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President **Jānis Dūklavs**
Minister for Agriculture of Latvia

P R E S S

CONTENTS¹**ITEMS DEBATED**

FISHERIES	4
Multiannual management plan for fish stocks in the Baltic.....	4
AGRICULTURE	5
Council conclusions - EU position at the United Nations Forum on Forests	5
ANY OTHER BUSINESS.....	5
European Investment Bank (EIB).....	5
Indication of the country of origin for certain food products	6
Expo Milano 2015.....	6

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*AGRICULTURE*

– Codification - Agricultural products from Turkey and EU tariff quotas	7
– Farm structure survey - Modification of the definitions.....	7
– Market of ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin - Removal of obligations.....	8
– Pesticides - Maximum residue levels	9

FISHERIES

– General fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - Conclusion of agreement.....	10
– Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna - EU membership	10
– Extension of the International Sugar Agreement 1992 - Position of the EU.....	11
– Extension of the Grains Trade Convention 1995 - Position of the EU.....	12

¹

- 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.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

- Money laundering..... 12
- Long-term investment funds..... 13
- Capping fees for card-based payments..... 13

ENLARGEMENT

- Montenegro: Stabilisation and Association Agreement 13

TRADE POLICY

- Imports from third countries..... 14

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

- EU-UAE visa waiver agreement 14

TRANSPORT

- Safer and greener lorries* 14
- Flight testing..... 15
- General aviation aircraft - maintenance procedures 15
- Continuing airworthiness: update of rules..... 16

ENVIRONMENT

- Protection of species and EU Ecolabel..... 16
- Quality of petrol and diesel fuels..... 17
- Persistent organic pollutants..... 17

ENERGY

- Oil supply disruptions 18

CUSTOMS UNION

- Hong Kong, China - Cooperation on enforcement of intellectual property rights..... 18

EMPLOYMENT

- Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for France..... 19

APPOINTMENTS

- European Economic and Social Committee 19

WRITTEN PROCEDURE

ITEMS DEBATED

FISHERIES

Multiannual management plan for fish stocks in the Baltic

The Council reached agreement on a general approach on a proposal for a regulation establishing a multiannual plan for the stocks of cod, herring and sprat in the Baltic Sea ([8176/15](#)).

This management plan is proposed for a six year period and aims to ensure that the Baltic stocks of cod, herring and sprat are exploited in a sustainable way in accordance with the principles of maximum sustainable yield (MSY). In this context, target ranges for fishing mortality for the species covered have been included. An evaluation of this plan is also scheduled after three years. It should be noted that the plan takes account of the specificities of the Baltic Sea.

This should replace the existing management plan for the Baltic Sea cod stocks (in place since 2007) with a multispecies approach because the stocks of herring and sprat are not yet subject to a management plan. In view of the strong influence that biological interactions and environmental effects have on those Baltic Sea fish stocks, exploitation rates and patterns of these stocks were adapted in the latest scientific advice in the light of improvements in scientific understanding of their interactions and of changes in environmental conditions. In addition, scientific advice indicated that the current exploitation rates for some of the Baltic fish stocks were currently not consistent with achieving the MSY.

A general approach constitutes a political agreement in the Council on proposals for a regulation. The agreement sought on the multiannual management plan for fish stocks in the Baltic will make it possible for negotiations to be launched between the Parliament and the Council with a view to a political agreement between EU institutions. Following a vote in the PECH Committee, the European Parliament is expected to confirm its position in the plenary session of 27 April 2015.

AGRICULTURE

Council conclusions - EU position at the United Nations Forum on Forests

The Council adopted conclusions on the position to be taken by the EU and its member states at the 11th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) which will take place in New York from 4 to 15 May 2015 ([7529/1/15 REVI](#)).

Those conclusions stress the importance of the sustainable management of forests and their multi-functionality to address major challenges such as climate change and deforestation. It provides also further elements on the post-2015 development goals in this area

In October 2000, the UNFF was established by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) as a subsidiary body with its main objective being to promote "... the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and to strengthen long-term political commitment to this end..." on the basis of key milestones of international forest policy.

