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**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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3259th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 30 September 2013

President **Linas Linkevičius**
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

*The Council exchanged views on the EU's **cohesion policy package** for 2014-2020 and provided guidance to the presidency for finalising the negotiations with the European Parliament.*

*The Council examined an annotated draft agenda for the **European Council** meeting to be held on 24-25 October.*

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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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Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade

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Minister for EU Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr David LIDINGTON

Minister of State for Europe at the Foreign and
Commonwealth Office

Commission:

Ms Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice President

Mr Johannes HAHN

Membre

ITEMS DEBATED

Cohesion policy - public session

The presidency informed the Council about the state of play in the ongoing trilogue discussions with the European Parliament and the Commission on the EU's cohesion policy package for 2014-2020 on the basis of an issue paper ([13796/13](#)). The Council exchanged views and provided guidance to the presidency for finalising the negotiations with the European Parliament.

All member states considered that a timely agreement was urgently needed in order to allow the new cohesion policy programmes to be implemented as from 1 January 2014. Member states reminded the significant concessions which the Council had already made to the European Parliament. They reiterated their willingness to continue working in a constructive spirit on this file provided that the Council's efforts were matched by the European Parliament and that the agreements on the EU's multiannual financial framework 2014-2020 (MFF) reached on 8 February within the European Council and on 27 June between the Council and the European Parliament were respected.

With regard to the outstanding political issues the discussion went along the following lines:

Several member states opposed any dilution of the macro-economic conditionality. They considered it to be a key element of the European Council agreement of 8 February and stressed its importance for making sure that the five European structural and investment funds¹ were not undermined by unsound macro-economic policies. Other member states were open to making some adjustments within the framework of the mandate, notably to better clarify how the macro-economic conditionality would work in practice.

Many member states objected to any change to the performance reserve and the pre-financing which could have an impact on the payments' profile, seen as a core element of the MFF agreement. Some delegations were willing to explore ways in which to accommodate the European Parliament's wishes as long as the payments' profile was respected. The performance reserve is designed to ensure that the measures financed under the cohesion policy are result orientated. Pre-financing consists of advance payments allowing the managing authorities to start programmes and implement investment projects in advance.

¹ These are 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).

Some member states resisted to any modification to co-financing, reminding that national co-financing was essential to guarantee the ownership of the different programmes on the ground. Other member states were open to exploring this issue further along the lines suggested by the Commission (temporary increase subject to revision) as long as the overall balance was preserved.

On the Youth Employment Initiative, member states considered that the threshold of 25% youth unemployment was the right eligibility threshold for regions since lowering it would dilute the impact of this instrument. Suggestions were, however, made to extend the criteria for eligible persons from 15-24 years to 15-30 years on a voluntary basis.

Member states encouraged the presidency to reject any attempts to reopen the agreement reached in June of this year on a minimum share of 23.1% for the European Social Fund.

The purpose of cohesion policy is to reduce disparities between the levels of development of the EU's various regions by promoting economic growth, job creation and competitiveness.

Preparation of the October European Council

The Council examined an annotated draft agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 24-25 October ([12389/13](#)).

The European Council will focus on:

- Digital economy, innovation and services; completion of the digital single market and the European research area as well as the future of the "innovation union", peer review of the service directive and the licences for Europe process.
- Growth, competitiveness and jobs; implementation of the investment plan for Europe, progress in the area of youth unemployment and assessment of progress in simplification of regulation.
- Economic and monetary union; strengthened policy coordination, the social dimension of the EMU and state of play in the completion of the banking union.
- External relations; preparations for the Eastern Partnership summit in Vilnius.

The Council will hold a further discussion, on the basis of draft European Council conclusions, at its meeting on 22 October.

Any other business

– Balance of competence

The UK delegation informed the other member states about its ongoing balance of competence review.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

EU-Moldova - Joint committee on protection of geographical indications

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken by the EU within the Joint Committee set up by Article 11 of the agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova on protection of geographical indications (GIs) of agricultural products and foodstuffs, as regards the adoption of the rules of procedure of this committee ([13328/13](#)).

The agreement between the EU and Moldova on protection of GIs of agricultural products and foodstuffs entered into force on 1 April 2013. For the EU, this agreement is aimed at protecting and regulating the use of the GIs system. Reciprocally, in this framework, Moldova intends to develop and protect its current GIs in the EU. This agreement should improve the conditions of bilateral trade as well as promoting the quality in the food chain and stimulating sustainable rural development.

INTERNAL MARKET

Type-approval of motor cycles with regard to noise

The Council adopted a decision in order to apply Regulation No 41 of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) with a view to enabling European companies to follow a single set of requirements recognised worldwide on type-approval procedures for motor cycles with regard to noise.

The objective of the UNECE Regulation is to establish equivalent provisions for the sound control of motorcycles and clarifications as to the stationary noise measurement test of such vehicles.

UNECE develops international harmonised requirements to remove technical barriers to the trade in motor vehicles. The EU is a contracting party to this agreement.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

Sixth review meeting of the Contracting Parties to the Convention on Nuclear Safety

The Council noted the report on the implementation of the obligations under the Convention on Nuclear Safety which will be examined at the next review meeting, to be held from 24 March to 4 April 2014 ([13691/13 ADD1](#)).

For more information see [website](#).

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed Ms Susana DÍAZ PACHECO (Spain) as member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([13780/13](#)).
