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Presidents **Māriņe Seile**
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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

EDUCATION

ET 2020 mid-term stocktaking

Ministers expressed their views on the achievements of **European cooperation in education and training** to date and how it should develop, and in which direction. The debate took place in the context of the mid-term stocktaking and the 2015 Joint Report, which is due for publication this summer.

ET 2020 is the key European-level framework that helps member states to modernise their education and training systems, thus contributing to the overall political priorities set under the Europe 2020 strategy. The ET 2020 strategic framework was adopted in May 2009 ([OJ C 119, 28.5.2009](#)) and established four broad long-term objectives which European cooperation in education and training should seek to achieve by the end of this decade.

The Commission thinks that the ET 2020 framework needs to become more operational and focused. One of its main priorities should be to improve basic skills and competences, as well as digital literacy, in a lifelong learning perspective.

The main outcomes of the ministerial debate were the following:

- ET 2020 strategic objectives remain relevant but the current priority areas should be streamlined, focusing on a few headline priorities with clear European added value, while also increasing the efficiency of working methods;
- The ET 2020 work cycle should be extended from three to five years, thus enabling better synchronisation between the objectives of ET 2020 and the broader EU 2020 strategy for jobs and growth and reducing the reporting burden on member states;
- in the follow-up to the back-to-back meeting of EPSCO and Education ministers in December 2014, cooperation and closer synergy between the education and training sector and the employment policy sector should be pursued and strengthened, thereby acknowledging the role of quality education in promoting employability and competitiveness;

- more efficient use should be made of available EU financial instruments, such as Erasmus+ and the Youth Guarantee, as well as the recently proposed Investment Plan for Europe, which emphasises the need to swiftly increase the volume of investments in certain key policy areas, including education and training, by attracting private capital to strategic projects;
- vocational education and training must be developed in parallel with formal education, as is already the case in some member states, and the exchange of best practices should be conducted on a regular basis:
- though important, education cannot only be limited to finding a job. It should also promote personal development, critical thinking and active citizenship, focusing on European common values. In this context, ministers stressed the importance of ensuring a concrete follow-up to the declaration they adopted at their informal meeting in Paris in March on education for citizenship and ways of countering radicalisation.

The Commission concluded that main priorities to be developed in the post-2015 ET 2020 should be promoting inclusive education and active citizenship, increasing youth employability, and encouraging the exchange of best practices,

The role of early childhood education and primary education

The Council adopted conclusions on the **role of early childhood education and primary education in fostering creativity, innovation and digital competence** ([8397/15](#)).

The conclusions examine ways and means of ensuring that today's young people are equipped with the skills needed to meet the challenges of an increasingly digital economy and society.

They also emphasise the part which creativity, innovation and digital resources can play in the learning process itself, as well as the importance of ensuring that teachers are suitably trained and schools adequately prepared for this task.

Other business

- *Paris declaration: Promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education*

The Council took note of information from the Presidency, the French delegation and the Commission on the follow-up to the informal meeting of EU education ministers on 17 March 2015 in Paris (8496/15).

The meeting was organised by the French delegation - supported by the Latvian Presidency and the Commission - in the wake of the terrorist attacks in Paris in January this year. It brought together all the member states - 26 at ministerial level - and adopted a declaration calling for the education sector to play its part in preventing radicalisation by promoting citizenship and fostering social inclusion, and common European values such as tolerance and mutual respect.

The French minister stressed again that employability must be promoted in parallel with citizenship education. She also suggested that the Horizon 2020 programme could support research into the reasons that lead to radicalisation among young people and called for the regular exchange of best practices on this topic.

The Commission stated that preventing radicalisation was a strong priority, which is why the recently published European Agenda on Security (8293/15) gives such a large place to the role of education. Furthermore, EU instruments such as ET 2020 and Erasmus + can also be used in this field.

The Commission considered that any measures taken should reach down to grassroots level and signalled that a number of projects were already being implemented. It announced that the Commission would present a specific initiative in this area in the context of the 2016 Erasmus + work programme.

Member states briefly indicated some of the programmes and measures under way at national level to promote inclusion and fight radicalisation. Ministers also underlined that concrete actions at both national and European level should seek to involve sports clubs, NGOs, youth associations, parents and families, as well as develop specific teacher training programmes aimed at preventing radicalisation.

