



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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## **PRESS RELEASE**

3274th Council meeting

### **General Affairs**

Brussels, 19 November 2013

President            **Linas Linkevičius**  
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

# **P R E S S**

## **Main results of the Council**

*The Council approved the agreement with the European Parliament on the **2014 EU budget** and the financing of € 400,5 million to redress flood and drought damage in four member states. Overall payments in the budget amount to € 135,50 billion and overall commitments have been set at € 142,64 billion.*

*The Council took note of presentations by the presidency and the incoming presidency on a roadmap for the 2014 European Semester, as well as a presentation by the Commission on the Annual Growth Survey, thus kicking off the **fourth European Semester for economic policy coordination in the EU**. "Growth and jobs remain the main concerns of EU citizens and therefore our economic policy coordination is essential", said Minister Linkevičius of the Lithuanian presidency after the meeting.*

*The Council examined an annotated draft agenda for the **European Council** meeting to be held on 19-20 December.*

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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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**United Kingdom:**

Mr David LIDINGTON

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

.....

**Commission:**

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice- President

.....

## **ITEMS DEBATED**

### **Commission work programme 2014**

The Council took note of the [Commission work programme for 2014](#). On the basis of a presentation by the Commission on its priorities for 2014, and in particular for the remaining part of the legislative period ahead of the European Parliament elections in May 2014, ministers had an exchange of views on the programme.

In its presentation of the work programme the Commission put a strong focus on the priority growth-enhancing legislative proposals to be completed in the months ahead; it focused on the need to deliver on growth and jobs, the importance of finalising the banking union and to ensure that new measures under the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2014-2020 will swiftly become operational.

Member states broadly agreed with the Commission's priorities and emphasised that growth, jobs and competitiveness remain the main priorities for the EU. In terms of the report, a need for even further prioritisation was expressed by ministers and many mentioned the Commission's REFIT programme in the context of the EU needing to show concrete results and added value. With a view to future Commission work programmes a number of ministers underlined the need for member states to be closely associated with setting the priorities.

### **European Semester**

The Lithuanian presidency and the incoming Greek presidency presented to ministers a roadmap outlining key steps in the implementation of the 2014 European Semester. In their presentation they highlighted the main issues that have changed for 2014 compared with previous editions. These changes include; the reinforced role for the December European Council in guiding the European Semester, a more value-added involvement of different sectorial Council formations, more attention to be given to the implementation of country-specific recommendations (CSR) and a better adjusted calendar in order to have CSRs examined and approved in a timely manner.

Ministers also heard a presentation by the Commission on the Annual Growth Survey (AGS), which was adopted by the college on 13 November. The AGS sets out general economic priorities for member states to follow when drawing up their budgets and reform plans over the next year. The Commission highlighted the fact that this year the AGS was accompanied by the draft Joint Employment Report, which for the first time included a scoreboard on employment and social policies, as well as a synopsis overview on how the country-specific recommendations have been implemented in the member states. The key message from the Commission was that there is still need to strengthen the economic recovery but that the AGS shows that the EU strategy is working.

Comments by ministers were mostly focused on how to further improve the process by increasing economic policy coordination in the EU, better implementing the semester and increasing member state ownership.

The debate marked the start of the fourth European Semester.

## **Preparation of the December European Council**

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 19-20 December 2013 ([15651/13](#)).

The December European Council is expected to focus on:

- *Common security and defence policy*; an all -encompassing approach is provided for including an increase in the effectiveness, visibility and impact of CSDP, the development of defence capabilities and the strengthening of Europe's defence industry.
- *Economic and monetary union*; the Annual Growth Survey and the strengthening of economic policy coordination, in particular with regard to contractual arrangements and associated solidarity mechanisms will be discussed. The European Council is also expected to confirm a decision on the use of an employment and social scoreboard and indicators in the European Semester. In the light of developments and following further work in the Council, the European Council is expected to address the banking union.
- *Economic and social policy*; evaluation of the implementation of the Compact for Growth and Jobs and review of action taken in the area of taxation since May 2013.
- *Enlargement, the Task Force for the Mediterranean and Energy* are other topics to be addressed in December.

