



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

Brussels, 11 May 2012

9925/12

**PE 206
PESC 605
COEST 153
COMEM 170
COMEP 16**

NOTE

from : General Secretariat of the Council
To : Delegations

Subject: Summary record of the meeting of the **European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee (AFET)**, Brussels, 8 May 2012

The meeting was chaired by Mr Provera (EFD, IT).

I. Establishing an Instrument for Stability (AFET/7/08345)

- Rapporteur: Franziska Katharina Brantner (Verts/ALE)
- Responsible: AFET
- Opinions: DEVE (Cristian Dan Preda, PPE), INTA (Damien Abad, PPE), BUDG (María Muñiz De Urquiza, S&D)

The discussion started with a number of experts presenting preliminary comments on the draft Regulation on the Instrument for Stability, stressing in particular the uniqueness of the instrument, the insufficient involvement of some actors (EU delegations, Member States, the European Parliament), the need to improve the reporting mechanisms, the simplification of rules and procedures, wider timeframes, the need to link the counter-terrorism measures with a strong human rights mechanism, the insufficient rapidity of the instrument, and possible overlaps (with humanitarian aid), etc.

The rapporteur shared to a large extent the points raised by the experts and agreed in particular on issues such as the risk of overlap with humanitarian aid, the need for counter- terrorism measures to comply with human rights (human rights mechanism), the mediation dialogue, the evaluation processes and the Parliament's involvement. The S&D shadow rapporteur, Mr Gualtieri (IT) shared the rapporteur's assessments and reserved his position as he needed more time for further analysis of the Commission proposal. However, with support from Mr Lambsdorff (ALDE, DE), he raised concerns about Parliament's involvement, which in the proposal did not reflect the current treaties. The EPP shadow rapporteur, Mr Preda (RO) stressed that cooperation between the different instruments should be clearly defined. The ALDE shadow rapporteur, Mr Lambsdorff added that this also applied to the scope of the instrument. He agreed that procedures were an important point and said that the speed of availability of funds was essential.

The rapporteur concluded by recalling that as regards the Parliament's involvement, this issue had to be dealt with in conjunction with all the other instruments.

II. Presentation of the study "Political and social developments in Russia in 2012 as a consequence of its new role on the global stage" (in association with the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee)

Professor Hanson was sceptical about the prospects for a more open Russia. His presentation focused on the economic aspects of the study, which highlighted the need for reforms in Russia. With regard to the consequences of the Russian WTO accession, he considered that the key point would be implementation. He defended the view that low oil prices could be more conducive to reforms than WTO accession. He said that more important influences would come primarily from domestic pressures.

Mr Swoboda (S&D, AT) shared the conclusions of the study and agreed with Professor Hanson. He added that visa liberalisation could be an additional element in promoting reform. He felt that a more unified and consistent position on the part of Member States would be an asset and deplored the fact that there was no real progress in negotiations on the EU-Russia cooperation agreement. He concluded by saying that the EU should continue its pragmatic approach and insist on the need for respect for the rule of law. Mr Fleckenstein (S&D, DE, chair of the Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee) said that the study was clear and that he shared its conclusions.

Other speakers welcomed the study. Some additional matters were raised by some Members: Ms Ojuland (ALDE, EE) mentioned the problem of corruption in Russia and said that the rule of law was insufficient. Mr Kirilov (S&D, BG) asked for information on the Russia-China relationship and drew attention to the emerging Russian middle class. He shared Mr Swoboda's views on the positive effects of visa liberalisation, whilst Mr Schulz considered that the focus should actually be on other freedoms. Mr Millan Mon (EPP, ES) wondered whether Russia valued the EU relationship. Mr Schoepflin (EPP, HU) asked a question about the consequences of the demographic decline.

In reply, Professor Hanson recalled that China's WTO accession had had no effects on its human rights record, even though the WTO obliged members to reply to questions relating to human rights. On Russia's view on its relationship with the EU, he said that Russia considered it abnormal that an organisation gave so much power to small countries and that in Russia the aim was the opposite. He summarized the relationship as one of a lack of understanding. On the demographic decline, he replied that the tendency was downwards but that social tensions appeared only recently, in particular in relation to immigration.

III. Debriefing by Saïd El Khadraoui on the Delegation for relations with the Mashreq countries' visit to Egypt on 30 April - 4 May 2012

Mr El Khadraoui reported that there had been a real change in Egypt but the situation remained unclear and there was political chaos. He said that there were a lot of parliamentary discussions focusing on the new constitution, which would most likely be adopted only after the elections, and this added some uncertainty. He reported in detail on the presidential candidate admission process and said that political alliances were not obvious. Mr El Khadraoui also pointed to the poor economic situation, which was related to decreasing tourism. Ms Brepoels (Greens/EFA, BE) added that the delegation had also met women's organisations and she felt that Egyptians were willing to have an EU independent investigation into military actions.

Only two Members took the floor: Mr Poettering (EPP, DE) wanted to know if the issue of foreign associations had been brought up, and Ms De Keyser (S&D, BE) asked if the army supported a particular candidate. Mr El Khadraoui answered that the association issue had been raised and he felt that foreign interventions were not welcome and that some were felt to be exploiting the situation. Regarding the presidential campaign, he explained that there were about ten candidates still running, three of them slightly ahead, and a Salafi candidate had been excluded.

IV. Debriefing by Emer Costello on the Delegation for relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council's visit to Palestine on 2 - 5 April 2012

Ms Auken (Greens/EFA, DK), speaking on behalf of Mr Costello, said that it had been a very effective delegation visit because the issues had been addressed head on. She said that Palestine did not exist anymore and Israel had succeeded in its strategy. She considered that European taxpayers' money was being spent to no purpose. Ms Auken defended the view that the EU had to insist on the two- states solution and she called on the EU to look into the prisoners issue. She also suggested that the Parliament should ask the Commission to launch legal action against Israel because of the preferential treatment for products coming from the occupied territories. Ms Auken believed that the upgrading of the EU-Israel relationship would send a wrong signal. She blamed Member States for not acting in a consistent manner, although she considered that the Heads of Mission reports and the recommendations contained in them constituted a way forward. She also stressed that settlers were killing people and proposed that a list could be published.

Ms De Keyser expressed the view that the EU did not sufficiently appreciate the non-violence of the Palestinians and that in order to maintain the non-violent approach, clear unequivocal signals by the EU were required. Mr Pöttering reiterated that the aim was safe borders for both states and dignity for both populations but he noted that the notion of a Palestinian state was becoming more and more unrealistic, though this development was ultimately not in the interest of Israel.

In her closing remarks, Ms Auken reiterated some of her opening statements and said that although the EU had called for reconciliation, in practice the reality was very different.

V. Exchange of views with Nicholas Westcott, EEAS Managing Director for Africa, on Sudan - South Sudan and recent developments in west and central Africa

Due to Mr Westcott's unannounced absence, there was no exchange of views. Instead Ms De Keyser made a statement, saying that the negotiations between the two parties were not progressing and that the situation has escalated to pre-war situation. She criticised the fact that there was no visible evidence of EU action in the region and she called on the EU to be more active.

VI. Date and venue of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 14 May 2012 (p.m.) in Brussels.