– *Work programme of the incoming presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Luxembourg delegation concerning its main priorities in the education field for the coming six months:

- develop linguistic diversity at both formal and non-formal level
- improve early childhood facilities
- increase access to tertiary education
- promote inclusive education

YOUTH

Structured dialogue

Before starting with the formal items on the agenda, the Presidency briefly outlined the main outcome of the informal meeting between government representatives and the representatives from youth organisations which had taken place in the morning before the Council meeting.

The youth representatives stressed the need to develop a positive youth policy where young people could be seen as assets rather than problems, and highlighted the importance of enhancing participation and social inclusion.

They acknowledged in particular the value of the “structured dialogue” and of a cross-sectoral approach, called for an effective implementation of the rights of young people, the recognition of the value of youth work, further measures to combat youth unemployment, in particular through increased implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

Cross-sectorial policy cooperation

The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing **cross-sectorial policy cooperation to effectively address the socio-economic challenges facing young people** ([7863/15](#)). Cross-sectorial policy cooperation is also one of the three main priorities set out in the recently adopted EU Work Plan for Youth 2014-2015 ([OJ C 183/02, 14.6.2014](#)).

Although significant steps have been taken to improve the situation of young people in Europe, youth unemployment rates remain high with increasing numbers of long term unemployed and demotivated young workers who have a higher risk of social exclusion. There is still a skills gap between education and the world of work and the transition from school to work is often difficult.

The conclusions consider strategies to strengthen the cross-sectorial approach to youth issues so that policy-makers can react more effectively and promptly to problems, making the best use of all available EU funding and programmes in this field, such as the Youth Guarantee and Erasmus+.

They also underline that certain core elements of the youth sector (youth work, non-formal learning) could be integrated into other sectors (education, employment, social policy and health) and could play a crucial role in addressing the main socio-economic problems of young people in the EU.

The Commission said that the forthcoming Youth Report (scheduled for early Autumn) will be an important tool to assess youth policy to date and will also show that the cross-sectorial approach is already bringing results. The report will also include a list of member states' best practices in this regard.

Youth work

The Council adopted conclusions on **reinforcing youth work to ensure cohesive societies** ([8407/15](#)), which highlight the contribution of youth work to personal development, social inclusion, cultural diversity and active citizenship.

The conclusions also underline that these values are at the core of European democracies and should also be promoted and supported outside the formal education structures.

There are estimated to be around 3 million youth workers (both voluntary and paid) in the EU, often neither recognised nor regulated by any kind of framework.

A number of member states were in favour of the Commission presenting a proposal for a Council recommendation, which would strengthen the recognition of youth work, addressing the persistently high level of youth unemployment and its negative consequences in terms of social exclusion, marginalisation, extremism and, potentially, radicalisation.

Many ministers underlined that youth work plays an important role in reaching out to all young people of different backgrounds, including marginalised young people and those not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

The Commission is examining this issue at several levels and is preparing a study on quality youth work. This study could form the basis for a possible Council recommendation

Political participation of young people

Ministers discussed how to improve **young people's political participation in the democratic life of Europe**. This is one of the overall thematic priorities of the trio presidencies in the framework of the "structured dialogue" and was also the subject of the last EU Youth Conference that took place in Riga on 23 to 26 March,¹.

Member states stressed that young people are interested in political participation, but are participating in new and less conventional ways, such as through social media and internet campaigns. Consequently, member states are already implementing a large number of measures to enhance political participation of young people, focusing in particular on election turn-outs.

In general ministers agreed that the focus should be on the following measures:

- strengthen civic and political education and increasing support from families and schools in order to combat extremism and radicalisation
- make the best use of social media, the [European Youth Portal](#) and user-friendly tools for political participation
- develop tailored projects mainly at local level aiming to intensify the dialogue with and between young people
- continue to exchange best practices

The Commission announced that it was preparing a set of measures in this field to be presented at the end of the year.

¹ Joint recommendations ([8095/15](#), p.8).

Other business

- *European declaration on youth work in the context of the Second European Youth Work Convention*

The Council was briefed by the Belgian delegation on the [outcome Second European Youth Work Convention](#) which took place from 27 to 30 April 2015 in Brussels, in the framework of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe ([8491/1/15 REV 1](#)).