The UNFF has universal membership, and is composed of all member states of the United Nations and specialised agencies.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

European Investment Bank (EIB)

The European Commission presented to the ministers a model guarantee instrument for agriculture prepared in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) ([7964/15](#)).

Several delegations supported the joint initiative of the Commission and the EIB aiming to facilitate access to credit for rural initiatives.

The model instrument is intended to help ease access to finance for farmers and other rural businesses. Member states and regions can adapt and use the model to set up financial instruments funded by their rural development programmes under the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) - to secure loans for investments in farm performance, processing and marketing, business start-ups and many other areas.

Indication of the country of origin for certain food products

The Council was briefed by the Commission on the state of play of two reports dealing with the mandatory indication of the country of origin of milk and dairy products and of certain types of meat, unprocessed food and single ingredients products.

The Commission explained that those reports were delayed but are finally expected to be made available in the coming weeks. Most of the member states welcomed this announcement and pointed out that the reports will provide a useful analysis of the implication of the mandatory indication of the country of origin. In this regard, some member states supported the principle of this indication in particular for milk and dairy products while others considered that the benefit of providing this additional information to the consumer should be balanced with the cost of the measures for the agri-food sectors concerned.

Regulation 1169/2011 on food information to consumers provides that in December last year, the Commission should have submitted to the European Parliament and to Council, two reports regarding the mandatory indication of the country of origin on:

- types of meat other than beef, swine, sheep, goats and poultry, milk and milk used as an ingredient in dairy products;
- unprocessed food, single-ingredient products and ingredients that represent more than 50% of a food.

Expo Milano 2015

The Italian delegation presented to the Council the main events organised for Expo Milano 2015, the key theme of which is "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life". Expo Milano 2015 will officially open on 1 May (7947/15).

Expo Milano 2015 is the universal exhibition that Milan will host from 1 May to 31 October 2015. Over that six-month period, more than 140 participating countries will showcase the best of their technology that offers a specific answer to a vital need: to guarantee healthy, safe and sufficient food for everyone, while respecting the planet and its balance. In addition to the exhibitor nations, the Expo also involves international organisations, and expects to welcome over 20 million visitors to its exhibition area of 1.1 million square metres.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**AGRICULTURE****Codification - Agricultural products from Turkey and EU tariff quotas**

The Council adopted codified versions of the following regulations:

- the regulation suspending certain concessions relating to the import into the EU of agricultural products originating in Turkey ([PE-CONS 9/15](#)) (i.e. codified version of regulation 1506/98)
- the regulation on the imports into the EU of agricultural products originating in Turkey ([PE-CONS 5/15](#)) (i.e. codified version of regulation 779/98);
- Union tariff quotas for high-quality beef, and for pigmeat, poultrymeat the regulation opening and providing for the administration of certain, wheat and meslin, and brans, sharps and other residues ([PE-CONS 6/15](#)) (i.e. codified version of regulation 774/98).

As all those regulations have been substantially amended they were codified in the interest of clarity and rationality. The new regulations replace the various acts incorporated into regulations 1506/98, 779/98 and 774/98, while fully preserving their content.

Farm structure survey - Modification of the definitions

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of an amendment to Commission regulation 1200/2009 implementing regulation 1166/2008 on farm structure surveys and the survey on agricultural production methods, as regards livestock unit coefficients and definitions of the characteristics ([7275/15](#)).

The purpose of this amendment is to modify the definitions of characteristics to be used for the farm structure survey included in the annex of regulation 1200/2009 implementing regulation 1166/2008 to make them consistent with the new list of characteristics set out for the survey 2016 (implementing regulation 715/2014). Regulation 1166/2008 establishes a framework for the provision of comparable EU statistics on the structure of agricultural holdings and for a survey on agricultural production methods.

This regulation was submitted for scrutiny by the Commission on 12 March 2015.

