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Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

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¹ • Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
 • Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
 • Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

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ITEMS DEBATED

YOUTH

European Solidarity Corps

The Council agreed its position (general approach) on a draft regulation on the European Solidarity Corps (ESC).

The regulation aims to strengthen cohesion, solidarity and democracy in Europe by offering young people the possibility to volunteer or work in beneficial projects across Europe.

The agreed text opens the ESC to people aged 18-30 from the European Union, acceding, candidate and potential candidate countries, EFTA and EEA agreement countries, Switzerland and countries of the European neighbourhood policy.

The overall budget will be based on 100% redeployments of heading 1a which means various existing programmes.

[European Solidarity Corps: Council agrees on general approach](#)

Smart Youth Work

The Council adopted conclusions on smart youth work ([13593/17](#)). The conclusions emphasise the importance of launching smart and purposeful actions to support the development of digital competencies and safe tools to prevent and manage the risks of the digital era for young people, but also to empower young people through digital media and technology, to support their self-realisation and active citizenship.

Issues that matter to young people and possible solutions

Youth ministers held a policy debate on 'What's next? The issues that matter to young people and possible European efforts to address these issues'.

The Presidency highlighted the importance of supporting and engaging young people in the current political agenda of the European Union.

Some of the points raised during the debate were as follows:

- a wide range of issues are of key importance for young people. Some examples are migration and its effects on young people, decent jobs (employment), quality education, the challenges of social media and the online world, mental health problems and the fight against radicalisation and violent extremism.
- the Erasmus + project - together with other European initiatives - is a big success. It needs to be further maintained and developed
- new ways of consulting young people - not only organised young people but also disadvantaged youth - need to be developed. Using e-participation and social media are possible options.
- the two main challenges for the European Union are effective youth participation and active citizenship on the one hand and employment on the other.

To broaden the debate, a Twitter live feed was opened so that young Europeans could voice their opinions and concerns. Young people raised a number of issues, including votes for 16-17 year olds and the plight of those not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

Other business

- *New Narrative for Europe*

The Council took note of information from the Commission, which presented the outcomes of the New Narrative for Europe project, due to end soon ([13884/17](#)).

– *Work programme of the incoming Presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Bulgarian delegation on its Presidency's main priorities in the youth field for the coming six months. They will focus on:

- finalisation of the European Solidarity Corps
- the role of young people in building resilience and ensuring demographic equality
- young people, peace and security.

EDUCATION

School development and excellent teaching

The Council adopted conclusions on school development and excellent teaching. ([13538/17](#))

The conclusions highlight the importance of ensuring high-quality and inclusive education for all, empowering teachers and school leaders, and shifting towards more effective, equitable and efficient governance. They also invite the Commission to support member states and complement their actions.

These conclusions follow the Commission communication of 30 May 2017 on school development and excellent teaching, which recalls that investing in young people is a top priority for the EU.

Renewed EU agenda for higher education

The Council adopted conclusions on a renewed agenda for higher education. These conclusions reflect the need for highly skilled individuals to ensure the future prosperity of Europe. The overall aim is to modernise higher education so that it keeps up with a rapidly changing world. ([13539/17](#))

The conclusions invite member states to focus on a series of actions around four areas: promoting excellence in skills development, addressing the needs of a diverse student body and supporting academic staff, contributing to innovation in the wider economy, and promoting efficiency and developing further quality assurance in the higher education system.

The Commission is also invited to take full account of the conclusions in the preparation of its proposals for the future strategic cooperation framework in the field of education and training, the EU programme on education and training after 2020 and other financial instruments.

These conclusions follow the Commission communication of 30 May 2017 on a renewed EU agenda for higher education.

Tracking graduates

The Council adopted a recommendation for tracking graduates. ([13361/17](#))

The objective of this recommendation is to encourage and support member states to improve the quality and availability of information on what graduates do after leaving higher education or vocational education and training. It encourages member states to develop national tracking systems and improve cooperation with the aim of making data from different countries easier to compare.

Monitoring the activities of graduates after their education and training can help to understand the causes of graduate employability problems and identify solutions. It can also contribute to improve the quality and relevance of education and help students make informed choices about what to study.

The proposal for a Council recommendation was presented by the Commission in the context of its communication of 30 May 2017 on a renewed EU agenda for higher education.

Skills, vocational education and training

Ministers held a debate, in public deliberation, on the future of skills and the changing role of vocational education and training (VET).

