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Agriculture and Fisheries

Agriculture

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President **Gabriela Matečná**
Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development of
Slovakia.

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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>).
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ITEMS DEBATED

AGRICULTURE

Presidency work programme

The Slovak presidency gave a presentation on its work programme and outlined its main priorities in the agriculture and fisheries sectors.

Within the Agriculture and Fisheries Council, the Slovak presidency will look at ways to strengthen the position of farmers in the food supply chain, with the intention of adopting Council conclusions on the issue at the December Council meeting. This will also be the main theme of the informal meeting of agriculture ministers to take place in Bratislava from 11 to 13 September 2016. Owing to the protracted crisis in the agricultural markets, especially in the dairy and pigmeat sectors, it plans to monitor the situation on the agricultural commodities market and assess the implementation of the new measures agreed to stabilise the markets. The presidency will also aim to evaluate the progress made on simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), and to finalise negotiations with the European Parliament on the proposed regulation on organic farming and labelling of organic products. It will also pay attention to international agricultural trade issues, and forests and forestry. In this context, it intends to help implement the EU Forest Strategy, in particular as regards the guiding principle of global forest responsibility.

Concerning veterinary and food safety issues, particular attention will be paid to veterinary medicinal products and medicated feed, to the animal health situation and the issue of market access.

Finally, in the fisheries policy sector, the Slovak presidency will focus on annual fishing quotas. The presidency's ambition is to reach a political agreement on individual regulations on the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, and other stocks. It also aims to make progress on the sustainable management of external fishing fleets, technical measures and data collection.

Market situation and support measures

The Council was updated on the latest developments in the main agricultural sectors.

In response to the continued market downturn, and to the concerns strongly relayed by ministers, the Commission put forward a third package of support measures worth €500 million addressed mainly at the dairy sector. These measures are aimed at tackling the crisis by stabilising production and indirectly prices, and providing liquidity to farmers.

€150 million will be distributed through an EU-wide measure to those farmers who voluntarily decide to reduce their milk deliveries, thereby helping the market restore the balance between demand and supply. Moreover, €350 million will be made available through national financial envelopes to help producers face cash-flow problems and finance national measures. This aid will be conditional on the fulfilment of certain commitments linked to e.g. support for small farms, extensive production methods, environmental undertakings, cooperation projects, value-added quality schemes and training in financial instruments. Member states will have maximum flexibility in the use of these funds to support vulnerable livestock sectors, and also be able to provide national top-ups up to 100%.

Other elements of the package include: a review of voluntary coupled support agreements for the dairy sector, an extension of public intervention and private storage for skimmed milk powder until the end of February 2017, early and increased advanced payments without the need to complete on-the-spot checks (up to 70% for direct payments and 85% for area-based rural development payments), and increased withdrawal prices for fruit and vegetables.

In the subsequent debate, ministers broadly supported the package presented by the Commission. Many called for swift implementation and some underlined the importance of sticking to the market orientation of the CAP and of addressing structural market imbalances in the medium to long term.

Following a continued crisis affecting several agricultural sectors - notably the dairy, pigmeat and fruit and vegetables sectors - the Council first endorsed a €500 million package of support measures for farmers in September 2015 (mainly direct aid) and then a second package in March 2016 (7108/16). The latter featured mainly budget neutral instruments such as the voluntary and temporary reduction of milk production and a temporary relaxation of state aid rules in case of member state support for farmers.

After the March AGRIFISH Council, the agreed measures were swiftly implemented and ministers kept developments in the market situation under close scrutiny. Furthermore, additional initiatives were undertaken by the Commission. These include the doubling of the quantitative ceilings for buying in skimmed milk powder and butter at a fixed price in the context of public intervention and the proposal for a further increase thereof, the announcement of the extension of the deadline by which member states may make CAP direct payments without a reduction in the rate of reimbursement from the EU to the member state to 15 October, and the adoption of a delegated regulation setting further exceptional and temporary support measures for the fruit and vegetables sector.

At the Council meeting in June 2016, many ministers expressed continued concern over the persistent market downturn and stressed the need to alleviate the condition of European farmers and contribute to the sustainability of the most affected sectors. Ministers generally agreed on the need to consider further concrete measures as soon as possible. The presidency called upon the Commission to come forward with proposals, including financial support, at the next Council meeting in July. The Commission confirmed that it was working on additional measures and expected to be able to present them at the July Council.

