



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

3268th Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 22 October 2013

President

Linas Linkevičius

Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

Enlargement - Accession negotiations with Turkey

The Council agreed to confirm the EU common position for the opening of chapter 22 on regional policy and coordination of structural instruments with Turkey, and to convene an accession conference at ministerial level on 5 November in Brussels.

Preparations for the October European Council

The Council examined the draft European Council conclusions for the European Council on 24 and 25 October 2013. Ministers discussed the draft conclusions with the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, via video link.

The European Council is due to focus on: the digital economy, innovation and services, economic and social policy, the economic and monetary union, the Eastern partnership and migration flows.

European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR)

The Council adopted a regulation establishing the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR). The aim of the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) is to reinforce control of the Schengen external borders. In particular, EUROSUR will establish a mechanism for member states' authorities carrying out border surveillance activities to share operational information and to cooperate with each other and with the FRONTEX Agency in order to reduce the number of irregular migrants entering the EU undetected, and to increase internal security by preventing cross-border crime, such as trafficking in human beings and the smuggling of drugs.

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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**Enlargement - Turkey**

The Council agreed today to confirm the EU common position for the opening of chapter 22 on regional policy and coordination of structural instruments with Turkey, and to convene an accession conference at ministerial level on 5 November in Brussels.

The General Affairs Council on 25 June already agreed to open chapter 22 and underscored that the Inter-Governmental Conference with Turkey would take place after the presentation of the Commission's annual progress report and following a discussion of the General Affairs Council.

Since the start of the negotiations with Turkey in 2005, thirteen chapters have been opened, of which one (chapter 25 on science and research) has been provisionally closed. Chapter 22 on regional policy and coordination of structural instruments is the fourteenth chapter to be opened. The last chapter, on food safety, veterinary and phytosanitary policy (chapter 12), was opened in June 2010.

EU accession negotiations are divided into 35 chapters (policy fields) each of which is negotiated separately.

European Semester - lessons learned report

The Council had an exchange of views and endorsed the presidency synthesis report on the European Semester - lessons learned from 2013 and the way forward.

The 2013 European Semester cycle was completed on 9 July 2013 with the adoption of country-specific recommendations (CSRs). It covered a wide range of policy areas involving several Council configurations and their preparatory bodies.

The lessons learned report, which recognises that the 2013 semester has been a smoother exercise than those of previous years, proposes further improvements to the process.

The recommendations include that more attention to be given to monitoring of implementation of policy recommendations and in this context the report underlines the key importance of national ownership to CSR implementation. The report also refers to the tight timeframe that applies to the European semester which is a constraint.

The annual growth survey for 2014, which marks the start of the next semester, will be launched in the coming weeks and today's conclusion of the lessons learned process will allow for the recommendations to be taken into account in the upcoming semester.

European Union macro-regional strategies

The Council was informed of the achievements and added value of European Union macro-regional strategies and had an exchange of views on experiences gained within that framework. It adopted Council conclusions on the subject.

A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework, endorsed by the European Council, to address common challenges in a given geographical area, be they of an economic, social, or environmental nature.

Until now, the EU has initiated two macro-regional strategies, one for the Baltic Sea Region and the other for the Danube Region. In addition, the European Council has invited the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region by the end of 2014.

See here for the full [Council conclusions](#)

Preparations for the October European Council

The Council examined the draft European Council conclusions for the European Council on 24 and 25 October 2013. Ministers also discussed the draft conclusions with the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, via video link.

The main topic at the October European Council will be digital economy, innovation and services. A strong and digital economy is vital for growth and European competitiveness in a globalised world and discussions will focus on the need to invest in the digital economy, promoting a consumer and business-friendly digital single market and improving digital skills.

In the context of economic and social policy, at the European Council leaders will return to the issues of combating youth unemployment and the financing of the economy, in particular with respect to small and medium-sized enterprises (SME's). Particular attention will be given to progress on the youth unemployment initiative and how to improve and put in place a new financing instrument for SME's. The European Council will also discuss progress on simplifying regulation on the basis of a recent Commission communication on regulatory fitness (REFIT).

Following previous discussions on the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), the October European Council is expected to focus its debate on banking and economic union. In particular, heads of state or government are due to focus their discussions on strengthened economic policy coordination, the social dimension of the EMU and banking union.

The October European Council should also take note of the preparations for the Eastern Partnership Summit due to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, on 28 and 29 November.

Finally, the European Council will have an exchange of views on migratory flows following the recent tragic events in the Mediterranean in which hundreds of people lost their lives.

Other business

Macro-regional strategy for the Alps

The Council heard a presentation by the French delegation about the on-going activities with a view to establishing a macro-regional strategy for the Alps.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Financial assistance to Ireland: Extension of availability period

The Council adopted a decision amending decision 2011/77/EU on granting EU financial assistance to Ireland by extending the availability period of the aid by two months.

This is aimed at allowing for a comprehensive assessment of program compliance under the final review in due diligence and to make sure that the decision on the release of the last instalment can proceed in time.

The Commission completed the tenth review of the Irish economic reform programme on 10 July 2013.

Financial assistance for Romania

The Council adopted two decisions granting mutual assistance and precautionary EU medium-term financial assistance to Romania ([14696/13](#) and [14699/13](#)).

