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<http://www.smh.com.au/business/carbon-economy/clean-energy-challenges-await-returning-policymakers-week-in-review-20130918-2txyv.html>

Clean energy challenges await returning policymakers: Week in Review

Policymakers in Brussels and Washington D.C. last week got to grips with some of the items on their post-summer break clean energy agendas – and avoided others. There was a significant development on biofuels in Brussels, as the European Parliament voted to limit the use of crop-based biofuels in transport.

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Also in Brussels last week, the new Lithuanian Presidency tried to get ministers to give the Council a mandate to start negotiations with the Parliament and Commission over backloading.

This follows the Parliament voting through the Commission proposal in July to support the struggling EU carbon price by delaying the auction of some carbon permits until later this decade.

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Elsewhere in Europe, the Czech Republic last week passed a law ending subsidies for new clean energy projects from next year. That was expected: prime minister Jiri Rusnok said at the publication of a draft in July that the cost of renewable energy subsidies threatened the country's industrial competitiveness.

Meanwhile, there was some confusion over a new French carbon levy on fuels last week, as environment minister Philippe Martin said there would be a new “carbon component” in consumer taxes, without giving further details.

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Across the pond, Washington D.C. was abuzz last week with rumours that the Environmental Protection Agency is set to publish emissions limits for new coal plants. The agency proposed limits of 1,000 pounds of carbon dioxide per megawatt hour last year – about the same as the UK's 450g per kilowatt hour limit – but agreed to revise the rules to treat coal distinctly from natural gas. The new limit for coal is said to be higher but not enough to allow new plants to operate without carbon capture technology.

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Clean energy stocks again performed well in the public markets last week. The WilderHill New Energy Global Innovation Index, or NEX, which tracks 98 clean energy companies, rose 2.4 per cent, again beating broader market indices such as the S&P 500 Index and Nasdaq Composite Index.

All sectors were up, with US microconverter producer Enphase Energy leading the pack with a 16.1 per cent gain, followed by SolarCity. The US rooftop installer added 15.6 per cent as it announced a fund with Centrica's Direct Energy unit to finance up to \$US124 million of projects.

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European Union carbon permits advanced for a fourth straight week as German power prices continued to rise.

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