An any other business item on drought in Poland was also considered jointly with the market situation (see below in the text).

International agricultural trade issues

The Commission updated ministers on international agricultural trade issues. It reported on the latest developments in agricultural trade and the EU commitment to opening up new world markets and to promoting EU agricultural products, with particular attention to bilateral and multilateral free trade negotiations. These include ongoing negotiations on the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), with Mercosur, Japan and the Philippines, and future negotiations with Indonesia, Australia and New Zealand and Malaysia.

Ministers had the opportunity to assess the impact of the EU's ongoing and upcoming free trade negotiations and agreements, generally pointed out the need for balanced international agreements with regard to agriculture and restated the EU offensive interests in such negotiations. There were also calls for more transparency in international negotiations. Ministers generally welcomed the Commission study on the cumulative impact of free trade agreements on agriculture, which was due in September 2016.

On several occasions ministers pointed out the need for the Council to be regularly updated on the state of play of international trade negotiations with third countries and regional bodies in which the EU was involved, in particular when those negotiations included agricultural issues.

The Commission had provided the Agriculture Council with an update on trade negotiations and agriculture-related issues in February 2016 and through any other business items in April and May 2016. In addition, the Special Committee on Agriculture (SCA) was regularly briefed on these issues.

An any other business item on rice was also considered jointly with the international agricultural trade issues (see below in the text).

Simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy: review of greening

The Commission briefed the Council on its report on the first year of implementation of greening provisions. Based on a public consultation, the review analyses the experience gained from the first year of implementation of greening in member states. It also outlines the next steps in the simplification of greening requirements.

In its presentation the Commission highlighted greening's potential to deliver environmental and climate benefits on a large share of EU farmland, but also acknowledged that it was difficult to fully assess its impact after only one year. It also concluded that greening could be further simplified through changes to [delegated regulation 639/2014](#). The objectives of the changes to be achieved include:

- better specification of what is required from farmers and national administrations, especially as regards landscape features
- eliminating some burdensome technical requirements without lowering environmental benefits
- providing more flexibility or alternative options where this increases the environmental and climate benefits of greening
- additional harmonisation of some requirements and conditions.

In the subsequent debate ministers expressed their views on the actions proposed by the Commission. While generally welcoming the Commission's simplification efforts, ministers restated the importance of a genuine simplification that reduces the administrative burden for both farmers and public administrations. They also expressed some misgivings in relation to specific proposals linked to plant protection products and set-aside periods.

The key elements raised by member states on greening will be conveyed by the presidency to the Commission in a letter summarising the Council discussion. Work will also continue at technical level in the Commission expert group on direct payments on 25 August 2016.

CAP simplification is part of the EU's overall strategy to streamline and reduce EU legislation wherever possible. In this context, the EU institutions have decided to look at what was agreed in the latest CAP reform and propose improvements which are achievable in the short and medium term.

The Council adopted conclusions on the issue in May 2015 ([8485/15](#)) emphasising that, in implementing the CAP, greater account should be taken of the subsidiarity and proportionality principles.

It also recalled the main principles to be respected in this process:

- preserve the policy objectives and the main elements of the reformed CAP
- ensure the sound financial management of EU funds
- focus on areas where those implementing the CAP and its beneficiaries would benefit most
- improve the clarity and consistency of legislation

The Council also discussed simplification at its meeting in May 2016, with a special focus on direct payments and market measures.

Any other business

– *Outcome of the conference on 'Strengthening of the farmers' position in the food supply chain' (Bratislava, 30 June - 1 July 2016)*

The presidency reported on the outcome of the conference, the aim of which was to evaluate the status and bargaining power of farmers in the food supply chain, to analyse key factors influencing the distribution of economic power in the chain, and to discuss possible measures likely to lead to its long-term sustainability. One of the main conclusions of the conference was that there was a need to strengthen the farmers' position as the weakest link in the food supply chain and that legislation at European level would help tackle unfair trading practices.

The conference prepared the ground for the informal meeting of ministers taking place in Bratislava from 11 to 13 September 2016, at which the same topic will be discussed. The presidency also intends to work on Council conclusions on the subject, to be adopted at the December meeting of the [Agriculture and Fisheries Council](#).

