

## ENERGY LABELS: RETURN TO THE A-G SCALE WILL IMPROVE CONSUMER ORIENTATION



Labels that indicate energy consumption introduced twenty years ago remain one of the motivating factors for the development of more efficient products. However, with the technical innovation and shift of the appliances towards more efficient energy categories, the value of the information on the labels is falling. European Commission's proposal to return to the original range of energy labels with the scale from A-G should allow a better orientation for consumers. Nevertheless, the transformation will mean new costs for manufacturers. The impact of the proposal in practise was discussed on October 20 in the European House in Prague. "The aim of this proposal is to provide consumers with better information about energy efficiency when buying appliances, which leads to reduced energy consumption" said Michaela Mlíčková-Jelínková of Representation of the European Commission in the Czech Republic. According

to Juraj Krivošík, Director of the Center for Energy Efficiency SEVEN, the current energy labels do not provide sufficient information about market offer for consumers and that decreases their motivation to choose energy-saving appliances. Hana Schvarcová of the Ministry of Industry and Trade of the Czech Republic stressed the advantage of new product database that will unite all the information about available products on the market under one roof. On the other hand, Radek Hacaperka of the European Association of Domestic Equipment Manufacturers CECEC CZ said that some of the information in database is confidential and should be available only for authorized authorities. All speakers agreed that the return to the original A-G scale has a potential to provide a better consumer orientation on the market. However, massive information campaign is needed to provide clarity for the customers.

## MEPs CORNER



*The promotion of energy efficient products through labelling is undoubtedly beneficial for the consumers and I agree that the current system has become rather confusing. However, similarly to other cases we should be cautious as regards the scope of the new regulation, claim sufficient time for its introduction and safeguard a predictable environment for the manufacturers to motivate them to the innovations. In order to defend the interests of the Czech industry, as a lead committee member I am determined to closely watch every step taken by the ITRE rapporteur, Mr Tamburrano.*

MEP Evžen Tošenovský,  
Committee on Industry, Research and Energy of the European Parliament

## SAFE HARBOUR: BUSINESSES NEED IMMEDIATE REACTIONS

On the 5<sup>th</sup> of October, the European Court of Justice issued a judgement concerning the Safe Harbour agreement that says that the agreement is invalid and it cannot be used any longer. The agreement enabled the data transfer from the EU to the United States freely, because American companies that signed this agreement agreed to meet the European data protection conditions that are stricter than those in the US. However, the decision of the court claims that the Safe Harbour is not valid as it concluded that American surveillance authorities had access to personal data of European users. The judgement literally caused a shock to both European and American businesses. The main reason is that the decision created a state of legal

uncertainty, because the Safe Harbour framework has been used by several thousands of companies including small and medium sized ones. Now that the agreement is invalid, companies have to find other ways how to transfer data from across the Atlantic. Furthermore, the judgement could cause disruptions to the European single market as well, as all the member states can have completely different approaches to international data transfer. The business community therefore calls on the European Commission to push current negotiations on the new Safe Harbour agreement forward and create a framework that would respect fundamental human rights and provide legal certainty for the companies.

CEBRE was founded in 2002 by the three most important Czech business organizations - Czech Chamber of Commerce, Confederation of Industry of the Czech Republic, Confederation of Employers' and Entrepreneurs' Associations of the Czech Republic with kind support of the Ministry of Industry and Trade via its Trade promotion agency CzechTrade.



## News FLASH

### >CZECH REPUBLIC IS A LEADER OF REAL ESTATE INVESTMENTS IN THE REGION

Real estate investments market is thriving in the Czech Republic, as it became leader of real estate investments in Central and Eastern Europe. During the first nine months of 2015, the volume of transactions grew by 130% to 2.36 billion EUR.

### >CZECH BUSINESSES SUPPORT REFUGEE INTEGRATION

Main Czech employers' and entrepreneurs' associations expressed their willingness to integrate and employ refugees into local companies. Given the right education, Czech businesses are able to immediately offer job to approximately 5,000 refugees.