The Presidency invited a guest speaker, Mr Risto Maëots, CEO of the Estonian company Magnetic MRO, to introduce the topic. He said that VET faces several challenges, which include low popularity among young people, the flexibility and length of study programmes and coordination with relevant partners.

Following this, ministers raised several points, including:

- ensuring VET is competency-based and provides the key general skills needed
- incorporating new methods and digital possibilities into VET
- promoting lifelong learning and fostering the flexibility and permeability of the education system

- raising awareness among young people about the attractiveness of VET
- involving all VET actors, including the private sector as well as research and higher education institutions
- sharing best practices and bolstering the Erasmus+ programme after 2020.

[Discussion paper](#)

Other business

– *Gothenburg summit*

The Secretary-General of the Council of the EU informed ministers about the leaders' lunch discussion on education and culture which took place on 17 November 2017 during the Gothenburg summit. In this debate, leaders discussed how to enhance EU efforts in the area of education and culture.

Leaders discussed concrete ideas to further the EU's education agenda, such as scaled-up mobility and exchanges for young Europeans, a network of European universities, emphasis on language learning and the mutual recognition of secondary education diplomas.

– *Education summit*

The Commission provided further information on the education summit, which will be held in Brussels on 25 January 2017. The summit will focus on inequality and low achievement in basic skills, which is seen as a core challenge for the EU. The main themes of the summit will be: basic skills and inclusive education, smart investment in education, and what skills are needed for the coming decades.

The summit will bring together 400+ participants, in particular: education ministers from the member states, leading global speakers and representatives of key stakeholders such as teachers, learners and parents, researchers, business and civil society.

– *Promoting common values through education, training and non-formal learning*

The Commission informed the Council of its forthcoming proposal for a Council recommendation on inclusive education and promoting common values through education, training and non-formal learning. This proposal, expected to be released in early 2018, is a follow-up to the Paris declaration of 17 March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

– *Work programme of the incoming Presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Bulgarian delegation on its Presidency's main priorities in the education field. Priorities include:

- Erasmus+: mid-term evaluation and setting up the orientations on the future of the programme
- Investing in digital skills and connectivity
- ET2020: new mandates of the working groups in the European framework for education and training for the period 2018-2020
- Common EU values through education: adoption of a recommendation
- Key competences for lifelong learning: revision of a recommendation

AUDIOVISUAL/CULTURE

Promoting access to culture through digital means

The Council adopted conclusions on promoting access to culture through digital means. ([12980/17](#))

The conclusions acknowledge the significance of the digital shift for the cultural sector and highlight the opportunities presented by new technologies, especially in terms of better targeting existing audiences and reaching new ones.

To benefit fully from this potential, the conclusions encourage cultural organisations to embrace digital technologies and digital audience development, and to make the digital dimension an integral part of their functioning. Collaboration and exchange of knowledge, information and best practices, as well as data collection on digital audiences are ways of achieving this.

The conclusions also recommend the use of the European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018 as a platform to promote public access to digital heritage and increase cultural participation.

Access to culture is one of the key priorities of the Council Work Plan for Culture 2015-2018. In the conclusions, member states are invited to consider the topic of audience development via digital means also when designing a new Council Work Plan for Culture.

The role of culture in building cohesive societies in Europe

The Council exchanged views, in public deliberation, on how culture and cultural organisations can contribute to making European societies more cohesive.

The debate was introduced by a guest speaker, Ms Helen Sildna, a creative entrepreneur and social activist from Estonia, whose intervention focused on how the cultural sector can become and remain socially responsible, and be a solid partner for cities, states and communities.

Ministers generally agreed that cultural policies have the potential to increase people's sense of belonging and civic participation, thereby building bridges and addressing dangerous tendencies such as populism, nationalism and extremism. They discussed, in particular, best practices at national level and what can be done jointly at European level to reinforce national activities, as well as the specific role of cultural and heritage organisations.

Many ministers emphasised the role of culture in including different groups and highlighted the potential of digitisation and new technologies to make sure that the cultural offer reaches more people. Many agreed on the key role of the upcoming European Year of Cultural Heritage 2018.

Some delegations also asked for more ambition at EU level, advocating adequate funding for culture in the next budget period.

Other business

– *Gothenburg summit*

The Director-General for Education of the Council of the EU debriefed ministers about the discussions held at the Gothenburg summit on 17 November 2017. He focused in particular on the leaders' lunch discussion chaired by the President of the European Council, Mr Donald Tusk, on how to enhance EU efforts in the area of education and culture.