Market of ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin - Removal of obligations

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission delegated regulation amending regulation 376/2008 as regards the obligation to present a licence for imports of ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin (6473/15).

The purpose of this delegated act is to remove:

- the obligation for the EU to establish and publish an EU balance sheet for ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin and the quarterly obligation for Member States to provide information on production, disposal and stocks;
- the obligation to present an import licence for the import of ethyl alcohol of agricultural origin into the EU, including the lodging of a security.

This regulation was adopted by the Commission on 20 February 2015 in the light of its simplification agenda and its 2015 work programme which identify whether existing rules impose unnecessary red tape and administrative burden or are outdated. The regulation was identified in this context.

Pesticides - Maximum residue levels

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of three Commission regulations amending annexes II, III and V to regulation 396/2005¹ as regards:

- maximum residue levels (MRLs) for acetamiprid, ametoctradin, amisulbrom, bupirimate, clofentezine, ethephon, ethirimol, fluopicolide, imazapic, propamocarb, pyraclostrobin and tau-fluvalinate in or on certain products (amendment of annexes II and III) ([6925/15](#));
- MRLs for 2,4,5-T, barban, binapacryl, bromophos-ethyl, camphechlor (toxaphene), chlorbufam, chloroxuron, chlozolate, DNOC, di-allate, dinoseb, dinoterb, dioxathion, ethylene oxide, fentin acetate, fentin hydroxide, flucycloxuron, flucythrinate, formothion, mecarbam, methacrifos, monolinuron, phenothrin, propham, pyrazophos, quinalphos, resmethrin, tecnazene and vinclozolin in or on certain products (amendment of annexes II, III and V) ([6950/15](#));
- MRLs for azoxystrobin, chlorantraniliprole, cyantraniliprole, dicamba, difenoconazole, fenpyroximate, fludioxonil, glufosinate-ammonium, imazapic, imazapyr, indoxacarb, isoxaflutole, mandipropamid, penthiopyrad, propiconazole, pyrimethanil, spirotetramat and trinexapac in or on certain products (amendment of annexes II and II) ([7071/15](#));

Regulation 396/2005 establishes the maximum quantities of pesticide residues permitted in products of animal or vegetable origin intended for human or animal consumption. These MRLs include, on the one hand, MRLs which are specific to particular foodstuffs intended for human or animal consumption and, on the other, a general limit which applies where no specific MRL has been set. MRL applications are communicated to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which issue a scientific opinion on each intended new MRL. Based on EFSA's opinion, the Commission proposes a regulation such as those listed above to establish a new MRL or to amend or remove an existing MRL and modifying the annexes of regulation 396/2005 accordingly.

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

¹ OJ L 070, 16.3.2005, p. 1.

FISHERIES

General fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean - Conclusion of agreement

The Council adopted a decision concerning the conclusion, on behalf of the EU, of the amended agreement for the establishment of the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) ([15458/14](#)).

The EU, as well as Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, France, Greece, Italy, Malta, Romania, Slovenia and Spain are contracting parties to the GFCM, a regional fisheries management organisation (RFMO) established under the FAO Constitution. The GFCM may, on the basis of scientific advice, adopt recommendations and resolutions designed to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilisation of stocks of living aquatic resources in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea at levels which are considered sustainable and low risk. Since recommendations adopted by the GFCM are binding on its contracting parties, they should be transposed into EU law.

On 15 November 2013, the Council authorised the Commission to negotiate, on behalf of the EU, amendments to the agreement on matters falling within EU competence. Negotiations were successfully concluded in May 2014 and the GFCM endorsed the text of the amended agreement.

The purpose of the amendments to the agreement is to modernise the GFCM and reinforce its role in the conservation of fisheries resources in its area of competence.

Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna - EU membership

The Council adopted a decision on the signing, on behalf of the EU, and provisional application of the agreement between the EU and the Commission for the Conservation of Southern Bluefin Tuna (CCSBT) concerning the membership of the EU in the Extended CCSBT ([7135/15](#)).

