



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

3200th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 20 November 2012

President

Mr Andreas MAVROYIANNIS
Deputy Minister for European Affairs of Cyprus

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

*The Council agreed on a fourth partial general approach covering further elements of the **cohesion policy legislative package for 2014-2020**.*

*The **European Commission** presented its **work programme for 2013**.*

*The Council took note of the preparations for the special European Council meeting on 22-23 November dedicated to the EU's **multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020**.*

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- 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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PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:

Mr Dirk WOUTERS

Permanent Representative

Bulgaria:

Mr Nickolay MLADENOV

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Nicolai WAMMEN

Minister for European Affairs

Germany:

Mr Michael LINK

Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Eamon GILMORE

Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

Ms Lucinda CREIGHTON

Minister of State for European Affairs (Departments of the Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs and Trade)

Greece:

Mr Dimitrios KOURKOULAS

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Iñigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO Y MONTOJO

State Secretary for the European Union

France:

Mr Bernard CAZENEUVE

Minister with responsibility for European Affairs, attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Deputy Minister to the President of the Republic of Cyprus for European Affairs
Director for European Affairs

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Audronius AŽUBALIS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

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Hungary:

Ms Enikő GYŐRI

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr Tonio BORG

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

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Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

Mr Reinhold LOPATKA

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of European and International Affairs

Poland:

Mr Marek PRAWDA

Permanent Representative

Portugal:

Mr Miguel MORAIS LEITÃO

State Secretary attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Leonard ORBAN

Minister of European Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Igor SENČAR

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Peter JAVORČÍK

State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Alexander STUBB

Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade

Sweden:

Ms Birgitta OHLSSON

Minister for EU Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr David LIDINGTON

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice President

Mr Janusz LEWANDOWSKI

Member

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Mr Joško KLISOVIĆ

Deputy Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

Cohesion policy - public session

The Council agreed on a fourth partial general approach¹ on the cohesion policy legislative package for the 2014-2020 period ([15880/1/12 REV 1](#)+ [15880/12 ADD 3 REV 3](#)).

The purpose of cohesion policy is to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the EU's various regions.

The partial general approach covers the following two elements:

- Financial management, as set out in [15880/12 ADD 1 REV 1](#). This part of the partial general approach is aimed at ensuring that EU support under the cohesion policy respects the principle of sound financial management and safeguards the European Union's financial interest. The provisions cover inter alia areas such as the annual pre-financing and the interim payments of programmes by the Commission, the application of financial corrections in case of irregularities and rules for the closure of operational programmes.
- Common strategic framework, as set out in [15880/12 ADD 2 REV 1](#). This part of the partial general approach is about setting up a framework that provides strategic orientation to the programming and the coordination of EU support under the five following funds: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF).

¹ A general approach is a political agreement of the Council pending the adoption of a first-reading position by the European Parliament. The general approach on the cohesion policy legislative package is partial since some elements are excluded. This concerns for instance the overall amount for cohesion policy in 2007-2013 which will be decided at a later stage.

The partial general approach complements the three partial general approaches agreed on 24 April ([8925/12](#))¹, 26 June ([11221/12](#))² and 16 October ([14911/12](#))³.

Care has been taken to ensure that these partial general approaches do not prejudice the outcome of negotiations on other elements of cohesion policy or on the MFF for 2014-2020.

Since all four partial general approaches were agreed on the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed they may be subject to change as a result of these other negotiations.

The presidency intends to step up the informal trilogues with the European Parliament and the Commission achieving a preliminary agreement among the three institutions on programming before the end of the year, thus facilitating the preparatory work of member states and regions for the new programmes. The presidency will also complement the work on the cohesion policy package with some other elements still to be agreed at the Council.

¹ This partial general approach covered the six following items: programming; ex ante conditionality; management and control; monitoring and evaluation; eligibility; major projects.

² This partial general approach covered the four following items: thematic concentration; financial instruments; net revenue generating operations and private public partnerships; performance framework.

³ This partial general approach covered the seven following items: territorial development; European territorial cooperation; financial issues not covered in the negotiations on the MFF for 2014-2020; management and control; country-specific recommendations; information and communication, technical assistance; indicators.

European Commission work programme - public session

The European Commission presented its work programme for 2013 ([15691/12](#)).

Multiannual financial framework

The Council took note of the preparations for the special European Council on 22-23 November dedicated to the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020.

The objective is to reach an agreement at the European Council on the basis of draft conclusions prepared by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the Commission.

The draft conclusions replace the MFF negotiating box while keeping its structure and function, i.e. to outline the main elements and options, hereby facilitating the negotiations and constituting the basis of an agreement.

Unlike the draft conclusions all versions of the MFF negotiating box were prepared under the responsibility of the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU.

Compared to the last version of the negotiating box ([15599/12](#)) the draft conclusions include notably further reductions of the overall expenditure ceiling and on the expenditure ceilings for the different categories of expenditure (the headings).

The discussion followed an exchange of views which ministers held with president Van Rompuy on the preparation of the European Council at a dinner on 19 November.

Once an agreement is reached, its content will feed into legislative work on the different legal acts.

The aim of the MFF negotiations are threefold and are about defining for the next budget cycle:

- expenditure limits that determine how much money the EU can spend;
- spending programmes that determine on what the money should be spent;
- rules defining how the expenditure should be financed.

The negotiations are conducted according to the principle that nothing is agreed until everything is agreed.