– *Drought and its impact on arable crops in Poland*

Poland briefed the Council on the agricultural drought that hit the country in May and June 2016, and particularly the production of winter and spring cereals, fruit shrubs, legumes, oilseed rape, turnip rape and strawberries. The Polish delegation also requested protective measures to address the situation.

The Commission recognised the impact of the drought on arable crops and advised on the CAP tools available to mitigate the negative effects on agriculture.

– *Catastrophic fires in Cyprus*

The Cyprus delegation briefed ministers on the situation arising on the island as a consequence of severe drought and a number of wildfires that broke out in the month of June 2016.

In its response the Commission expressed solidarity and advised on the available CAP tools, which could help farmers face the difficult situation.

– *Prohibition on use of phosphonates for plant protection in organic production*

The Czech Republic reported to ministers on the difficulties arising from the ban on the use of potassium phosphonates in organic agriculture and its impact particularly on wine growers and fruit growers, but also on other vegetable producers. The Czech Republic also argued for a review by the European Commission of the European legislation on organic production in relation to residues, in view of the positive advice of the expert group for technical advice on organic production (EGTOP).

In the subsequent debate a couple of delegations supported the Czech request. While expressing sympathy for the situation of wine growers, the Commission did not deem it appropriate to modify rules on organic farming. It nonetheless emphasised the role of research projects in improving plant protection methods and products.

– *Rice imports from EBA countries*

The Italian delegation raised the issue of duty-free imports of indica rice from Cambodia and Myanmar/Burma.

The Commission reported to the Council on its contacts with Cambodia to discuss the issue of rice import flows with local authorities. In the context of these contacts the Commission emphasised the importance of ensuring balance in the rice market in Europe. The Commission also said it would continue to monitor the situation and any development in the rice market.

Everything but Arms (EBA) is an initiative of the European Union under which all imports to the EU from the least developed countries are duty-free and quota-free, with the exception of armaments.

– *Lumpy skin disease*

The Austrian delegation briefed the Council on the threat posed by lumpy skin disease to the European animal health sector. Austria urged the Commission to take appropriate measures such as: reviewing the current legal framework and procedures to facilitate vaccination, establishing as a matter of the highest priority a legal framework to allow preventive vaccination in countries or regions at risk, clarifying the list of safe commodities and trade restrictions of vaccinated animals and products thereof, and taking a leading role at Union level, including common purchase and distribution of vaccines by the European Commission.

In the subsequent debate, several delegations supported the Austrian requests. The Commission shared a deep concern for the severity of the disease and highlighted all the initiatives already in place to fight its spread. It underlined the importance of good preparedness and encouraged member states to follow the Commission advice more consistently and to work on regional cooperation. It also showed openness to facilitate vaccination under the current legal framework.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

Bluefin tuna: Council agrees on update of the multiannual recovery plan

On 18 July 2016 the Council adopted a new regulation which updates the multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna in the eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

The new rules improve the existing recovery plan, which has been successful in helping reverse the downward trend in bluefin tuna stocks.

The regulation enacts in Union law measures adopted by the International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas (ICCAT) between 2012 and 2014. In particular it transposes recommendation 14-04, which rationalises the existing control provisions and sets out procedures in relation to the use of stereoscopic cameras, release operations and the treatment of dead fish in the recovery plan.

The multiannual recovery plan for bluefin tuna (*Thunnus thynnus*) applies from 2007 until 2022. It was recommended by ICCAT, an inter-governmental fishery organisation responsible for the conservation of tunas and tuna-like species in the Atlantic Ocean and its adjacent seas. The EU is a contracting party to ICCAT.

This adoption by the Council confirms the agreement at first reading reached with the European Parliament in April 2016. The regulation will enter into force and become applicable by the end of 2016.

Tackling plant pests: new measures adopted by Council

On 18 July 2016 the Council formally adopted new rules which will offer better protection against plant pests.

The new regulation will help fight plant pests and diseases through better surveillance and early eradication of outbreaks of new pests. The most dangerous pests ('quarantine pests') will be better defined and divided between 'priority pests' which will be subject to stricter rules on eradication and information to the public, and therefore be eligible for greater EU financial support, and other quarantine pests.

