



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

from: General Secretariat of the Council
to: Delegations

Subject: Partial summary record of the 155th meeting of the Bureau and 108th meeting of the Plenary of the **Committee of the Regions**, held in Brussels on 6 and 7 October 2014

Mr GOZI presented the priorities of the Italian Presidency. He focused on the issues of unemployment, solidarity, subsidiarity and multi-level governance. He also highlighted the importance of immigration and the role of Frontex plus, the use of the Cohesion Fund in the recovery of the European economy and the link with the EU 2020 strategy.

I. MEETING OF THE BUREAU

The bureau meeting and the plenary session were chaired by Mr LEBRUN (EPP, BE), President of the Committee of the Regions (CoR).

The bureau adopted the agenda for the next plenary sessions.

On 7 October, the Italian Secretary of State, Mr GOZI, presented the priorities of the Italian Presidency. In this context, the CoR President recalled that in its Turin Declaration in September, the CoR bureau reiterated its support for the European Parliament's call to exclude national co-financing of investments co-financed by the European Union under partnership agreements from the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP). The bureau asked that investment made by local and regional authorities in the context of the Structural Funds and the Cohesion Fund be excluded from the rules of the SGP. The President said that this issue would be raised again during the exchange with the Italian Presidency.

The new President of the European Commission, Mr JUNCKER, is scheduled to speak at the 109th plenary session on 3 and 4 December.

The issue of the cooperation agreement with the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) was discussed. The bureau confirmed its position - differing from that of the EESC - that this agreement should be extended until the end of 2015. Negotiations with the EESC will start soon.

The bureau discussed a document, presented by the Secretariat, containing guidelines on the follow-up to CoR opinions. All speakers unanimously supported the need to find ways to improve the weight of the Committee's opinions and to establish a procedure for their follow-up. The guidelines that had been presented would be further developed.

II. PLENARY SESSION

Item 6:

Statement by Mr Sandro Gozi, Secretary of State for European Affairs, on the priorities of the Italian Presidency

The Italian Secretary of State, Mr GOZI, wished for a "fresh start for the Union" in his presentation of the priorities of the Italian Presidency of the Council.

Regarding the social dimension of Europe, he particularly stressed the need to stimulate private investment. Solidarity, which is mentioned 22 times in the Treaties, should also become a real EU policy.

Regarding financial matters, Mr GOZI recognised the importance of the European Investment Bank (EIB), stressing the role it has, as a public bank, to stimulate the economy by taking risks that private banks are not willing to take.

On the Cohesion Fund, Mr GOZI expressed his intention to reverse past trends to make EU budget compromises by cutting the Cohesion Fund. He recognised the important role the Fund has to play in regional and social cohesion. Reference was made on several occasions to the link with the 2020 EU Strategy.

He further added that the EU should make maximum use of the flexibility which exists in the Stability and Growth Pact. Mr GOZI considered that co-financing instruments were to be supported as well, as he saw no fundamental problems in identifying the criteria for investment. Investment and budgetary discipline should be viewed as complementing each other.

On the issue of subsidiarity Mr GOZI, explained that most Member States want to deal with the matter without reforming the Treaties. He also stressed the importance of having a multi-level governance approach, that cuts away red tape and manages to bring the EU closer to its citizens.

Mr GOZI also assigned an important role to the speedy development of the Digital Agenda.

Another priority for the Italian Presidency was the EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionic region (EUSAIR).

Mr GOZI expressed his concern about the problem of immigration into the EU and stressed the need to implement existing solutions.

During the discussion, Mr CATTANEO (EPP, IT), together with Mr LAMBERTZ (PES, BE), expressed general agreement with the points of view that had been outlined. Mr LAMBERTZ added that a white paper was needed on the quality of public investments.

Mr THOMAS (EA, UK) and Mr KEYMER (ECR, UK) supported Mr GOZI's approach on the question of subsidiarity. Mr CATTANEO called for a bottom-up approach to bridge the gap between the EU and its citizens. Mr SPACCA (ALDE, IT) felt a new vision should be developed to reach out to citizens.

ALDE welcomed the priority accorded to EUSAIR and the subsequent Alpine project.