- *Work programme of the incoming presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Luxembourg delegation concerning its main priorities in the youth sector for the coming six months.

- adoption of a recommendation on the political participation of young people
- adoption of the 2015 Joint Report
- adoption of new Youth Work Plan

CULTURE and AUDIOVISUAL

European audiovisual policy

Ministers had a first exchange of views on the audiovisual policy aspects of the recent [Commission communication on the Digital Single Market Strategy](#) presented by Commissioner Oettinger.

The Commission underlined that the aim of the strategy is to allow Europe to re-establish its digital supremacy, catching up on digital innovation in order to compete in equal terms with other global players, such as the United States, China and South Korea who have already a digital strategy for quite some time now.

The European Union market is fragmented with different rules and regulations in many sectors, which do not allow the EU to compete as successfully as others. To be able to do so, the EU must further harmonise its copyright legislation and address issues such as e-commerce, the role of digital platforms, taxation, net neutrality and geo-blocking.

Commissioner emphasised that if third countries want to do business in Europe, they will have to respect EU law.

The Commission and ministers also stressed that the digital single market strategy is not solely about technological issues: it also focuses on boosting creativity, ensuring cultural diversity and promoting cultural heritage. Together all this is what makes European culture attractive for export.

The main outcomes of the ministerial debate were the following:

- regarding the **digital single market strategy**, ministers supported the cross-border portability of content, the fight against illegal content and the need to find the right balance on copyright;
- they also stressed that the territoriality principle is important for content creation and geo-blocking might sometimes be justified in particular as far as small markets are concerned.
- concerning the **audiovisual media services** (AVMS) directive ([OJ L 95, 15.4.2010](#)) remains valid in many domains but should be adapted to technological changes brought about by the digital shift, regarding in particular the current regulatory distinction between on-demand and linear audiovisual media services
- the review of the directive should aim to guarantee media freedom and pluralism, promotion of cultural diversity, as well as ensuring a high level protection of minors
- the country of origin principle (each provider of audiovisual media services comes under the jurisdiction of one and only one EU member state) is still a cornerstone of European audiovisual policy but some exceptions could be foreseen, for instance when fundamental values, freedoms and democracy are seriously threatened
- however, the procedure to be followed by member states when they are the target of unacceptable content coming from another member state should be streamlined and accelerated, in particular in certain cases of services of non-EU origin licensed in one member state yet targeting the audience of another member state. Effective cooperation among audiovisual regulatory authorities is crucial in this respect.
- the freedoms guaranteed by the AVMS directive must not be misused to disseminate hate speech, propaganda or disinformation in order to ensure public interest objectives of security and stability

The Commission indicated that its REFIT exercise on the AVMS directive should be completed by the end of 2015 with a view to adopting a legislative proposal in the course of 2016.

The Presidency said that it would prepare a summary of the outcome of today's Council debate and of the forthcoming Competitiveness and Telecommunications Councils' debates on the subject. The text will be forwarded to the June European Council.

Cultural and creative cross-overs

The Council adopted conclusions on **cultural and creative cross-overs to stimulate innovation, economic sustainability and social inclusion** ([8346/15](#)), which highlight how culture and artistic creativity can trigger innovation and enhance competitiveness in industry and business, as well as in education, health care and the environment.

The cultural and creative sectors (CCS) cover a broad range of sectors from the arts, crafts, architecture, heritage, libraries and publishing to film, television, games, music, advertising and design.

Despite numerous studies undertaken in recent years at both national and EU levels that have demonstrated the significant contribution of these sectors to GDP, job creation and exports, the synergies with other sectors have not yet been fully explored.

The conclusions call on member states to create favourable conditions to promote cultural and creative entrepreneurship, including by using innovative financial instruments.

They also recommend that education should encourage the development of transversal skills such as critical thinking, creativity, entrepreneurship and initiative taking, which are vital in today's labour market.

The Commission is invited to develop a comprehensive industrial strategy that would strengthen competitiveness and further growth of the cultural and creative industries.

