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Transport, Telecommunications and Energy

Energy issues

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P R E S S

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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.

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ITEMS DEBATED

ENERGY

Clean energy package

The Council agreed its negotiating positions on four of the legislative files under the clean energy package:

- [regulation on governance of the Energy Union](#)
- [directive on the promotion of energy from renewable sources](#)
- [directive on common rules for the internal market in electricity](#)
- [regulation on the internal electricity market](#)

Negotiations with the European Parliament can now start with the aim of reaching an agreement at first reading on each of the files.

This legislation will allow the EU to implement the Energy Union strategy and reach the EU's 2030 energy and climate goals. Today's general approaches should be considered an important step towards that common goal.

The clean energy package contains eight legislative files in total. The other four items concern energy efficiency, energy performance of buildings in addition to risk-preparedness in the electricity sector and the European Union Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators (ACER).

The Council has already agreed its positions on the first three. Work on the ACER regulation is ongoing.

Any other business

– *External energy relations*

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on the main recent and upcoming developments and events in the field of external energy relations. The topics addressed were Japan, Iran, the Eastern Partnership, Energy Charter, Energy Community, and the International Energy Agency (IEA).

[Information note](#)

– *Work programme (January to June 2018)*

The Council took note of the information provided by the Bulgarian delegation on the work programme of the incoming presidency.

[Information note](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Sanctions guidelines

The Council adopted the updated sanctions guidelines. The updated guidelines replace the previous guidelines adopted in June 2012.

[Sanctions: how and when the EU adopts restrictive measures](#)

EUAM Ukraine

The Council decided to establish a regional presence in Odessa of the EU European Union Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform in Ukraine (EUAM Ukraine) and allocated close to €1.26 million for this purpose.

The European Union Advisory Mission for Civilian Security Sector Reform Ukraine, EUAM Ukraine, has been deployed since December 2014, with a mandate to support Ukrainian state agencies in the reform of the civilian security sector. The mission has been one of the central elements of the EU's enhanced support to the Ukrainian authorities in recent years.

EUAM aims to strengthen and support reform in state agencies such as the police, other law enforcement agencies and the judicial sector, particularly the prosecutor's office. The mission provides strategic advice to the Ukrainian authorities, supported by operational activity, including training, to develop sustainable, accountable and efficient security services that strengthen the rule of law. This process is ultimately designed to restore the trust of the Ukrainian people in their civilian security services, which have been beset by allegations of corruption and malpractice.

EUAM is an unarmed, non-executive civilian mission with its headquarters in Kyiv and regional presences in Lviv and Kharkiv, and now also in Odessa.

[EUAM Ukraine](#)

EU-Cuba relations

The Council adopted the EU position regarding the rules of procedure of the Joint Council and the rules of procedure of the Joint Committee for the EU-Cuba Joint Council. The rules of procedure are expected to be formally adopted at the first meeting of the EU-Cuba Joint Council.

[EU-Cuba relations, factsheet](#)

Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

The Council adopted a decision to support the Hague Code of Conduct and ballistic missile non-proliferation in the framework of the implementation of the EU Strategy against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The Council allocated a budget of close to €1.88 million for one year to the support of activities to promote the Hague Code of Conduct and ballistic missile non-proliferation.

TRADE POLICY

EU relations with Georgia

The Council agreed to replace the protocol to the EU-Georgia Association Agreement concerning the definition of the concept of 'originating products' and methods of administrative cooperation. The new protocol refers to the Regional Convention on pan-Euro-Mediterranean preferential rules of origin. It is expected to be formally adopted at a forthcoming meeting of the Customs Sub-Committee established by the Association Agreement.

[EU-Georgia Association Agreement](#)

EU relations with the Republic of Moldova

The Council agreed to give a favourable opinion on the comprehensive roadmap on public procurement submitted by the Republic of Moldova, in view of the document becoming the reference for the implementation of the Association Agreement in the area of public procurement. The opinion is expected to be formally adopted at a forthcoming meeting of the Association Committee meeting in trade configuration.

[EU-Moldova Association Agreement](#)

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Renewal of the term of the SRB Chair

The Council renewed Elke König's term of office as chairperson of the EU's single resolution board.

Having completed a three-year tenure as the board's first-ever chairperson, Ms König's mandate is renewed for a further five years as from 23 December 2017.

The six-member board oversees the resolution of unviable banks. It was established in 2014 under the single resolution mechanism, a key component of the EU's banking union.

VAT derogation - Latvia - SMEs

The Council adopted a decision allowing Latvia to continue exempting small companies from VAT until the end of 2020 ([15492/17](#) + [15364/17](#)).

The measure benefits companies with an annual turnover of up to €40 000. The Council's decision derogates from directive [2006/112/EC](#).

Excise duty rates - the north of Sweden - electricity

The Council adopted a decision allowing Sweden to continue applying a reduced rate of excise duty to electricity consumed by households and service providers in certain parts of the north of the country ([15494/17](#) + [15365/17](#)).

Statistics

The Council adopted decisions appointing Enrico Giovannini as chairperson and Bart De Moor, Jaume Garcia and Algirdas Semeta as members of the European statistical governance advisory board ([13115/17](#), [13081/17](#), [13114/17](#) + [13079/17](#)).

The four will assume their duties on 1 February 2018 for three years.

European long-term investment funds - extension of time limit for delegated act

The Council decided to extend by one month the time limit for raising objections to a Commission regulation supplementing regulation 2015/760 on European long-term investment funds (ELTIFs) with regard to regulatory technical standards on: financial derivative instruments solely serving hedging purposes; the sufficient length of life of ELTIFs; assessment criteria for the market for potential buyers; criteria for the valuation of the assets to be divested; and the types and characteristics of the facilities available to retail investors.