The new rules will extend, simplify and harmonise the existing plant passport scheme which is needed for all movements between professional operators inside the EU. They will also require relevant professional operators to be registered in order to guarantee easier controls and better traceability.

The new regulation will also include measures to tackle pests introduced from outside the EU, focused on a risk-based approach.

The Council position adopted at first reading confirmed the agreement reached with the European Parliament in December 2015 and approved by Coreper in May 2016. To conclude the procedure, the legal act must still be approved by the European Parliament at second reading. The regulation is expected to enter into force at the beginning of 2017 and will become applicable after a three-year period following the entry into force.

Programmes to contain animal diseases: Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report no 06/2016 entitled 'Eradication, control and monitoring programmes to contain animal diseases' ([10994/16](#)).

The European Court of Auditors' special report was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 26 April 2016 (see [European Court of Auditor's website](#)).

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

- (1) WELCOMES the Special Report No 6/2016 from the European Court of Auditors entitled 'Eradication, control and monitoring programmes to contain animal diseases' which overall concluded that the animal disease programmes examined by the Court adequately contained animal diseases;
- (2) ACKNOWLEDGES the finding of the Court on the importance of the wildlife aspect in fighting animal diseases and WELCOMES the commitment of the Commission to ensure that veterinary programmes include wildlife aspects when relevant;

- (3) **ACKNOWLEDGES** the recommendation that the Commission should support the availability of vaccines where epidemiologically justified and **WELCOMES** the Commission's acceptance of this recommendation;
- (4) **AGREES** that disease outbreaks can always occur and that the Commission and the Member States should continue to be vigilant; and **RECALLS** that the 'Animal Health Law'¹ aimed at prevention and control of animal diseases that are transmissible to animals or humans in kept animals, wild animals and animal products was adopted on 9 March 2016. These rules consist of requirements for disease prevention and preparedness; disease awareness; biosecurity; traceability of animals and where necessary products thereof; intra-EU movements and entry into the EU of animals and animal products; surveillance; disease control and eradication; and emergency measures;
- (5) **NOTES** the Court's finding that the examined programmes were well-designed and implemented and that the Court further noted some specific areas with scope for improvement; and **WELCOMES** that the Commission agrees to facilitate the exchange of epidemiological information between Member States; and **ENCOURAGES** Member States to support the Commission in achieving a successful outcome;
- (6) **AGREES** that there is a need to better demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of veterinary expenditure but simultaneously notes that the cost-effectiveness of programmes is difficult to determine, due to the lack of available models for such analysis; and therefore

¹ OJ L 84, 31.3.2016, p. 1. Regulation (EU) 2016/429 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on transmissible animal diseases and amending and repealing certain acts in the area of animal health ('Animal Health Law').

- (7) WELCOMES that the Commission accepts to examine whether the existing set of indicators should be updated to provide better information on veterinary control activities and the cost-effectiveness of programmes; and further WELCOMES the adoption of resolution No. 35 'The Economics of Animal Health: Direct and Indirect Costs of Animal Disease Outbreaks' by the World Assembly of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) on 27 May 2016¹ which could lead to the generation of a dataset on the economic burden of animal diseases to be used for the design of future disease control programmes."

FLEGT - Voluntary Partnership Agreement with Indonesia

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission delegated regulation amending Council regulation 2173/2005, which establishes a FLEGT licensing scheme for imports of timber into the EU ([10470/16](#) + [10470/16 ADD 1](#)).

Regulation 2173/2005 lays down EU procedures for the implementation of the FLEGT licensing scheme through the conclusion of Voluntary Partnership Agreements (VPAs) with timber producing countries.

The FLEGT VPA between the EU and the Republic of Indonesia entered into force on 1 May 2014, but the operation of the FLEGT licensing system is conditional on a positive assessment of the system set up by Indonesian authorities.

Based on the progress made by Indonesia, a start date for its FLEGT licensing scheme can now be decided upon. In order to facilitate this, the Commission delegated regulation incorporates the Republic of Indonesia and its Licensing Information Unit into regulation 2173/2005 under the list of 'Partner countries and their designated licensing authorities' contained in Annex I, and the list of products covered by the FLEGT licensing scheme in Annex III 'Timber products to which the FLEGT licensing scheme applies only in relation to the corresponding partner countries'.

