



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



11198/14

(OR. en)

PRESSE 358  
PR CO 38

## **PRESS RELEASE**

3326th Council meeting

### **General Affairs**

Luxembourg, 24 June 2014

President

**Evangelos Venizelos**

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of  
Greece

# **P R E S S**

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## **Main results of the Council**

### ***Enlargement - Albania***

*The Council decided to grant candidate status to Albania, subject to endorsement of the European Council. "We are today sending a message of friendship of cooperation, to Albania, to the Albanian government, to the Albanian political system, and we are certain that our Albanian friends understand that there is an institutional and political frame of reference. This frame of reference is the Copenhagen political criteria, respect for the European acquis and respect for international law, including the principle of good neighbourly relations", said Evangelos Venizelos, deputy prime-minister and minister for foreign affairs of Greece, after the decision.*

### ***Solidarity clause***

*The Council adopted a decision on the rules and procedures for the implementation of the solidarity clause (article 222 of the Treaty on Functioning of the EU). The solidarity clause provides for the Union and its member states to act jointly in assisting another member state affected by a terrorist attack or a natural or man-made disaster.*

### ***EU maritime security strategy***

*The Council endorsed an EU maritime security strategy as a framework for effectively and comprehensively addressing the EU's maritime security challenges. The objective is to secure the EU's maritime security interests against risks and threats in the global maritime domain, such as cross-border and organised crime, threats to freedom of navigation, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or environmental risks.*

### ***European Council preparations***

*The Council prepared the European Council of 26-27 June and held an exchange of views via video link with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy. The European Council will focus in particular on the economy, including growth, competitiveness and jobs, the area of freedom, security and justice and energy and climate.*

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- 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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**Romania:**

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**Commission:**

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice President

Mr Štefan FÜLE

Member  
.....

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **Preparation for the June European Council**

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 26-27 June, and held an exchange of views with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, via video link.

The June European Council will focus on:

- the area of freedom, security and justice: it will agree on the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning for the coming years, and will also address some related horizontal issues such as data protection and free movement of EU citizens;
- growth, competitiveness and jobs, endorsing the country specific recommendations, which are designed to guide member states in their structural reforms, employment and fiscal policies and national budgets, thus concluding the 2014 European Semester. In this context, the European Council will also review progress in the area of regulatory fitness;
- climate and energy: it will take stock of progress made on the key issues of the 2030 framework and hold a first debate on the Commission's recent communication on a European Energy Security Strategy.

The European Council is also expected to address enlargement, the situation in Ukraine and the EU priorities for the next institutional cycle. Leaders are also expected to welcome the signature of the Association Agreements with the Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, and congratulate Lithuania on meeting the convergence criteria to adopt the euro on 1 January 2015. The European Council will also discuss institutional matters and is expected to adopt a decision proposing to the European Parliament a candidate for President of the Commission.

On 26 June the European Council will meet in Ypres for a commemoration ceremony to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War.

An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council on 13 May ([8280/14](#)).

## **Enlargement - Albania**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. In line with its Conclusions of 17 December 2013, the Council welcomes the Commission's report of 4 June and, in light of its examination of Albania's continued progress, decides to grant Albania candidate status, subject to endorsement by the European Council.
2. Following the granting of candidate status, the Council underlines that Albania should act decisively on all of the recommendations in the Commission's report and intensify its efforts to ensure a sustained, comprehensive and inclusive implementation of the key priorities, notably the reform of the public administration and the judiciary, the fight against organised crime and corruption, the protection of human rights and anti-discrimination policies including in the area of minorities and their equal treatment, and implementation of property rights.

The Council underlines the importance for Albania to intensify its anti-corruption efforts and to implement its anti-corruption strategy and action plan, strengthen cooperation between law enforcement agencies, and establish a solid track record of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in cases of corruption and organised crime, particularly organised immigration crime, the use of fraudulent documents, money laundering, drug cultivation and human trafficking. The Council also underlines the importance for Albania to strengthen the independence, transparency and accountability of the judiciary, including to provide greater legal certainty for economic operators and to increase investor confidence.