Leaders discussed concrete ideas to further the EU's education agenda, such as:

- stepping up mobility and exchanges for young Europeans through, among others, a stronger Erasmus project
- creating a network of European universities
- putting stronger emphasis on language learning
- mutually recognising secondary education diplomas
- promoting student mobility and participation through an EU student card.

The debate on education and culture is part of the Leaders' Agenda, which was discussed and enjoyed unanimous support by the members of the European Council on 20 October 2017. The aim of this concrete work programme is to guide EU action over the next two years.

– ***Friends of the Presidency on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations***

The presidency provided information on the work of the Friends of the Presidency group on an EU strategic approach to international cultural relations, which was created to follow up the recommendations set out in the Council conclusions adopted by the EYCS Council in May 2018. The Friends of the Presidency group was created to act as a cross-sectoral platform for developing a strategic approach to international cultural relations and has met three times to date. The Estonian presidency has continued the efforts started by the Maltese presidency and focused its work on the protection and prominence of cultural heritage. The choice of this topic was also influenced by the fact that 2018 will be the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

– ***Council of Europe convention on offences relating to cultural property - treaty open for signature (Nicosia, 19 May 2017)***

The Cyprus delegation informed the Council about the initiatives enshrined in the 'Nicosia Convention'. The aim of the convention is to enhance the legal framework against the illicit trafficking in cultural goods, by defining offences against cultural property and enabling international legal co-operation.

As the convention was opened for signature on 19 May 2017, in the framework of the Cyprus Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Cyprus delegation took the opportunity to encourage the EU and its member states to consider acceding to it.

– ***Defence of cultural heritage in crisis areas, the role of the European Union***

The Italian delegation drew ministers' attention to the issue of the defence of cultural heritage in crisis areas. Italy reported, in particular, on current initiatives within UNESCO and the United Nations to protect cultural heritage at risk and fight against illicit trafficking of cultural goods.

The Italian delegation also advocated for a stronger and more integrated role of the European Union in protecting cultural heritage in the framework of the Common Security and Defence Policy and for introducing a strong cultural element in all EU peace-keeping missions.

– ***Regulation on the import of cultural goods – active participation from a cultural politics point of view***

The German delegation informed the Council about the state of play of the Commission proposal on the import of cultural goods. In particular it expressed misgivings on some aspects of the proposal which would make it too easy to import cultural goods into the EU, even though their licit origin is questionable. In particular, Germany called upon other culture ministers to actively participate in the negotiation of the proposal in close coordination with their colleagues responsible for the file in the Competitiveness Council.

– ***Re-establishing Europe through culture***

The French delegation shared with the Council some of the ideas that emerged from the meeting of the EU ministers for culture – entitled 'Remaking Europe through culture' – organised by the French minister for culture as a side event at the Frankfurt Book Fair on 11 October 2017.

The event provided ministers with the opportunity to discuss practical initiatives embodying the aim of a 'People's Europe', re-established through culture, and to look at solutions that EU policies may provide to the challenges related to the creation of works and to cultural diversity in the digital age.

– ***Mobility of artists***

The Commission briefed the Council on the specific problems encountered by EU artists seeking to perform and tour in the United States. These problems are notably linked to visa costs, delays and denials and, according to the Commission, depend on the inconsistent interpretation and enforcement of existing rules by US officers. The Commission also illustrated possible ways forward to remedy the situation and encouraged ministers to cooperate with the Commission to find workable solutions and suggest them to the US government in the future.

– ***Review of the Directive on audiovisual media services (AVMS)***

The presidency updated the Council on the state of play of negotiations with the European Parliament on the review of the audiovisual media services (AVMS) directive, which governs the EU-wide coordination of national legislation on all audiovisual media - both traditional TV broadcasts and on-demand services.

The AVMS directive was introduced in 2010 to create a single market for the free circulation of audiovisual works and is based on a country-of-origin principle, according to which service providers are subject only to the rules applicable in their own country. At the same time, the directive seeks to ensure the protection of general public interests such as the protection of minors, media pluralism, cultural diversity, and consumer protection.

In the light of rapid technological changes, the Commission proposed a review of the AVMS directive in May 2016 on which the Council reached a general approach at the 23 May EYCS Council. Since then, 4 trilogues have taken place and a fifth informal trilogue is tentatively planned for 28 November.

– ***The House of European History in Brussels***

The Polish delegation drew the Council's attention to what it considered to be examples of incorrect information in the exhibition of the House of European History.

It also informed ministers about a letter addressed by the deputy prime minister and minister of culture and national heritage of the Republic of Poland, Prof. Piotr Gliński, to the president of the European Parliament, Mr Antonio Tajani. In that letter, Prof. Gliński voiced Polish concerns about the exhibition and expressed hope that the European Parliament, on whose initiative the House of European History was established, would manage to verify the content of the exhibition.