European Capitals of Culture in 2019

The Council adopted a decision designating **Plovdiv** (Bulgaria) and **Matera** (Italy) as European Capitals of Culture in 2019 ([8103/15](#)), following a recommendation from the Commission which is based on the reports of the selection panel and the positive opinion of the European Parliament.

The European Capitals of Culture initiative was launched in 1985 and over 40 cities have been designated since then. It has become one of the better-known European initiatives. Its aim is to promote greater mutual understanding between European citizens and strengthen a feeling of European citizenship, simultaneously highlighting the richness of European cultures and both their diversity and their shared features.

The initiative had proved to have a positive impact in terms of media response, local development, tourism and the recognition by inhabitants of the importance of their selected city.

The Bulgarian and Italian ministers welcomed the designation and outlined briefly some of the features of their respective cities.

Other business

– *Destruction of cultural sites perpetrated by ISIL/Da'esh*

The Council was updated by the Commission on culture and cultural heritage related aspects of the [Joint communication on elements for an EU regional strategy for Syria and Iraq as well as the Da'esh threat](#) .

Da'esh is destroying cultural sites in occupied territories for ideological reasons and at the same time it trades cultural and archaeological objects in order to finance its terrorist activities.

The Commission included in its [European Agenda on Security \(8293/15\)](#) a reference to illicit trafficking of cultural objects as an area where additional measures might be needed to prevent terrorist financing. Europol has also set-up a specific task force to deal with the trafficking of cultural objects.

Member states and the Commission unanimously condemned these barbaric acts against a cultural heritage that belongs to all humanity and signalled that they are committed to doing all they can to stop these acts of criminal violence, also in cooperation with other international organisations such as the UNESCO.

– *Financing of small-scale cultural infrastructure projects*

The Council took note of concerns of the Polish delegation - supported by a large number of member states - regarding the maximum threshold that the Commission has decided to apply to small-scale cultural infrastructure financed from the European Regional Development Fund 2014-2020, and its calculation method ([8561/15](#)).

The Commission recalled that only small-scale cultural and tourism infrastructure can be supported under the ERDF since these projects proved having a greater impact in local economy than isolated larger projects.

The Commission defended the threshold as being reasonable to meet the criterion of "small scale". However, it also pointed out the flexibility that member states have in financing projects under the ERDF regulation

– *Council conclusions on cultural governance*

The Council took note of information from the Presidency ([8489/15](#)) on the main outcomes of the stocktaking exercise relating to the Council conclusions on cultural governance, adopted in November 2012 ([15849/12](#)+ [COR 1](#))

– *Work programme of the incoming presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Luxembourg delegation concerning its main priorities in the field of culture for the coming six months:

- cross-sectoral cooperation on cultural issues
- culture in European Union external relations, in particular concerning development cooperation

SPORT

Role of grassroots sport

The Council adopted conclusions on **maximising the role of grassroots sport in developing transversal skills, especially among young people** ([7875/15](#)), highlighting how voluntary activities in sport as a method of non-formal and informal learning can help young people acquire skills and transversal competences that complement formal education and enhance their employability.

Non-formal and informal learning are important elements in the learning process and are effective instruments for making learning attractive, developing readiness for lifelong learning and promoting the social integration of young people.

Sport is the largest non-governmental movement in Europe. Voluntary activities in the sports sector mainly take place at grassroots level, with people taking part either as participants, facilitators or organisers.

Physical activity as part of quality education

Ministers held a debate on **physical activity as an essential element of quality education at all levels**.

The promotion of physical activity is a priority of EU policy-making in the field of sport, and has been regularly addressed, in particular through the Council recommendation on health-enhancing physical activity across sectors ([15575/13](#)), a specific chapter for sport under the Erasmus+ programme and the upcoming first edition of the European Week of Sport in September (http://ec.europa.eu/sport/week/index_en).

Most member states are already developing many programmes and strategies to promote physical activity, since they are all aware of its benefits and of the dangerous consequences of sedentarity and of the rising trend of obesity in particular among young people. Many member states already work in close cooperation with local sport associations.