The EU has been a cooperating non-member of the CCSBT since 2006 but is bound to implement its decisions. Pending the EU's full membership to the CCSBT, in October 2013, it was decided to establish an Extended CCSBT to allow the EU to become a member through an agreement in the form of an exchange of letters. The EU will, as a result, be able to play an effective role in the implementation of the Convention.

The CCSBT may, on the basis of scientific evidence, make decisions designed to maintain the populations of southern bluefin tuna at levels which will ensure the long-term sustainability of those stocks. Southern bluefin tuna are large, fast swimming, pelagic fish found throughout the southern hemisphere mainly in waters between 30 and 50 degrees south. Measures decided in this body may become binding upon the EU.

Extension of the International Sugar Agreement 1992 - Position of the EU

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU, within the International Sugar Council (ISC) as regards the extension of the International Sugar Agreement 1992 (ISA) ([6486/15](#)).

The ISC was created in 1937, originally to deal with problems concerning sugar surpluses and sugar distribution through the International Sugar Organisation. This organisation aims to ensure enhanced international cooperation in connection with world sugar matters and to provide a forum for intergovernmental consultations on sugar so as to improve the world sugar economy, and to facilitate trade by collecting and providing information on world sugar.

The ISA was concluded by the EU and entered into force on 1 January 1993. Since then, it has been regularly extended for periods of two years and is due to expire on 31 December 2015. A decision on its extension will be made at the 47th session of the ISC to be held in Antigua Guatemala on 25 June 2015. The EU is in favour of an extension for a two-year period.

Extension of the Grains Trade Convention 1995 - Position of the EU

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU, within the International Grains Council (IGC) with respect to the extension of the Grains Trade Convention 1995 (GTC) ([6487/13](#)).

The GTC applies to trade in wheat, coarse grains, (maize (corn), barley, sorghum and other grains) and rice. It seeks to further international cooperation in grains trade, to promote expansion, openness and fairness in the grains sector, to contribute to grain market stability and to enhance world food security. These objectives are sought by improving market transparency through information-sharing, analysis and consultation on grain market and policy developments. The Convention also establishes the IGC as an intergovernmental forum for cooperation in grains trade matters. The functions of the IGC are to oversee the implementation of the GTC, to discuss current and prospective world grain market developments, and to monitor changes in national grain policies and their market implications.

The GTC was approved by the EU and entered into force on 1 July 1995. Since then, it has regularly been extended and is due to expire on 30 June 2015. A decision on its extension will be made at the 41st session of the IGC to be held in London on 8 June 2015. The EU is in favour of an extension for a further two year period.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Money laundering

The Council adopted its position at first reading on new rules aimed at preventing money laundering and terrorist financing.

The directive and regulation will strengthen EU rules against money laundering and ensure consistency with the approach followed at international level. The regulation deals more specifically with information accompanying transfers of funds.

Approval by the Council enables the European Parliament, with which agreement was reached in December 2014, to adopt the package at second reading at a forthcoming plenary session.

[Press release on the Council's April 2015 first reading position on money laundering](#)

Long-term investment funds

The Council adopted a regulation aimed at increasing the pool of capital available for long-term investment in the EU economy by creating a new form of fund vehicle.

European long-term investment funds (ELTIFs), by virtue of the asset classes that they will be allowed to invest in, are expected to provide investors with long-term, stable returns. Their creation will help tackle barriers to investment in, for example, infrastructure projects, thereby stimulating employment and economic growth.

[Press release on adoption of the regulation on ELTIFs](#)

Capping fees for card-based payments

The Council adopted a regulation capping interchange fees for payments made with debit and credit cards.

The aim is to reduce costs for both retailers and consumers, and to help create an EU-wide payments market. The regulation will also help users make more informed choices about payment instruments.