– ***Work programme of the incoming presidency***

The Bulgarian minister of culture, Boil Banov, presented the Bulgarian presidency's programme for the first half of 2018 in the field of audiovisual and culture. He focused in particular on:

- the revision of the AVMS directive, with the objective of reaching a political agreement with the European Parliament
- adopting Council conclusions on cultural heritage
- continuing the work of the Friends of the Presidency group on a strategic approach to international cultural relations
- the proposal for a regulation amending regulation (EU) No 1295/2013 establishing the Creative Europe Programme.

SPORT

Role of coaches in society

The Council adopted conclusions on the role of coaches in society ([13433/17](#)).

The conclusions highlight the central role played by coaches in supervising sports' activities and the expansion of their field of activity in recent years.

Today, the focus on sporting achievements is only one aspect of the tasks of coaches, as they are now expected to play a role in developing soft skills and values that are important for contemporary societies. Coaches can also have a significant role in strengthening human and social capital and thus have a positive impact on young athletes' personal development and upbringing. Coaches can also help to develop and promote cohesive societies as they work on a daily basis with people of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. This helps to enhance solidarity, tolerance and mutual respect among various groups and communities.

The conclusions invite member states to set up the appropriate frameworks to support coaches' efforts to acquire additional skills and competences that correspond to the expectations of today's society.

These conclusions are a direct follow-up to the 2017-2020 work plan for sport, adopted in May 2017, which encourages policy initiatives aiming for sport to have a positive impact on society.

EU structured dialogue on sport

The Council adopted a resolution aiming at further developing the existing high-level structured dialogue between EU institutions, member states' authorities and the sport movement ([13432/17](#)).

The 2017-2020 work plan for sport invites the Council to consider the evaluation of the structured dialogue with the sport movement. On this basis, the resolution highlights in particular the importance of introducing more flexibility for organising a structured dialogue in sport, so as to better match the format and level of its meetings to the needs and possibilities of EU presidencies. It also encourages those participating in the structured dialogue to hold more practical discussions at the executive level.

The EU structured dialogue on sport was set out in a resolution of November 2010. Sports directors and delegates of the member states discussed the current concept and possible improvements at an informal meeting in Tallinn on 12 July 2017.

Main challenges facing sport in the 21st century

As a follow-up to the adoption of the 2017-2020 work plan for sport in May 2017, ministers discussed how the role of sport has evolved in European society in recent decades and how the EU and national governments could improve their cooperation to better respond to the current challenges in this field ([13549/17](#)). Mr Thomas Back, president of the international Olympic committee (IOC), took part in the debate.

While sport is no longer seen as a simple leisure activity but is recognised as an economic driver for jobs and growth, the sector is facing major threats such as match fixing, corruption, doping and violence both on and off the field that require cooperation between governments of the EU and the sport movement.

Ministers highlighted the importance of enhanced structured dialogue between governments and sport movements and the exchange of best practices among member states in order to tackle current challenges in sports. They stressed the importance of promoting sports' integrity through good governance, transparency and credibility of bodies involved. They recognised the crucial role of sports in building cohesive and inclusive societies. They emphasised the need to give wider access possible to sports' practice and to promote shared ethical values in this context.

Other business

– *World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) meetings*

The Council was briefed by the EU representatives (BE, BG and RO sport ministers) on the outcome of the WADA meetings which took place in Seoul on 15 and 16 November 2017.

The meetings focused on budget, good governance of WADA, the WADA code review process and code compliance.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (www.wada-ama.org) set up in 1999, is a private law body whose mission is to promote, coordinate and monitor the fight against doping in sport in all its forms. Its key tasks include scientific research, education, the development of anti-doping capacities and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code.

A new World Anti-Doping Code was approved by the WADA Foundation Board at the World Conference on Doping in Sport in Johannesburg in November 2013. It came into force on 1 January 2015.

– ***Supporting the Olympic truce during the winter Olympic games of Pyeongchang***

The Greek delegation raised awareness about the UN General Assembly resolution, adopted on 13 November, calling for an Olympic truce, i.e. the cessation of hostilities starting seven days before the opening of the Olympic Games, and lasting until seven days after the closing of the Paralympic Games to ensure unhindered and safe access to the Games. It stressed the importance of promoting community development and peace through sport, ahead of the Olympic games to be held in Pyeongchang from 9 to 25 February 2018, and the leading role the EU should be playing in that context.