The main recommendations from the debate were the following:

- propose a greater range of activities in schools and increase their attractiveness
- encourage young people to engage in extracurricular sport and physical activity beyond the school day, organise school competitions
- extend the use of community facilities, ensuring that sport facilities are available, meet the necessary technical and safety standards and are managed efficiently, in partnership with local sports organisations and clubs
- universities and further education institutions should also develop sporting opportunities, since it's generally during their teenage years that children tend to give up sport
- support the progress of young athletes aspiring to a career in elite sports, by adapting school curricula and schedules

- develop programmes ensuring an inclusive approach, adjusting the activities to children with disabilities or special education needs

The ministerial debate also benefited from the very relevant input from the sport movement's representatives who participated in the working lunch, in the framework of the “structured dialogue”:

- EOC (European Olympic Committee);
- EUPEA (European Physical Education Association),
- EUSA (European University Sports Association),
- CEV (European Volleyball Confederation),
- FIBA (Europe International Basketball Federation)
- LEN (European Swimming League), and IFF (International Floorball Federation).

The discussion addressed the **cooperation between the sports movement and the education systems in member states**:

Other business

- *Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions*

The Council was briefed by the Presidency on the state of play regarding the signing of the Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions. To date 18 countries (of which 9 EU member states) have signed the Convention but so far only Norway has ratified it.

The Convention will come into force following ratification by at least five signatories (three of which must be members of the Council of Europe), which is expected by 2016.

The Commission presented the proposals for the EU signature of the Convention in March 2015 and they are currently under examination in the competent Council bodies. The Council Legal Service is expected to provide an opinion on some of the pending issues .

– ***World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) meetings***

The Council was briefed by the EU representatives on the outcome of the WADA meetings which took place in Montreal on 12 and 13 May 2015. The meeting mainly addressed issues relating to the budget, data protection and the Anti-Doping Code.

The EU is represented on the WADA Foundation Board by Belgium, Luxembourg and Malta. The Foundation Board is WADA's supreme decision-making body and it is composed of 38 members, with an equal proportion of representatives from the Olympic Movement and from governments.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), set up in 1999, is a private law body whose mission is to promote, coordinate and monitor the fight against doping in sport in all its forms (<https://www.wada-ama.org/>.) Its key tasks include scientific research, education, the development of anti-doping capacities and monitoring of the World Anti Doping Code.

– ***Work programme of the incoming presidency***

The Council took note of information from the Luxembourg delegation concerning its main priorities in the field of sport for the coming six months:

- promotion of physical activity in schools
- double careers in sport
- EU representation and coordination at WADA
- adoption of Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Inland waterway transport in Europe - Report of the European Court of Auditors

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report entitled "Inland Waterway Transport in Europe: No significant improvements in modal share and navigability conditions since 2001", as set out in [8331/15](#).

TRANSPORT

Fishing vessel personnel

The Council decided to authorise member states to become parties to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel (STCW-F). The European Parliament gave its consent to the decision in April 2015, after agreement by the Council in December 2014.

The STCW-F is an International Maritime Organisation convention aimed at making safety standards for crews of fishing vessels mandatory worldwide.

For more information, see [Transport Council press release from December 2014](#)

[Council decision authorising member states to become parties to the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Fishing Vessel Personnel](#)

Port state control*

The Council adopted a decision that contains the position to be adopted by the member states in the Port State Control Committee (PSCC) of the Paris Memorandum of Understanding on Port State Control (Paris MOU). The decision covers the 48th session of the PSCC, which will be held in the Netherlands from 18 to 22 May 2015. During that session, the PSCC is expected to decide on certain issues which have direct legal effect on the EU directive on port state control.

Port state control means monitoring the compliance of ships with the international standards for safety, pollution prevention and on-board living and working conditions. While the primary responsibility for compliance rests with the flag state, inspections by port states play an important role as a second line of defence against substandard shipping.

[Statement on the adoption of the decision concerning Paris MOU PSCC](#)

ENVIRONMENT

List of restricted substances

The Council did not raise objections to a Commission delegated act amending Annex II to Directive 2011/65/EU on the restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances in electrical and electronic equipment as regards the list of restricted substances ([8108/15](#)+ *ADD 1*). The Commission and the European Parliament will be informed.

This means that, unless the European Parliament objects, the delegated act will be published and enter into force on the twentieth day following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 18 May 2015, the Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application No 07/c/01/15 ([7861/15](#)).