers by coordinating ongoing research programmes in various European countries.

### The background:

The fight against Alzheimer's disease is one of the main priorities of European health policy. Europe faces the twofold challenge of an ageing population and caring for dependant patients, and the effects are already being felt on the social level.

This situation has encouraged the development of a joint approach in the health care field, based on exchanging and sharing experience on a European level.

### The event:

Conference in Paris, Bibliothèque Nationale de France.

### The sources:

On the Commission's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/mental/mental\\_health\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental/mental_health_en.htm)

Annual Report on Alzheimer in Europe:

[http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_information/reporting/docs/2007\\_dementiayearbook\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_information/reporting/docs/2007_dementiayearbook_en.pdf)



Infoclip [I-055401](#): Healthcare without borders

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## **Friday 31 October: Youth delegates set the course for European youth policies during European Youth Week**

### **The news:**

At the European Youth Week, 2 – 6 November, 200 delegates nominated by the National Youth Councils will discuss the direction of EU youth policies beyond 2009 and adopt conclusions that will be presented to Commissioner Figel' and other senior representatives of EU institutions.

European Youth Week 2008 celebrates twenty years of European programmes for youth. The purpose is to discuss the challenges that young people in Europe will be facing in the years to come. This year's Youth Week is also dedicated to "intercultural dialogue" – the EU's theme of 2008.

The conclusions that will be adopted during the European Youth Week 2 – 6 November will be taken into account as the Commission puts forth a proposal for a new framework for co-operation in the field of youth, scheduled for spring 2009. They will also complement the results of an on-line consultation launched by the European Commission on 22<sup>nd</sup> September (until 25 November).

### **The background:**

The European Youth Week is an event that is organised by the European Commission and the European Parliament every 18 months. The European Youth Week 2008 is the fourth of its kind, following similar successful undertakings in 2003, 2005 and 2007.

It has three objectives:

- to contribute to the discussions on the future direction of EU youth policies
- to take stock of EU youth programmes over the past two decades
- to contribute to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

1.5 million young people have participated in such programmes since 1988. One example is the European Voluntary Service (EVS). Through this programme young Europeans can participate in unpaid and full-time voluntary activities in a foreign country within or outside the EU. The EVS spans areas such as culture, social care, cultural heritage, and civil protection, and is open to young people between 18 and 30 years.

### **The event:**

5<sup>th</sup> November: at the European Youth Celebrations ceremony, Youth in Action programme awards will be presented to projects that have benefited from the support of the programme in 2005-2007, in the presence of Commissioner Figel' and other guests at the Halles de Schaerbeek. All projects have an intercultural priority, as the ceremony will be a youth contribution to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Friday 31st October, 11.30 – 12:00: technical briefing on the European Youth Week 2008.

**The sources:**

The European Youth Week website:

<http://youthweek.eu/>

Commissioner Figel's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_barroso/figel/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/figel/index_en.htm)

European Youth Week in your country:

<http://www.youthweek.eu/european-youth-week-in-your-country.html>

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## Wednesday 5 November: Enlargement package

### The news:

The Commission will adopt an enlargement strategy paper, which gives an updated overview of the EU's enlargement policy and a summary of progress made over the past twelve months by each of the countries that share a perspective to join the EU. These are the three candidate countries; Croatia, Turkey and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and the potential candidates; Albania, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Kosovo Under UN Security Council Resolution 1244. More detailed assessments will be provided in the progress reports for each country that will be published as background documents.

To establish a clear framework for the enlargement policy, the Commission will also adopt the Multi-annual Financing Framework document for all the candidate and potential candidate countries establishing the financial framework for 2008-2011 with indicative allocations for each beneficiary.

### The background:

Enlargement has been a success story for the EU and Europe as a whole. It has helped Europe overcome its division and contributed to peace and stability throughout the continent. It has inspired reforms and has consolidated common principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law as well as the market economy. The wider internal market and economic cooperation have increased prosperity and competitiveness, enabling the enlarged Union to respond better to the challenges of globalisation.

At the Dec. 2006 Summit, EU Heads of State and Government renewed the consensus on the Enlargement policy. They consolidated the EU's enlargement agenda, which now covers South-East Europe, i.e. the Western Balkans and Turkey. At the same time they emphasised conditionality. This means that the European perspective can only materialise if the candidate countries and potential candidates meet the accession criteria. Quality is more important than speed. Enlargement is a gradual and carefully managed policy.

### The event:

Press conference by Commissioner Rehn, place and time TBC.

 Available on EbS

### The sources:

The Enlargement package of 2007:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2007/nov/strategy\\_paper\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/strategy_paper_en.pdf)

Related documents:


[IP/071651](#): Implementing the renewed consensus on enlargement

[MEMO/07/447](#): Key findings of the progress reports on the candidate countries: Croatia, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey

[MEMO/07/446](#) Key findings of the progress reports on Kosovo and the potential candidate countries: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia

European Commission website on enlargement:

[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index\\_fr.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/index_fr.htm)

 Infoclip [I-047965](#): EU Enlargement 2004

Infoclip [I-052497](#): EU Enlargement : Turkey – 2006

Infoclip [I-052498](#): EU Enlargement : Croatia - 2006

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## Thursday 6 and Friday 7 November: 7<sup>th</sup> EU-China Energy Conference

### The news:

The EU-China Energy Conference gathers together high-level European and Chinese representatives from industry and the administration every two years, alternating between China and Brussels. It is co-organized by the Chinese Ministry of Sciences and Technology and the Directorate General Transport & Energy (TREN).

The Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs will make an opening address as will Mr Shang Yong, Vice Minister for Science and Technology (MOST), Mr Fatih Birol, (IEA).

### The background :

The six main themes of this two-day Conference are:

Renewable energy for power generation (solar & wind);  
Increasing role of biofuels;  
Promoting hydrogen energy and fuel cells;  
Coal and gas hydrates;  
Carbon Capture and Storage  
Nuclear energy

The Director General of DG TREN Mr Mathias Ruete will present the latest on EU Energy Policy and there will also be a presentation by Mr Zhang, Deputy Director General of Hi-Tech Development, on China Energy Policy.

Various sessions will cover renewable energies for power generation, solar and wind and also the role of biofuels, hydrogen energy and fuel cells, coal and gas hydrates, CCS and nuclear energy.

### The event:

The event will take place in the Charlemagne Building in Brussels

A Press Conference will take place (Time and Place TBC – probably in Berlaymont's press room at 11h30)

### The sources:

European Commission 's website:

[http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy\\_transport/international/bilateral/china/energy/eu\\_china\\_7\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/energy_transport/international/bilateral/china/energy/eu_china_7_en.htm)

Commissioner Piebalg's website:

[http://europa.eu/comm/commission\\_barroso/piebalgs/team\\_fr.htm](http://europa.eu/comm/commission_barroso/piebalgs/team_fr.htm)

 Infoclip [I-049707](#): EU/China Relations - 2005

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