



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



5877/13

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PRESS RELEASE

3219th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 4 February 2013

President

Mr Eamon GILMORE

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Trade of Ireland

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

The Council discussed preparations for the European Council meeting to be held on 7 and 8 February, on the basis of draft conclusions.

It also discussed a work programme presented by the Irish presidency.

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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.

PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:

Mr Didier REYNDERS

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs,
External Trade and European Affairs

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivan NAYDENOV

Deputy 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 Matti MAASIKAS

Permanent Representative

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 Íñigo MÉNDEZ DE VIGO Y MONTOJO

State Secretary for the European Union

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

Lithuania:

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Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

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Hungary:

Ms Enikő GYŐRY

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Ms Marlene BONNICI

Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Mr Pieter DE GOOIJER

Permanent Representative

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Mr Reinhold LOPATKA

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of European and
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Poland:

Mr Piotr SERAFIN

State Secretary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Mr Miguel MORAIS LEITÃO

State Secretary attached to the Minister for Foreign
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Romania:

Mr Titus CORLĂTEAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Igor SENČAR

State Secretary at the Ministry of 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

.....

The government of the acceding state was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Ms Vesna PUSIĆ

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME

The Council held an exchange of views on the Irish presidency's work programme for the duration of its term of office (January to July 2013)¹.

The presidency intends to focus on the following priorities:

- Securing stability: focusing on banking union, the *European Semester* process and the next phase of economic and monetary union reforms.
- Investing in sustainable growth and jobs: among the main tasks are a single market for the future, including a digital single market, youth unemployment and smart and sustainable growth.
- Europe and the world: contributing to the pursuit of peace, democracy and prosperity and prioritising bilateral trade agreements with key partners, including the United States.

¹ http://www.eu2013.ie/media/eupresidency/content/documents/EU-Pres_Prog_A4.pdf

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

– February meeting

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 7 and 8 February.

The European Council will be called on to agree on the EU's multiannual financial framework for the 2014-2020 period. It will also discuss trade and external relations (Arab Spring and Mali).

The draft conclusions will be reviewed in the light of the Council's discussion.

– March meeting

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 14 and 15 March ([5639/13](#)).

The European Council is due to focus on:

- Economic policy: *European Semester*; compact for growth and jobs.
- External relations: relations with strategic partners; specific issues in the light of events.

The Council will hold a further discussion, on the basis of draft European Council conclusions, at its meeting on 11 March.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS****Readmission agreement with Cape Verde**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the signing of an agreement with the Republic of Cape Verde on the readmission of persons residing without authorisation ([14544/12](#)).

It also decided to forward a draft decision on the conclusion of the agreement to the European Parliament for its consent ([14546/12](#)).

TRADE POLICY**EU-Switzerland veterinary agreement**

The Council approved the position to be taken by the EU on amendment of annex 11 to the EU-Switzerland agreement on trade in agricultural products ("veterinary agreement") ([16724/12](#)).

The EU position acknowledges an equivalency of Swiss legislation with certain recent changes in the EU legislation concerning animal by-products and the protection of animals at the time of slaughter, subject to conditions. It also introduces a number of technical updates to the agreement.

Generalised scheme of preferences - Azerbaijan and Iran

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of a regulation removing Azerbaijan and Iran from the list of countries benefiting from the EU's generalised scheme of tariff preferences (GSP).

Article 4(1)(a) of the GSP regulation (978/2012) provides that a country that has been classified by the World Bank as a high or upper-middle income country during three consecutive years shall not benefit from the GSP general arrangement. Azerbaijan and Iran were classified by the World Bank as upper-middle income countries in 2010, 2011 and 2012. The Commission's draft regulation amends annex II of the GSP regulation accordingly.

The draft regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Now that the Council has given its consent, the regulation can enter into force unless the European Parliament objects to it.

Generalised scheme of preferences - Special incentive arrangement

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of a regulation establishing rules of procedure for granting, under the EU's generalised scheme of tariff preferences (GSP), a special incentive arrangement for sustainable development and good governance ("GSP+").

The Commission's draft regulation covers deadlines and the submission and processing of requests, in particular.

The draft regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Now that the Council has given its consent, the regulation can enter into force unless the European Parliament objects to it.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Euratom/Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation - Renewal of agreement

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion, by the Commission, of an agreement between the European Atomic Energy Community (Euratom) and the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO).

KEDO was established pursuant to a 1995 agreement, amended in 1997, between the Republic of Korea, Japan and the United States.

For more information, see: [//www.kedo.org/](http://www.kedo.org/).

TRANSPORT

Screening of liquids at airports

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of a regulation cancelling the obligation for all EU airports to introduce security screening of all liquids, aerosols and gels by 29 April 2013 ([17200/12](#)).

Restrictions applicable to those products remain in place for the time being, since the rule that liquids may be taken into security-restricted areas only on condition that they are screened or exempted from screening continues to apply.

After assessing the situation in respect of the screening of liquids at EU airports, the Commission has concluded that imposing a mandatory general introduction of such screening by the end of April this year would entail operational risks, and that the best way to guarantee both a high level of security and passenger facilitation is to pursue a more gradual approach to the lifting of restrictions.

The draft regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.