¹ The resolution is available on the OIE website:
http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/About_us/docs/pdf/Session/2016/A_RESO_2016_public.pdf

FISHERIES

Autonomous Union tariff quotas for certain fisheries products for the period 2016-2018

The Council adopted amendments to Council regulation 2015/2265 opening and providing for the management of autonomous Union tariff quotas for certain fishery products for the period 2016 to 2018 ([10103/16](#)).

The amended regulation aims at allowing the effective use of the tariff quotas during the years 2016 to 2018 for hake and pink cusk-eel –imported products which the processing sector mainly cuts into slices–, by describing slicing as a qualifying operation.

Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Protocol with Kenya: opening of negotiations

The Council adopted a Council decision to authorise the Commission to open negotiations on behalf of the EU for the conclusion of a Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement and Protocol with the Republic of Kenya, including negotiating directives.

The aim of the new agreement and protocol is the promotion of sustainable and responsible fishing.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Rules of procedure of the Stabilisation and Association Council with Kosovo*

The Council adopted the position to be taken by the EU within the Stabilisation and Association Council with Kosovo concerning the decision of the Stabilisation and Association Council adopting its rules of procedure.

*References to Kosovo are without prejudice to positions on status. They are in line with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244/99 and the opinion by the International Court of Justice on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**VAT derogation - Romania - Wood products**

The Council adopted a decision authorising Romania to continue applying a measure derogating from directive 2006/112/EC for supplies of wood products ([10799/16](#) + [10702/16](#)).

The measure enables the recipient to be designated as the person liable for the payment of VAT, instead of the supplier, in application of the 'reverse charge' mechanism to prevent fraud.

Authorisation of this measure, due to expire on 31 December 2016, is extended to 31 December 2019. Romania will have to present a report by 1 April 2019 if it considers a further extension necessary.

Bank recovery and resolution - Markets in financial instruments

The Council decided not to object to the following Commission regulations:

- regulation supplementing directive 2014/59/EU on bank recovery and resolution with regard to regulatory technical standards for methodologies and principles on the valuation of liabilities arising from derivative financial products ([10875/16](#) + [9362/16](#));
- regulation supplementing directive 2014/59/EU on bank recovery and resolution with regard to regulatory technical standards related to the methodology for setting the minimum requirement for own funds and eligible liabilities ([10877/16](#) + [9358/16](#));
- regulation supplementing regulation 600/2014 on markets in financial instruments with regard to regulatory technical standards on clearing access in respect of trading venues and central counterparties ([10881/16](#) + [10651/16](#));
- regulation supplementing regulation 600/2014 on markets in financial instruments with regard to regulatory technical standards for the maintenance of relevant data relating to orders in financial instruments ([10884/16](#) + [10650/16](#)).

The regulations are delegated acts pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. They can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

TRADE POLICY

Anti-dumping - United States - Bioethanol

The Council agreed to lodge an appeal with the European Court of Justice against the General Court's judgments of 9 June 2016 in cases T-276/13 and T-277/13 concerning dumping in relation to imports of bioethanol from the United States.

EU-Indonesia trade relations

The Council gave the go-ahead for negotiations to start on a free trade agreement with Indonesia.

The negotiations will be led by the Commission on behalf of the EU, in consultation with the Council's Trade Policy Committee. The Council encouraged it to take an ambitious approach.

In April 2007, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate a free trade agreement with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), of which Indonesia is a member. In December 2009, however, following the suspension of region-to-region talks, it decided to pursue negotiations with individual ASEAN countries on a case-by-case basis. The strategic objective of a region-to-region agreement was nevertheless maintained. In October 2013, the Council extended the scope of its negotiating directives to include provisions on investment protection.

The EU is currently negotiating with three ASEAN countries -- Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand -- whilst talks with two others -- Singapore and Vietnam -- have concluded. The Commission will continue its efforts to launch free trade negotiations with other ASEAN countries.

WTO - United States - Former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands

The Council agreed to support the United States' request for a WTO waiver to extend its system of preferential treatment for trade with the Former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands.