3. The Council also expects Albania to intensify its support for the timely reduction of migratory pressures on the EU including by pursuing its efforts to ensure the fulfilment of all conditions of the visa roadmap and by taking further steps to address the issue of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Albanian nationals.
4. The Council welcomes the Roadmap on the key priorities Albania has adopted in order to structure the reform process ahead and build a track record of implementation. Based on this Roadmap it invites the Commission to intensify its support, monitoring and assessment of Albania's reform process, including in the context of the high level dialogue on the key priorities and through close interaction with Member States. This should focus on securing concrete results on all the above issues, based on credible and measurable targets and timeframes, with reliable data and statistics. In this respect the Council invites the Commission to report, in addition to the Enlargement Package and on the basis of the output of the high level dialogue, in a comprehensive and detailed manner on Albania's progress on the key priorities.



5. The Council welcomes Albania's continued constructive engagement in regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations as well as its alignment with the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy.
6. The Council reiterates that continued and sustainable dialogue between the government and the opposition on EU-related reforms will remain an important factor for Albania to advance on its EU integration path."

### **EU maritime security strategy**

The Council adopted the EU maritime security strategy.

For more details, see press release [11177/14](#).

### **European Semester**

The Council approved the integrated country specific recommendations (CSRs) to be forwarded to the European Council for endorsement. The draft CSRs have also been discussed in the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council and the Economic and Financial Affairs Council.

The European Semester involves simultaneous monitoring of the member states' fiscal, economic and employment policies during a six-month period every year. In the light of the guidance provided by the European Council, the member states will prepare their national reform programmes (economic and employment policies) and stability or convergence programmes (fiscal policies) for this year.

### **Implementation of European Council conclusions**

The presidency presented a report on the implementation of European Council conclusions, covering all ongoing tasks arising from European Council orientations.

The report is wide-ranging, across several policy areas, from the internal market to financial services, taxation and trade, as well as justice and home affairs, energy, defence and enlargement. It aims to provide a snapshot of where we stand regarding the main commitments taken at the level of heads of state or government.

### **18-month programme of the Council**

The Council endorsed the 18-month programme of the Council. The programme, drawn up by the incoming trio of presidencies (Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg) together with the president of the Foreign Affairs Council, sets out the Council's activities for the next 18 months.

### **EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region**

The Council heard a short presentation by the Commission on the new EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region. The initiative brings together cooperation among 8 countries, four from the EU (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia) and four non-EU countries in the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia).

A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework, endorsed by the European Council, to address common challenges in a given geographical area, be they economic, social, or environmental in nature. The EU has previously initiated two macro-regional strategies, one for the Baltic Sea region and the other for the Danube Region.

### **Application of Article 10 of Protocol 36 to the Treaties**

Following the UK's notification of 24 July 2013, under Article 10(4) of Protocol 36, that it has exercised the block opt-out option in respect of Union acts in the field of police and judicial cooperation in criminal matters adopted before the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the Council noted the conclusion reached between the Commission and the UK on the list of non-Schengen ex-third pillar measures which the UK will seek to rejoin, as well as the solution concerning the Prüm Decisions and the Probation Framework Decision, as explained by the Commission and the UK.

With regard to the Schengen ex-third pillar acquis, the Council had provisionally noted on 5 June 2014 a broad technical agreement on the text of the draft Council Decision on the notification of the UK of its wish to take part in some of the provisions of the ex-third pillar Schengen acquis, until such time as there is a clear picture and a political understanding on the list of ex-third pillar measures which the UK will rejoin, as set out in a report by the Presidency to the Council. However, at this stage, not all reservations could be lifted.

**Any other business**

– *Cohesion policy*

The presidency presented the results of the informal cohesion ministers meeting in Athens on 24-25 April 2014, with a particular focus on further work in the area of cohesion policy at ministerial level.