As on previous occasions, the Cyprus presidency had an exchange of views with representatives of the European Parliament before the Council meeting and debriefed them afterwards.

Further information on the negotiations may be found on the Council's MFF webpages:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/special-reports/mff>

Preparation of the December European Council

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda, drawn up by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the presidency and the Commission, for the European Council meeting to be held on 13 and 14 December ([15628/12](#)). The European Council will notably cover:

- economic issues (future of the Economic and Monetary Union; assessment of progress made on the key files for economic governance and banking union; examination of the state of play on the Single Market Act I and setting further orientation on Single Market Act II);
- other items (preparation of the European Council debate on defence scheduled for December 2013; enlargement).

Follow-up of the October European Council

The Council took stock of the follow-up to be given to the European Council held on 18-19 October. The meeting focused on economic policy (review of progress in the implementation of the compact for growth and jobs; the future of the Economic and Monetary Union; assessment of progress as regards the single European banking supervision mechanism) and strategic partners.

Other Business**Informal meeting of ministers for cohesion policy**

The Cyprus presidency briefed the Council on the informal meeting of ministers in charge of cohesion policy held in Nicosia on 6 November 2012 ([16284/12](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Effectiveness of staff development in the European Commission

The Council adopted conclusions on a special report from the European Court of Auditors entitled "The effectiveness of staff development in the European Commission".

2012 European Semester - Synthesis report

The Council took note of a presidency synthesis report of the 2012 European Semester and the recommendations included therein. The report is set out in document [15674/12](#).

BUDGETS

Mobilisation of the EU Solidarity Fund for Italy

The Council adopted¹ its position on draft amending budget no 5 for 2012, accepting the Commission proposal to mobilise the EU Solidarity Fund for an amount of EUR 670 million in order to provide financial assistance to Italy that was hit by a series of earthquakes earlier this year.

TRADE POLICY

International Jute Study Group - terms of reference

The Council adopted a decision on the EU's position within the International Jute Study Group (IJSG), opposing the opening of negotiations for the renewal of the terms of reference beyond 2014.

The current terms of reference of the IJSG will expire on 30 April 2014. The opening of negotiations for their renewal under the aegis of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development will be discussed at the 15th session of the IJSG Council on 6 December 2012. The IJSG is an intergovernmental body with the mandate to promote sustainable development of the global jute sector.

¹ The Dutch, Swedish and UK delegations abstained.

EU/Israel association agreement - Conformity assessment of industrial products

The Council approved the conclusion of an additional protocol to the EU/Israel Euro-Mediterranean association agreement on conformity assessment and acceptance of industrial products. The protocol was signed in Brussels on 6 May 2010.

The EU/Israel Euro-Mediterranean agreement entered into force on 20 November 1995.

ENVIRONMENT

Biocidal products

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of the following Commission's legislative acts amending directive 98/8/EC¹ concerning the placing of biocidal products on the market:

- directives to include Didecyldimethylammonium Chloride ([14684/12](#)), Alkyl (C12-16) dimethylbenzyl ammonium chloride (14688/12), pyriproxyfen ([14689/12](#)), diflubenzuron ([14690/12](#)) as active substances in Annex I;
- decision concerning the non-inclusion of certain substances in Annex I, IA or IB ([14691/12](#));
- directive to extend the inclusion in Annex I of the active substance thiamethoxam to product type 2 ([14692/12](#)).

The Commission acts are subject to what is known as the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt them, unless the European Parliament objects

¹ OJ L 123, 24.4.1998.

Bern Convention

The Council adopted a decision (15277/12) on the position to be adopted, on behalf of the European Union, at the 32nd meeting of the Standing Committee of the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention).

The "Bern Convention" aims to ensure conservation of wild flora and fauna species and their habitats. Special attention is given to endangered and vulnerable species, in particular the migratory ones.

The European Union is a Party to the Convention, which has been implemented at Union level by both directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds¹, and Council directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora².

FISHERIES

Fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2013

The Council adopted a regulation on fishing opportunities for 2013 for certain fish stocks in the Baltic Sea ([15369/12](#)).

A political agreement was reached on this regulation at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting in October ([15100/12](#)). The regulation lays down for 2013 the maximum quantities of fish from specific stocks that can be caught in the Baltic Sea (total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas), as well as the fishing effort limits for Baltic cod stocks.

The regulation takes into account available scientific advice and, in particular, the reports drawn up by the International Council for the exploration of the Sea (ICES) and the Scientific, Technical and Economic Committee for Fisheries (STECF). However, catch limits and fishing effort limits for cod stocks in the Baltic Sea are established in accordance with the rules laid down in regulation 1098/2007 establishing a multi-annual plan.

¹ OJ L 20, 26.1.2010, p. 7

² OJ L 206, 22.7.1992, p. 7

The regulation contains two sections for the management of the Baltic fisheries in 2012 through fishing opportunities: one section fixing the TACs and quotas and a second limiting the fishing effort, by imposing limits on their activity (number of days at sea).

According to article 43(3) of the Lisbon Treaty it is incumbent upon the Council to adopt the measures on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities in the framework of the common fishery policy. The European Parliament's participation and the Economic and Social Committee's opinion are therefore not required for this regulation.

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed Mr Ignacio GONZÁLEZ GONZÁLEZ (Spain) as member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([15893/12](#)).