[Press release on adoption of the regulation on interchange fees for card-based payments](#)

ENLARGEMENT

Montenegro: Stabilisation and Association Agreement

The Council adopted a regulation codifying procedures for the adoption of detailed rules for the implementation of the EU's stabilisation and association agreement with Montenegro.

[April 2015 regulation on procedures for the stabilisation/association agreement with Montenegro](#)

TRADE POLICY

Imports from third countries

The Council adopted a regulation recasting, in the interests of clarity, EU rules for imports from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, North Korea, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

[Text of the April 2013 recast regulation on imports from certain third countries](#)

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EU-UAE visa waiver agreement

The Council adopted a decision on the signing and the provisional application of the [agreement](#) between the European Union and the United Arab Emirates on the short-stay visa waiver. According to the decision the agreement will be provisionally applicable from the date set for its signature.

The Council also decided to forward the draft decision on the conclusion of the agreement to the European Parliament for its consent once the agreement has been duly signed.

TRANSPORT

Safer and greener lorries*

The Council adopted changes to the directive on the weights and dimensions of certain road vehicles. The new rules will allow lorry and bus manufacturers to exceed current length and weight limits to use designs that will improve road safety and fuel efficiency.

[Directive amending the weights and dimensions directive from 1996](#)
[Statements on the adoption of the weights and dimensions amending directive](#)
[Safer and greener lorries approved by the Council](#)

Flight testing

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 748/2012 as regards flight testing.

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

[Draft Commission regulation amending regulation 748/2012 as regards flight testing](#)
[Annex to the draft Commission regulation amending regulation 748/2012 as regards flight testing](#)

General aviation aircraft - maintenance procedures

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 1321/2014 as regards alleviations for maintenance procedures for general aviation aircraft.

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

[Draft Commission regulation amending regulation 1321/2014 as regards alleviations for maintenance procedures for general aviation aircraft](#)

[Annexes to the draft Commission regulation amending regulation 1321/2014 as regards alleviations for maintenance procedures for general aviation aircraft](#)

Continuing airworthiness: update of rules

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 1321/2014, which establishes rules on the continuing airworthiness of aircraft and aeronautical products. The changes relate to alignment of rules for continuing airworthiness with regulation 216/2008, critical maintenance tasks and aircraft continuing airworthiness monitoring.

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

[Draft Commission regulation amending regulation 1321/2014 as regards alignment of rules for continuing airworthiness with regulation 216/2008, critical maintenance tasks and aircraft continuing airworthiness monitoring](#)

[Annexes to the draft Commission regulation amending regulation 1321/2014 as regards alignment of rules for continuing airworthiness with regulation 216/2008, critical maintenance tasks and aircraft continuing airworthiness monitoring](#)

ENVIRONMENT

Protection of species and EU Ecolabel

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of the following Commission legislative acts:

- a regulation amending, as regards the trade in species of wild fauna and flora, regulation 865/2006 laying down detailed rules concerning the implementation of regulation 338/97 on **the protection of species of wild fauna and flora** by regulating trade therein ([6548/15](#) + [6548/15 ADD1](#))
- a decision amending decisions 2009/568/EC, 2011/333/EU, 2011/381/EU, 2012/448/EU and 2012/481/EU in order to prolong the validity of the ecological criteria for the **award of the EU Ecolabel**¹ to certain products ([6567/15](#))

¹ Regulation 66/2010 on the EU Ecolabel.

- a decision amending decision 2014/312/EU establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the **EU Ecolabel for indoor and outdoor paints and varnishes** ([6685/15](#)+[6685/15 ADD1](#))

Commission acts are subject to what is known as the regulatory procedure with scrutiny¹. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt them, unless the European Parliament objects.

Quality of petrol and diesel fuels

The Council adopted a directive laying down calculation methods and reporting requirements relating to the quality of petrol and diesel fuels ([5115/15](#) + COR 1), to be used by fuel suppliers when reporting on their greenhouse gas emissions.

It applies to fuels used to propel road vehicles, non-road mobile machinery (including inland waterway vessels when not at sea), agricultural and forestry tractors, recreational craft when not at sea and electricity for use in road vehicles.