The presidency took note of the remarks of ministers regarding the idea of having a more regular and formal discussion in the Council on cohesion policy in dedicated sessions of the General Affairs Council (GAC). In this context, the presidency also noted the intention of the incoming presidency to dedicate the GAC meeting of 19 November 2014 to cohesion issues.

– *Flooding in Bulgaria and Slovenia*

The ministers of Bulgaria and Slovenia briefed the Council on recent flooding in Bulgaria and Slovenia which caused a number of casualties, the evacuation of inhabitants and serious damage to buildings and infrastructure in the affected areas. The presidency on behalf of the Council expressed its solidarity with the affected member states.

## **OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

### **GENERAL AFFAIRS**

#### **Integrated maritime policy**

The Council adopted the conclusions on integrated maritime policy set out in [11204/14](#).

#### **Implementation of the solidarity clause**

The Council adopted a decision on the arrangements for the implementation by the Union of the solidarity clause.

For more details, see press release [11270/14](#).

### **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

#### **EU - Central America Association Agreement**

The Council adopted the EU position for the first meeting of the Association Council with Central America, which is to approve a decision on the respective geographical indications protected in the territory of both parties, i.e. in the EU and in Central America.

### **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

#### **Specifications for euro coins**

The Council adopted a regulation recasting rules on denominations and technical specifications for euro coins intended for circulation ([8950/14](#)).

The regulation, in the interest of clarity, repeals and replaces regulation [975/98](#), which has been substantially amended several times since its adoption in 1998, and introduces further amendments.

According to article 128(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, member states may issue euro coins subject to approval by the European Central Bank of the volume of the issue. The Council may harmonise denominations and technical specifications to the extent necessary to enable smooth circulation.

## **CUSTOMS UNION**

### **Tariffs and quotas on certain products**

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 1388/2013 opening and providing for the management of autonomous tariff quotas of the EU for certain agricultural and industrial products ([10647/14](#)).

The regulation aims to ensure that adequate and uninterrupted supplies of products which are not produced in sufficient quantity in the EU can be imported at reduced or zero duty rates of the Common Customs Tariff duty for appropriate volumes, without disturbing the markets for such products.

The Council also adopted a regulation amending regulation 1387/2013 suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on certain agricultural, fishery and industrial products ([10656/14](#)).

## **TRANSPORT**

### **Convention concerning international carriage by rail - EU position\***

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken by the EU at the OTIF (Intergovernmental Organisation for International Carriage by Rail) Revision Committee's 25th session, which is due to take place in Bern on 25 to 27 June 2014 ([10952/2/14 REV 2](#); statement: [10952/2/14 REV 2 ADD 1](#)).

The position relates to certain amendments to the Convention concerning international carriage by rail (COTIF) and to its appendices.

## **DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION**

### **European Development Fund**

The Council adopted a decision on the financial contributions to be paid by the member states to finance the European Development Fund as the second instalment for 2014.

## **FISHERIES**

### **Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources - Position of the EU**

The Council adopted a decision on the position, on behalf of the European Union, in the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR). The CCAMLR was established by international convention in 1982 with the objective of conserving Antarctic marine life. This was in response to increasing commercial interest in Antarctic krill resources, a key component of the Antarctic ecosystem.

Measures decided in this body may become binding upon the EU.

## **APPOINTMENTS**

### **European Economic and Social Committee**

The Council appointed Mr Alessandro GRUMELLI (Belgium) ([10774/14](#)), Dr Günter LAMBERTZ (Germany) ([10778/14](#)) and Mr Andreas THURNER (Austria) ([10781/14](#)), as members of the European Economic and Social Committee for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 20 September 2015.

## **TRANSPARENCY**

### **Public access to documents**

On 24 June 2014, the Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application No 14/c/01/14 (doc. [9999/14](#));
- the reply to confirmatory application No 15/c/01/14 (doc. [10077/14](#)).