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Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

Energy issues

Brussels, 5 March 2015

President **Dana Reizniece-Ozola**
Minister for Economics of Latvia

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press>

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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.

ITEMS DEBATED

Energy union

The Council exchanged views on a strategic framework proposed by the Commission for an [Energy Union](#).

Ministers welcomed the Commission communication as a valuable input for addressing the challenges the EU faces on energy security, competitiveness and its path towards a low-carbon economy.

Ministers wished that the energy union should strike the right balance between the different objectives: affordable energy, safe and secure energy systems, European competitiveness, sustainability and the transition towards a more climate friendly economy.

Some ministers considered that a fully functioning internal energy market should constitute the core of the energy union. Others stressed the need to strive for greater energy security, given the EU's high dependence from energy imports and the exposure of certain member states.

Calls to reduce energy dependency, especially as far as the gas supplies are concerned, were widely shared. Many ministers also supported the Commission's call for making further efforts to increase energy efficiency.

Ministers furthermore took the view that Commission suggestions to increase transparency on intergovernmental agreements and on commercial supply contracts needed to be carefully considered.

Many delegations emphasised the need to respect member states' national competencies over their energy mix.

The Commission idea to build on regional cooperation for a better energy market was widely supported.

EU environment ministers will discuss the climate policy aspects of the Commission communication on 6 March 2015 focusing on the decarbonisation aspects. The presidency intends to summarize the debates of both energy and environment ministers in one single letter which will provide a comprehensive input to the President of the [European Council](#) ahead of the March meeting of heads of states and government.

Energy infrastructure

The Council held a policy debate on the developments and priorities for energy infrastructure.

Ministers welcomed the Commission communication on [achieving the 10% electricity interconnection target](#).

Ministers called for urgent measures to achieve a fully functioning and interconnected European internal energy market to secure the uninterrupted supply of energy throughout Europe and increase interconnectivity, ending any isolation of member states from the European gas and electricity networks.

In this context, the Commission welcomed the high-level meeting that took place in Madrid on the 4 March between France, Portugal and Spain, with the participation of President Juncker and the President of the European Investment Bank, which approved projects to increase the electricity interconnections between the three countries.

A number of ministers stressed the need to modernise and extend the current energy infrastructure and asked in particular for projects of common interest to be carried out in a timely manner. Timely adoption and implementation of the network codes for gas and electricity should also be given highest priority.

Regional market integration was widely considered an important step to consolidate the single EU energy market and to achieve the 10% electricity interconnection target by 2020.

Ministers broadly shared the view that more investments in strategic and smart infrastructure were needed. In addition to recalling the important role of the TEN-E regulation and of the Connection Europe Facility, some ministers referred in particular to the recently proposed investment plan for Europe, and notably to the creation of a European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), while underlining that this fund should complement ongoing EU programmes and support schemes of the European Investment Bank (EIB).

In this context, several ministers also pointed out that investments required a stable and predictable regulatory environment and that the administrative burden should be reduced

The outcome of the debate will feed into the Presidency's synthesis report on Europe 2020 strategy.

Other business

– Energy security

The Commission provided the Council with an update on the latest developments in [energy security](#), including the implementation of the "winter package" agreed between Ukraine and Russia in October 2014.

Vice-President Šefčovič informed the Council on the outcome of the recent meeting Brussels between Russia and Ukraine under his mediation, which paved the way for an agreement not only on gas payments between the two parties but also guaranteed the normal gas supply to the EU.

Commissioner Šefčovič indicated that trilateral talks will continue, another meeting is already scheduled for the end of March. Ministers will be informed by the Commission on progress in these issues.

– European Nuclear Energy Forum

The Czech delegation informed the Council about the 10th Plenary meeting of the European nuclear energy forum which will take place in Prague on 26 and 27 May 2015 ([6170/15](#)).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Temporary reception of certain Palestinians

The Council enabled the concerned EU member states to extend until 31 January 2016 the validity of national permits for entry and stay granted to certain Palestinians, in the framework of common position 2002/400/CFSP concerning the temporary reception by EU member states of certain Palestinians.

Restrictive measures - Ukraine

The Council extended EU restrictive measures focused on the freezing and recovery of misappropriated Ukrainian state funds. For more details, see [press release](#).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Bank supervision - statistics

The Council adopted a regulation proposed by the European Central Bank authorising the collection of statistical data for prudential supervision under the EU's single supervisory mechanism for banks.

[Regulation adopted on 5 March 2015 on the collection of statistical data for prudential supervision.](#)

The regulation amends regulation 2533/98 which already allows for the collection of confidential data for statistical purposes. In order to minimise the reporting burden, the amendments enable the ECB and the national central banks to collect and use the statistical information in the field of prudential supervision of credit institutions.

ENVIRONMENT

Carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport

The Council adopted its first-reading position on a regulation on the monitoring, reporting and verification of carbon dioxide emissions from maritime transport. It also adopted the corresponding statement of the Council's reasons.

The new mechanism for monitoring reporting and verification of CO₂ emission from ships is a building block towards the implementation of the energy climate 2030 framework and, at the same time, a contribution to the international negotiations at the International Maritime Organization, aimed at a global monitoring, reporting and verification system.

International maritime shipping was the only means of transportation not included in the EU's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The new regulation - which amends regulation 525/2013 - will improve information about CO₂ emissions relating to the consumption of fuels, transport work and energy efficiency of ships, which will make it possible to analyse emission trends and assess ships' performances.

For further details see [press release](#).

TRANSPORT

Aviation safety rules - derogation concerning certain helicopters

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a decision authorising the United Kingdom to derogate from certain common aviation safety rules pursuant to article 14(6) of regulation 216/2008. The proposed derogation relates to restraint systems on flight crew seats of helicopters used in commercial air transport operations.

All member states will be entitled to apply this measure.

The Commission decision is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the decision, unless the European Parliament objects.

[Draft Commission decision on derogation concerning certain helicopter seat restraint systems](#)

INDUSTRY

Technical prescriptions for wheeled vehicles

The Council adopted a [decision](#) supporting certain amendments to the agreement of the United Nations economic commission for Europe (UNECE) concerning the adoption of uniform technical prescriptions for wheeled vehicles, equipment and parts used on wheeled vehicles ([6616/13](#)).

UNECE develops harmonised requirements intended to remove technical barriers to the trade in motor vehicles between the contracting parties of the agreement. The EU is a contracting party to this agreement and votes on behalf of the member states ([6244/15](#)).

FOOD LAW

Food additive - Analysis method for erucic acid

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of the two following Commission regulations:

- a regulation authorising the use of silicon dioxide in polyvinyl alcohol-polyethylene glycol-graft-co-polymer which is used in food supplements as film coating ([5746/15](#))
- a regulation establishing performance criteria with which the methods of analysis used to determine the erucic acid content in oils and fats for human consumption ([5747/15](#))

The Commission regulations are subject to the so called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt them, unless the European Parliament objects.