The Council will hold a further discussion, on the basis of draft European Council conclusions, at its meeting on 17 December.

## **Implementation of European Council conclusions**

The Council took note of the presidency report on the implementation of European Council conclusions ([15874/1/13 REV 1](#)).

The intention of the presidency was to inform delegations about on-going European Council-related work and to give member states a common picture of the state of play. The presidency also concluded that while progress is being made in most areas there is also work still remaining for the upcoming Greek presidency until the end of the European Parliament term.

The report covers items related to the compact for growth and jobs, economic and financial affairs, justice and home affairs, trade and enlargement.



**Any other business**

– *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*

The Lithuanian presidency informed the Council about the results of the 4th annual forum of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region which took place in Vilnius on 11-12 November.

– *EU Strategy for the Danube Region*

The Romanian delegation informed the Council about the second annual forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region which took place in Bucharest on 28-29 October.

– *Subsidiarity review*

The Netherlands delegation informed the Council about its national subsidiarity review and also proposed a debate among member states and in the institutions on the need for a sharper focus in EU initiatives.

**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED****ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS****Financial assistance to Portugal**

The Council adopted a decision ([15373/13](#) + [COR 1](#) + [COR 2](#) + [COR 3](#)) adjusting the conditions for assistance to Portugal from the European Financial Stability Mechanism (EFSM), following the conclusion of the combined eight and ninth reviews by the troika (the Commission and the IMF, in liaison with the European Central Bank) of progress made by Portugal in implementing its economic adjustment programme.

The Council also adopted a decision ([15787/13](#)) approving the update of the macroeconomic adjustment programme of Portugal, following the entry into force of the "two- pack" (specifically, [Regulation \(EU\) No 472/2013](#)) that lays down provisions for strengthening the economic and budgetary surveillance of euro area member states receiving financial assistance from the EFSM, the EFSF, the ESM or the IMF.

**BUDGETS****2014 EU budget - approval of agreement**

The Council approved the agreement with the European Parliament on the 2014 EU budget and the financing of €400.5 million to redress flood and drought damages in four member states, thereby confirming the deal reached in the Conciliation Committee on 12 November ([16106/13](#) + [ADD 1](#) + [ADD 2](#) + [ADD 3](#) + [ADD 4](#) + [ADD 5](#) + [16107/13](#)).

For details, see [16379/13](#).

**EUROPEAN FREE TRADE ASSOCIATION (EFTA)****Swiss financial contribution for the benefit of Croatia**

The Council and the representatives of the Governments of the member states meeting within the Council adopted conclusions regarding the Swiss financial contribution for the benefit of Croatia ([15581/13 EXT 1](#)).

**TRADE POLICY****Anti-dumping - Biodiesel - Argentina and Indonesia**

The Council adopted a regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of biodiesel originating in Argentina and Indonesia ([15382/13](#)).

**JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS****Automated data exchange with Slovakia**

The Council adopted a decision on the launch of automated data exchange concerning Vehicle Registration Data (VRD) in Slovakia ([15520/13](#)). The evaluation procedure required by decision 2008/616/JHA<sup>1</sup> concluded that the general provisions on data protection are fully implemented by Slovakia and this country is therefore entitled to receive and supply personal data for the purpose of prevention and investigation of criminal offences, as from the date of the entry into force of this decision.

**AGRICULTURE****Adjustment rate to direct payments 2013**

The Council adopted a regulation fixing an adjustment rate to direct payments provided for in regulation [73/2009](#) in respect of calendar year 2013 and repealing Commission implementing regulation [964/2013](#) ([15397/13](#)).