Persistent organic pollutants

The Council adopted two decisions:

- on the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU, at the 7th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants ([7695/15](#)). The position concerns amendments to Annexes A, B and C to the Convention.
- on the submission, on behalf of the EU, of a proposal to add perfluorooctanoic acid and its compounds in Annex A to the Convention, which lists persistent organic pollutants to be eliminated ([7552/15](#)).

The Stockholm Convention, which entered into force on 17 May 2004, aims at protecting human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants. The 7th Conference of the Parties (COP7) to this convention is to be held in May 2015.

¹ Council Decision 1999/468/EC laying down the procedures for the exercise of implementing powers conferred on the Commission (OJ L 184, 17.7.1999), as amended by decision 2006/512/EC (OJ L 200, 22.7.2006).

ENERGY

Oil supply disruptions

The Council adopted a decision ([7284/15](#)) repealing:

- decision 77/706/EEC on the setting of a Community target for a reduction in the consumption of primary sources of energy in the event of difficulties in the supply of crude oil and petroleum products
- the Commission decision 79/639/EEC laying down detailed rules for the implementation of decision 77/706/EEC.

The aim of the new decision is to simplify the legislative framework and to reduce the administrative burden. In case of a supply disruption, emergency stocks can replace the missing volumes quickly and efficiently without disturbing the economic activity and hindering mobility. Therefore, emergency stocks should now be considered as the main response tool to address an oil supply disruption.

CUSTOMS UNION

Hong Kong, China - Cooperation on enforcement of intellectual property rights

The Council endorsed an action plan for cooperation with Hong Kong, China (HKC) in the field of customs enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPR).

The [action plan](#) is aimed at tackling international trade in IPR infringing goods throughout the supply chain. In particular, the action plan seeks to:

- improve the targeting of shipments of IPR infringing goods destined for the EU;
- contribute to the dismantling of illegal IPR activities on both sides; and
- promote the active involvement of the customs authorities of both sides in fighting international trade in goods infringing IPR on the basis of risk analysis and close cooperation with the relevant stakeholders.

The importance of promoting legitimate trade between the EU and HKC is in line with the [EU-HKC agreement on cooperation and mutual administrative assistance in customs matters](#).

EMPLOYMENT

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for France

The Council adopted a decision mobilising €6.05 million under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) following the dismissal of 2513 workers of Mory-Ducros, a French enterprise operating in the land transport and transport via pipelines sector.

The EGF helps workers to find new jobs and develop new skills when they have lost their jobs as a result of changing global trade patterns, e.g. when a large company shuts down or a factory is moved outside the EU, or as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. The help of the EGF consists in co-financing measures such as job-search assistance, careers advice, tailor-made training and re-training, mentoring and promoting entrepreneurship. It also provides one-off, time-limited individual support, such as job-search allowances, mobility allowances and allowances for participating in lifelong learning and training activities.

APPOINTMENTS

European Economic and Social Committee

The Council appointed Mr Ferdinand WYCKMANS (Belgium) as a member of the European Economic and Social Committee for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 20 September 2015.

WRITTEN PROCEDURE

Fisheries - Amendment to fishing opportunities 2015: seabass, sandeel and undulate rays

The Council adopted by written procedure on 23 March 2015 an amendment to regulation 2015/104 as regards certain fishing opportunities for 2015 ([5687/15](#)).

Regulation 2015/104 fixes for 2015 fishing opportunities for certain fish stocks to EU vessels in Union and certain non-Union waters. This amendment establishes:

- daily limits on the number of seabass retained in the context of recreational fisheries (those limits add to urgent measures already adopted for certain commercial seabass fisheries);
 - a total allowable catch for sandeel in EU waters of zones IIa, IIIa and IV on the basis of an advice of the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES);
 - the setting of the by-catch quota for undulate ray in certain areas;
 - adjustments and corrections for errors in the original regulation for fishing opportunities.
-