The precautionary facility of up to EUR 2bn can be drawn on until 30 September 2015. If it is activated and disbursements are made, the assistance shall be provided in the form of a loan with a maximum average maturity of eight years.

Tariff preferences: Council not to object to delegated act

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation establishing rules related to the procedure for temporary withdrawal of tariff preferences and adoption of general safeguard measures under the EU's generalised scheme of tariff preferences.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the act can enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects to it.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**EUROSUR**

The Council adopted a regulation establishing the European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) (PE-CONS 56/13). The aim of this system is to reinforce the control of the Schengen external borders.

For more information see [15031/13](#).

Armenia - Readmission and visa facilitation agreements

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the agreement between the European Union and Armenia on readmission of persons residing without authorisation ([5859/13](#))

The main objective of this agreement is to establish, on the basis of reciprocity, rapid and effective procedures for the identification and safe and orderly return of those persons.

The readmission agreement was signed by the European Union and Armenia in Brussels on 19 April 2013 (see [8630/13](#)). On 9 October 2013, the European Parliament gave its consent to the conclusion of the Agreement.

In parallel to the readmission agreement, a Council decision concerning the conclusion of a visa facilitation agreement with Armenia was also adopted by the Council ([5835/13](#)).

The agreement makes it easier and cheaper for citizens of Armenia, in particular those who travel most, to acquire short-stay visas allowing them to travel to and freely throughout the EU.

The visa facilitation agreement was signed on 17 December 2012 (see [17866/12](#)). On 9 October 2013, the European Parliament gave its consent to the conclusion of the Agreement.

Readmission agreements usually go hand-in-hand with visa facilitation agreements. They will enter into force on the same day (on the first day of the second month following the date on which the two parties notify each other that the internal procedures have been completed).

EU-Central Asia Plan on Drugs

The Council gave a mandate to the Presidency to negotiate on the basis of the EU-Central Asia Action Plan on Drugs (2014-2020) ([14182/13](#)) and to endorse it during the EU-Central Asia Senior Officials' meeting which will take place in 12 November 2013 in Brussels. This will be the third Action Plan adopted since 2002.

The EU and Central Asian countries have a shared interest in enhancing their cooperation to address drug demand reduction, illegal drugs supply and related organised crime. The EU Drugs Strategy - adopted by the Council in 2012 - provides the overarching political framework and priorities for EU drugs policy identified by member states and EU institutions, for the period 2013-2020.

NUCLEAR ENERGY

New rules for radioactive substances in water

The Council adopted a directive laying down requirements for the protection of the health of the general public with regard to radioactive substances in water intended for human consumption. It sets out parametric values, frequencies and methods for monitoring radioactive substances ([7445/3/13](#)).

For more information see press release [15066/13](#).

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Relations with Montenegro

The Council amended the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Montenegro to take into account Croatia accession to the EU.

FISHERIES

Access to Mayotte waters for fishing vessels from the Seychelles

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations on behalf of the EU with a view to an agreement with the Republic of the Seychelles relating to the access, for fishing vessels flying the flag of Seychelles, to waters and marine biological resources of the EU, namely in the exclusive economic zone off the coast of Mayotte.

These negotiations follow the adoption by the European Council on 11 July 2012 of a decision amending the status of Mayotte so that it can become an outermost region instead of an overseas territory from 1 January 2014. On that date the current exclusive economic zone (EEZ) of Mayotte, will become EU waters. In the course of the recent negotiations for a new protocol to the EU-Seychelles fishing agreement, the Seychelles requested that an agreement with the EU be negotiated that would enable Seychelles flagged vessels to continue to have access to Mayotte from 1 January 2014.

INTERNAL MARKET

Type-approval of motor vehicles - UNECE regulations

The Council approved the position to be taken by the EU within the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) in support of technical progress adaptations a number of UNECE regulations, which include:

- the approval of retrofit emission control devices for heavy duty vehicles, agricultural and forestry tractors and non-road mobile machinery equipped with compression ignition engines ([14654/13](#)),
- the recyclability of motor vehicles ([14656/13](#)), and
- amendments to the consolidated resolution on the construction of vehicles and a draft global technical regulation on pole side impact ([14644/1/13](#)).

The UNECE develops, at international level, harmonised requirements intended to remove technical barriers to the trade in motor vehicles and systems with a view to increasing the level of safety and environmental protection.

DEVELOPMENT**Technical centre for agricultural and rural cooperation**

The Council established the EU position within the ACP - EU Committee of Ambassadors on the amendment of the statutes of the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation. The Centre aims to empower agricultural and rural communities in ACP countries with the knowledge and skills they need to fight poverty and hunger.

Contributions to the European Development Fund

The Council set € 300 million as the third instalment to be paid by the member states to finance the European Development Fund in 2013.

EMPLOYMENT**Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Spain**

The Council adopted a decision mobilising an amount of EUR 840.000 under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), providing support for 630 dismissed workers in 140 Spanish companies in the non-metallic products sector. This part of the construction sector seriously suffered from a strong competition from Asian products, and in particular from China, leading to a loss of market shares world wide.

The dismissed workers will benefit of a range of measures aimed at helping them to reintegrate into employment. The measures include notable counselling, training and upskilling, job-search assistance and support towards entrepreneurship.