The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFUE) lays down that the annual budget of the EU must comply with the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). With a view to ensuring that the amounts for the financing of the common agricultural policy (CAP) comply with the annual sub-ceilings for market related expenditure and direct payments under heading 2 laid down in the regulation to be adopted by the Council on the MFF, a financial discipline mechanism has been provided for in regulation [73/2009](#) on direct payments to farmers.

In drawing up the 2014 draft budget, the budgetary estimates for direct payments and market related expenditure showed that the sub-ceiling under heading 2 for financial year 2014, after financial transfers between European Agricultural Guarantee Fund (EAGF) and European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), was likely to be exceeded. As a consequence, direct payments in respect for calendar year 2013 should be reduced in order to comply with the ceiling.

The application of this adjustment rate will result in the reduction of the amounts of direct payments for budget lines covering expenditure relating to aid applications submitted by farmers in respect of calendar year 2013 (financial year 2014).

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<sup>1</sup> [OJ L 210, 6.8.2008](#)

## **Olive oil - Negotiations for a new international agreement**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to launch negotiations on behalf of the EU for the conclusion of a new international agreement on olive oil and table olives.

The current international agreement on olive oil and table olives dates from 2005. It was negotiated under the auspices of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and is administered by the International Olive Council (IOC).

The 2005 agreement will remain in force until 31 December 2014. The IOC was set up in 1959 to administer the successive international commodity agreements concluded over the past fifty years to defend and promote olive growing, olive oil and table olives.

## **FISHERIES**

### **Fishing opportunities in the Baltic Sea for 2014**

The Council adopted a regulation on fishing opportunities for 2014 for certain fish stocks in the Baltic Sea ([15169/13](#)).

A political agreement was reached on this regulation at the Agriculture and Fisheries Council meeting in October ([14832/13](#)). The regulation lays down for 2014 the maximum quantities of fish from specific stocks that can be caught in the Baltic Sea (total allowable catches (TACs) and quotas), as well as the fishing effort limits for Baltic cod stocks (limits on fishing activity by reducing the number of days at sea). Catch limits and fishing effort limits for cod stocks in the Baltic Sea are fixed in accordance with the rules laid down in regulation 1098/2007 establishing a multi-annual plan.

Under article 43(3) of the Lisbon Treaty, it is incumbent upon the Council to adopt measures on the fixing and allocation of fishing opportunities in the framework of the common fisheries policy. The European Parliament's participation and the Economic and Social Committee's opinion are therefore not required for this species.

## **Amendment to fishing opportunities 2013**

The Council adopted an amendment to regulations [754/2009](#), [1262/2012](#), [39/2013](#) and [40/2013](#) as regards certain fishing opportunities ([16109/13](#)).

This amendment to the regulations on external, internal and deep-sea fishing opportunities for 2013 includes a revision of the 2013 external quotas following the accession of Croatia to the EU on 1st July 2013 and the adjustment of some other quotas. One of these adjustments concerns a 26% increase in the "Northern Hake" total allowable catch (TAC) in accordance with a positive opinion on this stock from the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES). A commitment to identify and pursue the most appropriate control measures for the preservation of this stock has been included in the amending regulation.

The Northern component of the stock of hake (*Merluccius merluccius*) covers the following ICES fishing areas:

- IIIa; EU waters of Subdivisions 22-32,
- EU waters of IIa and IV,
- VI and VII; EU and international waters of Vb; international waters of XII and XIV
- VIIIa, VIIIb, VIIIc and VIIE.

## **ENERGY**

### **Energy labelling of domestic ovens and range hoods**

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation of 1.10.2013 supplementing directive 2010/30/EU with regard to the energy labelling of domestic ovens and range hoods ([14326/13](#)).

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.

### **Union list of projects of common interest**

The Council decided not to object to a Commission delegated regulation amending regulation 347/2013 on guidelines for trans-European energy infrastructure as regards the Union list of projects of common interest ([14825/13](#)).

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.

### **APPOINTMENTS**

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

The Council appointed Mr Christophe HILLAIRET (France) a member of the European Economic and Social Committee for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 20 September 2015 ([15814/13](#)).

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