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**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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## **PRESS RELEASE**

3047th Council meeting

### **General Affairs**

Brussels, 22 November 2010

President

**Steven Vanackere**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and  
Institutional Reforms

of Belgium

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

The Council discussed preparations for the December meeting of the **European Council**, taking stock of ongoing work on issues discussed in October.

It adopted a decision authorising Germany, Italy, Austria and the UK to apply a reversal of tax liability for the payment of value-added tax (VAT) on mobile telephones and integrated circuit devices, as a means of better **tackling VAT fraud**.

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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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**ITEMS DEBATED**

**FOLLOW-UP TO THE OCTOBER EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

The Council took note of a note from the presidency, setting out its intentions regarding the follow-up to the European Council meeting on 28 and 29 October (*doc.* [16204/10](#)).

**PREPARATION OF THE DECEMBER EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 16 and 17 December (*doc. [12345/10](#)*).

Further to the conclusions of its October meeting, the European Council is due to decide on the outline of a permanent crisis mechanism to safeguard the financial stability of the euro area and on a limited amendment to the EU treaties required to create such a mechanism. It will moreover take stock of work in progress on legislative proposals to strengthen EU economic governance provisions.

The European Council will also discuss work on the assessment of the EU's relations with its strategic partners, further to the conclusions of its September meeting.

The Council will hold a further discussion at its meeting on 13 December, on the basis of draft European Council conclusions.

## **USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE COUNCIL**

The Council took note of work regarding the possibilities for using information technologies to a greater extent within the Council, in particular videoconferencing and teleconferencing.

In the light of the disruption caused to air travel by the spread of a volcanic ash cloud over Europe in April, the Council's general secretariat was asked to examine the possibilities for using new technologies in the event of delegations being prevented from attending Council meetings. And the presidency prepared a draft code of conduct for the running of videoconferencing and teleconferencing within the Council.

As regards videoconferencing, the Council agreed on the need to upgrade the Council's current system so that it should be possible in the near future to organise such meetings with the participation of all member states.



**COMMISSION WORK PROGRAMME FOR 2011**

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of its work programme for 2011 (*doc. [15772/10](#) + [ADD 1](#)*).

## **EUROPEAN DISASTER RESPONSE**

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of a communication entitled "*Towards a stronger European disaster response: the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance*" (doc. 15614/10 + ADD 1).

It held an exchange of views, and asked the Permanent Representatives Committee to prepare conclusions for adoption at the Council's meeting on 13 December.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

**Common register of lobbyists**

The Council was informed by the Commission of developments regarding a common register of interest representatives (lobbyists) that the Commission and the European Parliament are preparing, and which is expected to become operational in 2011.

The Commission repeated its request for the Council to join the initiative.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED****ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS****VAT fraud - Mobile telephones and electronic devices**

The Council adopted a decision aimed at enabling certain member states to better tackle fraud with regard to the payment of value-added tax (VAT) on mobile telephones and integrated circuit devices and their components.

The decision authorises Germany, Italy and Austria to implement, on an optional and temporary basis, a reversal of tax liability as regards the payment of VAT on domestic supplies of those products. It also extends the period of validity of an existing authorisation for the United Kingdom.

The aim is to close off certain forms of tax fraud, in particular so-called carousel schemes whereby goods are traded several times by different suppliers without VAT being paid to the tax authorities. Applying a "reverse charge" principle, the decision allows, until 31 December 2013 in all four countries, liability for the payment of VAT on those goods to be shifted from the supplier (as normally required by EU rules) to the customer.

**BUDGETS****Mobilisation of the solidarity fund for Ireland**

The Council adopted its position on draft amending budget No 8 for 2010, accepting the Commission proposal to mobilise the EU solidarity fund for an amount of EUR 13.0 million for Ireland, following the severe floods which affected the country in November 2009.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **European Antifraud Office**

The Council approved the text of a letter to be sent to the Commission indicating its preferences for two of the six candidates short-listed by the Commission for the post of director of the European Antifraud Office (OLAF).

Under regulation 1073/99 the Commission appoints the OLAF director after having consulted the Council and the European Parliament.

### **Economic and Social Committee**

The Council appointed Mr Alberto NADAL BELDA (Spain), as a member of the European Economic and Social Committee for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 20 September 2015 ([14249/10](#)).

### **Committee of the Regions**

The Council appointed Mr Markus LINHART (Austria), as a member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January ([14090/10](#)).

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