### >INDUSTRY 4.0 LAUNCHED IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of September, on the occasion of the International Engineering Fair in Brno, the representatives of the Czech government officially launched the Industry 4.0 initiative. As the country with a very high industrial production, the Czech Republic wants to draw inspiration from the German approach.

# NEW INVESTMENT COURT SYSTEM FOR ALL



In the middle of October, the European Commission introduced its proposal on creation of a new system for resolving disputes between investors and states, the Investment Court System. The system proposal has been introduced after results coming from a public consultation on modernisation of the existing Investor-to-state dispute settlement (ISDS), which was criticised by the civil society with

regards to the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and rejected by the European Parliament earlier in July. The new proposal consists of two parts, the substantive investment protection provisions and the functioning of the system that focuses on the settlement of the disputes between states and investors. The new court system is comprised by a first instance Tribunal and an Appeal Tribunal, that would be run

by highly qualified and publicly appointed judges. Furthermore, the proposal defines conditions, under which the investor is entitled to take a case before the Tribunal and provision to avoid frivolous claims are included as well. The main focus of the proposal is to guarantee the right to regulate for the governments, which was the main point of concern with regard to TTIP negotiations. The business community welcomes the aim of the European Commission to modernise the system of dispute settlements between investors and states, however, the current proposal contains several provisions that are rather worrisome for businesses. First of all, the initial aim was to announce a mechanism that would replace the ISDS system in current TTIP negotiations. However, the intention of the Commission now is to implement the new system into all ongoing and future free trade negotiations, including Japan, China and others. Furthermore, the new system includes the so-called "Loser Pays" principle, meaning the party that loses the case would have to pay all the related costs. This could be discouraging mainly for small and medium size companies that would think twice before entering into a dispute even if they had a legitimate case. Therefore, the business community calls on the Commission to conduct a deep and proper impact assessment that would evaluate all the consequences of introducing the new investment system.

## EESC CORNER: VALIDATION OF QUALIFICATIONS: NON-FORMAL AND INFORMAL LEARNING

Recently, CEDEFOP published the European inventory on validation of non-formal and informal learning, which covered 33 European countries. It showed that a better design and implementation of effective tools to validate non-formal and informal learning is needed so they can better contribute to tackling current bottlenecks within the EU labour market. New tools and policies are being designed. The EESC strongly believes that emphasis should be placed on identifying, recording, assessing and hence valorising the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning and doing so in the most comparable way possible that is comprehensible to all parties involved, particularly employers and educational institutions. This validation could provide opportunities in particular to certain disadvantaged groups (such as women, migrants, young people, and older workers). However, it should not create false hopes that they would quickly find a place in the labour market. This requires economic and social policy aimed more at investment, creating quality jobs, and reducing poverty and the risk of social exclusion. These policies must also guide and support the strengthening of education,

vocational training and retraining systems. Member States should provide opportunities for people of different age and qualification levels to get the outcomes of non-formal and informal learning validated. The EESC calls for support for all stakeholders, particularly social partners and other civil society organisations, to make them aware of the benefits of validation and enable them to participate actively in setting national qualifications frameworks and determining professional qualifications. A good national legislative framework is a prerequisite for ensuring the equal value of certificates achieved through formal and non-formal or informal learning. This places significant demands on the quality of validation processes, which should be financially supported by, for example, the European Social Fund. Also the collective bargaining and social dialogue between unions and employers could play an important role in the process of validating non-formal education and lifelong learning and it should be used as an instrument to work on validating non-formal learning as an important contribution to the debate on employability and instruments to support it. Given the high rate of youth unemployment,

opportunities for interaction between public and private employment agencies, volunteer organisations (particularly of young people) and employers should be supported. This can serve as a means of promoting the visibility – and raising awareness of the importance and value – of non-formal education and informal learning



in voluntary organisations, as well as strengthening mutual trust.

Marie Zvolská,  
EESC Member – Group I,  
co-rapporteur on the opinion

## CEBRE CALENDAR:

- **8<sup>th</sup> December** – CEBRE debate on New trade strategy of the European Commission in European House (Prague)

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