The Council adopted a decision enabling the EU to take such a position within the WTO General Council ([10661/16](#) + [10662/16](#)).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EU - Mali standard operating procedures on return

The Council endorsed the EU position on the draft standard operating procedures between the EU and the Republic of Mali for the identification and return of persons without an authorisation to stay, with a view to launching negotiations with Mali on this text.

CUSTOMS UNION

Georgia - Preferential rules of origin

The Council approved a [decision](#) aimed at allowing the accession of Georgia to the [Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin](#), following Georgia's request to join the Convention.

The Convention, which aims to replace the protocols on rules of origin currently in force among the countries of the pan-Euro-Mediterranean area with a single legal act, entered into force on 1 December 2012.

INTERNAL MARKET

Non-road combustion engines: reduced pollutant emission limits

The Council approved new requirements to grant EU type-approval aimed at reducing pollutant emissions of engines installed in non-road mobile machinery.

The new regulation seeks to ensure the good functioning of the internal market and to strengthen market surveillance while protecting human health and the environment.

It also addresses competitiveness and compliance aspects, with the aim of removing obstacles to external trade by reducing the regulatory barriers that result from diverging emission requirements.

[For more information see press release](#)

ENVIRONMENT

Eutrophication in the Baltic Sea

The Council adopted conclusions on the special report from the European Court of Auditors entitled 'Combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea: further and more effective action needed'. The text of the conclusions can be found in the annex to document [10642/16](#).

The European Court of Auditors' special report was published in the Official Journal of the European Union on 14 April 2016.

[Special report no 03/2016: Combating eutrophication in the Baltic Sea: further and more effective action needed](#) (European Court of Auditor's website).

STATISTICS

Rail transport statistics on goods, passengers and accidents

The Council adopted its position at first reading with a view to amending [regulation 91/2003](#) on rail transport statistics as regards the collection of data on goods, passengers and accidents ([10000/16](#) and [10000/16 ADD1](#)).

The amendments will update, improve and simplify the existing legal framework for European statistics on rail transport.

The Council's position, which follows a political agreement with the European Parliament, is expected to be confirmed by the Parliament with a second-reading vote at an upcoming plenary session.

[Regulation 91/2003](#) establishes a common framework for producing, transmitting, evaluating and disseminating comparable rail transport statistics in the EU.

Statistics on the transport of goods and passengers by rail are needed to monitor and develop the common transport policy, and the transport elements of policies on the regions and on trans-European networks.

[Eurostat: railway passenger transport statistics](#)

Inland waterway transport of goods

The Council adopted its position at first reading with a view to amending [regulation 1365/2006](#) on statistics of goods transport by inland waterways ([9878/16](#) and [9878/16 ADD1](#)).

The Council's position, which follows a political agreement with the European Parliament, is expected to be confirmed by the Parliament with a second-reading vote at an upcoming plenary session.

The amendments will mainly adapt the delegated and implementing powers conferred upon the Commission with regard to particular aspects such as the update of definitions to comply with international ones and the adaptation of thresholds for statistical coverage of inland waterways transport.

[Eurostat: goods transport by inland waterways](#)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Web and app accessibility

The Council adopted its position at first reading on a draft directive laying down common requirements to make public sector websites and mobile applications (apps) more accessible across the EU.

The draft directive requires EU countries to ensure that the websites and mobile apps of public sector bodies meet common European accessibility standards. In addition, people will be able to request specific information if content is inaccessible.

The new requirements will make content more accessible and usable for all users, and will especially benefit those with disabilities or age-related limitations.

This adoption by the Council of its position at first reading paves the way for final approval by the European Parliament at second reading.

[Accessible websites and apps for all: Council adopts first-ever EU-wide rules](#)

[Web accessibility directive – Council position at first reading](#)

[Web accessibility directive – Council's reasons](#)

EMPLOYMENT

Labour force sample survey

The Council decided not to oppose Commission regulation .../.. of 14.6.2016 adopting the programme of ad hoc modules, covering the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, for the labour force sample survey provided for by Council regulation 577/98.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

European fund for the most deprived

The Council decided not to raise objections to a Commission delegated regulation .../... of 30.6.2016 concerning the fund for European aid to the most deprived.

The regulation sets out the conditions and procedures for determining whether irrecoverable amounts are to be borne by the Union budget or by member states.