



052352/EU XXIV.GP
Eingelangt am 25/05/11

**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



7932/11

PRESSE 69
PR CO 18

PRESS RELEASE

3079th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 21 March 2011

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P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

*The Council adopted a directive establishing new rules on the definition of criminal offences and the level of sanctions as relates to **trafficking in human beings**. The directive sets out to increase prevention and offer greater protection to the victims of human trafficking.*

*The Council discussed preparations for the March meeting of the **European Council**, which is due to discuss developments in **Libya** and elsewhere in the EU's southern neighbourhood, as well as the crisis in **Japan**, and to adopt a comprehensive package of measures to strengthen EU economic governance and ensure the stability of the euro area.*

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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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Commission:

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice-President

Ms Kristaline GEORGIEVA

Member

Secretariat General

Mr Pierre de BOISSIEU

Secretary General

ITEMS DEBATED

HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN LIBYA

The Council took stock of the humanitarian situation in Libya and neighbouring countries.

This follows a review of developments by the Foreign Affairs Council, and an assessment of the impact on energy markets by the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, both on 21 March.

EU RESPONSE TO THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN JAPAN

The Council took stock of the EU's response to the humanitarian crisis in Japan.

This follows an assessment by the Foreign Affairs Council and a review of the situation in the energy sector by the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, both on 21 March.

PREPARATION OF THE MARCH EUROPEAN COUNCIL

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 24 and 25 March.

The European Council is due to focus on:

- *Economic policy*: adoption of a comprehensive package of measures to strengthen EU economic governance and ensure the stability of the euro area.
- *Developments in Libya and elsewhere in the EU's southern neighbourhood*: follow-up to UN Security Council resolution 1973 and latest developments as regards Libya; implementation of measures agreed by the European Council on 11 March.
- *Crisis in Japan*: assessment of the humanitarian aid effort, the situation in the energy sector and the broader economic implications.

The draft conclusions will be reviewed in the light of the Council's discussion and, as regards Libya and Japan, developments on the ground. An annotated draft agenda was approved at the Council's meeting on 21 February (*doc. [6231/11](#)*).

As regards economic policy, the European Council will deal with:

- conclusion of the first phase of the European Semester (annual monitoring of budgetary policies and structural reforms);
- the strengthening of economic governance provisions;
- measures to restore the health of the banking sector;
- endorsement of the pact for the euro (economic policy coordination);

- adoption of a decision amending the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union with regard to the establishment of a European Stability Mechanism (ESM) to ensure the stability of the euro area;
- finalisation of work on the ESM and on the strengthening of the European Financial Stability Facility.

The Council also took note of a report from the presidency on progress in implementation of the European Semester, and agreed to submit it to the European Council (*doc. [7745/11](#)*).

The European Semester is being implemented for the first time this year as part of the reform of economic governance. The presidency report summarises the main political messages of the other Council configurations involved in the process.

The European Council is due to provide guidance to the member states for finalisation of their stability and convergence programmes (budgetary policies) and national reform programmes (structural reforms). The process will be concluded by the Council and the European Council in June.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Trafficking in human beings

The Council adopted a directive establishing rules on the definition of criminal offences and the level of sanctions as relates to trafficking in human beings.

The directive, which replaces decision 2002/629/JHA and applies to all member states except Denmark and the United Kingdom (which might opt into the rules at a later stage), sets out to strengthen prevention as well the protection of victims. Member states have two years to transpose the directive into national legislation.

For details, see press release [7860/11](#).

Judicial reform and the fight against corruption in Bulgaria and Romania

The Council, on the basis of reports from the Commission ([6986/11](#), [6987/11](#)), adopted conclusions on progress made by Bulgaria and Romania in judicial reform and the fight against corruption under an EU cooperation and verification mechanism ([7556/11](#)).

The mechanism was set up when Bulgaria and Romania entered the EU on 1 January 2007 in order to help them to remedy shortcomings in judicial reform and the fight against corruption and to monitor progress in these areas through periodical reports¹.

¹ Commission Decisions establishing a mechanism for cooperation and verification of progress in Bulgaria (2006/929/EC) and Romania (2006/928/EC) to address specific benchmarks in the areas of judicial reform and the fight against corruption and organised crime (OJ L 354, 14.12.2006).

External borders fund - Participation by Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of an agreement with Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein on rules in relation to the EU's external borders fund for the 2007-13 period ([7853/10](#)).

Under the decision establishing the fund (574/2007/EC), third countries associated with the Schengen area are to participate in the fund in accordance with its provisions and arrangements are to be concluded to specify the rules necessary for such participation. The rules include provisions to ensure the protection of the EU's financial interests and the audit powers of the Court of Auditors.

The agreement with Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein was signed in November 2009 and a joint declaration was annexed to the text in March 2010. The text of the agreement, the decision authorizing its signature and the joint declaration are published in the Official Journal *L 169 of 3.7.2010*.

TRADE POLICY**Anti-dumping - Tungsten carbide - China**

The Council adopted a regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of tungsten carbide, tungsten carbide simply mixed with metallic powder and fused tungsten carbide originating in China, following an expiry review pursuant to regulation 1225/2009 ([7080/11](#)).

COMPANY LAW

Mergers of public limited liability companies

The Council adopted a directive codifying EU rules on mergers of public limited liability companies ([PE-CONS 1/11](#)).

The text is a consolidated version of directive 78/855/EEC, as amended several times since its adoption in 1978, with the aim of increased clarity and rationality. The new version supersedes the various acts incorporated into the directive.

EMPLOYMENT

Freedom of movement for workers

The Council adopted a regulation codifying EU rules on freedom of movement for workers within the EU ([PE-CONS 2/11](#)).

The text is a consolidated version of regulation 1612/68, as amended since its adoption in 1968. It replaces the various acts incorporated into the regulation whilst fully preserving their content.

European globalisation adjustment fund - Poland/Czech Republic

The Council adopted decisions mobilising a total of EUR 777 000 under the European globalisation adjustment fund in support for workers made redundant in Poland and the Czech Republic.

EUR 453 570 is allocated for workers dismissed by three Polish companies in the machine-building sector, as a result of decline in demand on export markets following the global financial and economic crisis. EUR 323 820 will be provided to support workers dismissed in the Czech branch of Unilever because of a decrease in demand for branded food products in connection with the crisis.

APPOINTMENTS**Court of Auditors**

The Council appointed Mr Harald WÖGERBAUER (Austria) as a member of the Court of Auditors for the period from 1 April 2011 to 31 December 2013 ([7438/11](#)).

Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed the ten following members of the Committee of the Regions proposed by the Greek government, for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015: Stavros ARNAOUTAKIS, Grigorios ZAFEIROPOULOS, Dimitrios KALOGEROPOULOS, Georgios KAMINIS, Apostolos KATSIFARAS, Georgios KOTRONIAS, Ioannis BOUTARIS, Nikolaos PAPANDREOU, Ioannis SGOUROS and Panagiotis PSOMIADIS ([7711/11](#)).