– ***2019 world conference on doping in sport***

The Polish delegation informed ministers about the 2019 world conference on doping in sport that will take place in Katowice, Poland in November 2017 ([14077/17](#)). The conference will discuss fundamental issues for the functioning of the world anti-doping system. A new WADA foundation board will be elected and changes to the world anti-doping code will be approved.

– ***Work programme of the incoming Presidency***

The Council took note of the Bulgarian Presidency main priorities in the field of sport for the coming six months, in particular:

- promoting European values through sport
- fighting against doping in sport, in particular in the context of the WADA review
- grassroots sports as a tool for integration and a bridge between tradition and innovation.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Relations with Armenia

The Council adopted a decision authorising the signing and provisional application of the EU-Armenia Comprehensive and Enhanced Partnership Agreement (CEPA).

[Text of the agreement](#)

[EU-Armenia relations \(factsheet\)](#)

[Eastern Partnership summit, 24/11/2017](#)

African Union - European Union relations

The Council approved the signature of a memorandum of understanding on peace and security between the African Union (AU) and the European Union (EU).

[5th African Union - EU Summit, 29-30/11/2017](#)

Restrictive measures - territorial integrity of Ukraine

The Council added one person to the list under restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine. The name of the person concerned is published in the Official Journal of 22 November 2017.

EUAM Ukraine

The Council extended the mandate of EU Advisory Mission (EUAM) in Ukraine until 31 May 2019 and approved a budget of € 32 million for the next 18 months.

See [press release](#)

Union for the Mediterranean

The Council added the position of the EU and its member states for the 4th Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) ministerial conference on strengthening the role of women in society to take place on 27 November 2017 in Cairo.

[Union for the Mediterranean secretariat](#)

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

EUBAM Libya

The Council approved a budget of € 31.2 million for the period from 1 December 2017 to 31 December 2018 for EUBAM Libya.

As part of the EU's comprehensive approach to support the transition to a democratic, stable and prosperous Libya, EUBAM Libya is mandated to plan for a possible future EU mission providing advice and capacity-building in the area of criminal justice, migration, border security and counter-terrorism.

Any future civilian mission in Libya would seek in particular to address law enforcement aspects of irregular migration, smuggling of migrants and trafficking of human beings while promoting longer-term efforts on security sector reform, including governance. It would be conducted at the request of the legitimate Libyan authorities, with their full ownership.

The civilian planning capacity co-operates closely with, and contributes to, the efforts of the United Nations Support Mission in Libya.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

New role of certification bodies on CAP expenditure

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' report entitled 'The certification bodies' new role on CAP expenditure: a positive step towards a single audit model but with significant weaknesses to be addressed', as set out in [10709/17](#).

AGRICULTURE

International Olive Council - EU position

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted on behalf of the EU within the Council of members of the International Olive Council (IOC).

The Council of Members is to adopt decisions modifying trade standards applying to olive oils and olive-pomace oils during the 106th session of the International Olive Council ('IOC') from 21 November to 24 November 2017. The decisions to be adopted will influence in particular marketing standards concerning olive oil adopted by the Commission pursuant to Regulation (EU) No 1308/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

The IOC is an international intergovernmental organisation in the field of olive oil and table olives. It was set up in Spain in 1959, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Council contributes to the sustainable and responsible development of olive growing and it serves as a world forum for discussing policymaking issues and tackling present and future challenges. The EU is member of the IOC.

ENVIRONMENT

EU Ecolabel

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission decision amending [decision 2009/300/EC](#) regarding the content and the period of validity of the ecological criteria for the award of the EU Ecolabel to televisions ([12412/17](#) + [ADD1](#)).

The 'energy savings' criterion in decision 2009/300/EC has been updated to ensure that the EU Ecolabel is awarded to energy efficient products.

The validity of the current ecological criteria for the 'televisions' product group and the related assessment and verification requirements expires on 31 December 2017. Now, it will be prolonged until 31 December 2019 to enable sufficient time for the revision of the criteria once the proposed new energy labelling and eco-design requirements are adopted.

The Commission decision is subject to the so-called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that, now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the decision, unless the European Parliament objects.

The EU Ecolabel helps consumers identify products and services that have a reduced environmental impact throughout their life cycle, from the extraction of raw material through to production, use and disposal. It is a voluntary label promoting environmental excellence.

TRANSPORT

Transport infrastructure networks

The Council authorised the Commission to enter into negotiations on high-level agreements between the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) on transport infrastructure networks.