The new deadline is 4 February 2018 ([15522/17](#) + [15413/17](#)).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction**

The Council adopted a decision authorising Luxembourg and Romania to accept, in the interest of the EU, the accession of Georgia and South Africa to the 1980 Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction ([13581/17](#)).

The Council adopted a decision authorising Croatia, the Netherlands, Portugal and Romania to accept, in the interest of the EU, the accession of San Marino to the 1980 Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction ([13585/17](#)).

The Council adopted a decision authorising Romania to accept, in the interest of the EU, the accession of Chile, Iceland and the Bahamas to the 1980 Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction ([13586/17](#)).

The Council adopted a decision authorising Austria and Romania to accept, in the interest of the EU, the accession of Panama, Uruguay, Colombia and El Salvador to the 1980 Hague Convention on the civil aspects of international child abduction ([13587/17](#)).

Council conclusions on identity management

The Council adopted conclusions on identity management. These conclusions urge member states to ensure an appropriate follow-up of the implementation of the measures listed in the Commission Action plan to strengthen the European response to travel document fraud, notably in the area of registering the identity and of issuing documents, as a means of tackling the phenomenon of identity fraud, enhancing internal security and fighting against terrorism and organised crime ([15216/17](#)).

EU Agency for Fundamental Rights - Serbia, Albania

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted on behalf of the EU within the EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council on Serbia's participation as an observer in the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights ([9876/16](#)).

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted on behalf of the EU within the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Council on Albania's participation as an observer in the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights ([9877/16](#)).

INTERNAL MARKET

Chemicals (REACH) - CMR substances

The Council did not oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending the REACH system as regards substances that are classified as carcinogenic, mutagenic or reproductive toxicants (CMRs).

The new Commission regulation will amend annex XVII (restrictions on the manufacture, placing on the market and use of certain dangerous substances, mixtures and articles) to the [REACH regulation](#) (regulation [1907/2006](#) on the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals) ([13395/17](#) + [ADD1](#)).

The draft 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 it unless the European Parliament objects.

AGRICULTURE**EU-São Tomé and Príncipe: Council decision denouncing the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector**

The Council adopted a decision on opening negotiations on behalf of the EU for the renewal of the protocol to the Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of São Tomé and Príncipe, and related negotiating directives.

Council conclusions on EU support to young farmers

The Council adopted conclusions on the special report No 10/2017 from the European Court of Auditors entitled: '[EU support to young farmers should be better targeted to foster effective generational renewal](#)'. The conclusions (15499/17) acknowledge that achieving generational renewal remains a challenge in the farming sector and invite the Commission to consider the particular effects on young farmers when preparing new legislative initiatives for the CAP post-2020 in order to stimulate generational renewal in agriculture.

TRANSPORT**Balloons**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of two regulations relating to balloons.

The first Commission regulation amends Commission regulation 965/2012 as regards the deletion of air operations requirements for balloons ([13744/17](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The second one lays down detailed rules for the operation of balloons pursuant to regulation 216/2008 ([13811/17](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The 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 regulations, unless the European Parliament objects.

Runways

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 139/2017 as regards the classification of runways ([13746/17](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

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.

ENVIRONMENT

Eco-innovation

On 18 December 2017, the Council adopted conclusions on eco-innovation which will enable the vitally important transition towards a circular economy.

Eco-innovation has been a priority of the Estonian presidency during this semester. The discussions on the topic at the informal meeting of Environment Ministers in Tallinn in July 2017 served as an important source of inspiration to these conclusions.

For more details [read the conclusions here](#).

LIFE programme - increase percentage of budgetary resources

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation on the increase of the percentage of the budgetary resources dedicated to projects supporting the conservation of nature and biodiversity under the Programme for the environment and climate action ([LIFE programme](#)) ([14509/17](#)).

The Commission, given the 'nature directives fitness check' conclusions, decided to increase the 55% budgetary resources allocated to projects, supported by action grants under the sub-programme for environment, and falling under the priority area of nature and biodiversity.

The percentage devoted to this purpose will now be at least 60.5 %.

The Commission regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. The act can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

International whaling commission - EU position

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be adopted on behalf of the Union at future meetings of the International Whaling Commission (IWC).

The IWC is the governing body of the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling (ICRW), which aims to ensure the conservation and the sustainable management of whales at global level. Twenty-five member states of the European Union are currently contracting parties to the ICRW, while the European Union is not.

The IWC meets every two years and makes important decisions on measures to regulate whaling and conserve whale stocks and that may affect the achievement of the objectives of the EU policies and legislation in relation to cetaceans.

Global Green Growth Institute - opening of negotiations on the membership of the EU

The Council adopted a decision authorising the opening of negotiations with the Global Green Growth Institute for an agreement on an arrangement on the membership of the European Union.

The Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) is a treaty-based, international and inter-governmental organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting strong, inclusive and sustainable economic growth in developing countries and emerging economies.

EU membership would favour the sharing of the GGGI's knowledge and best practices among all EU member states and contribute to the EU efforts to spread policy and diplomatic messages regarding climate change as widely as possible among its international partners.

RESEARCH

EU-Mediterranean partnership for food and water projects: the 'PRIMA' initiative - Algeria, Egypt and Jordan

The Council authorised the conclusion of agreements with Algeria ([11964/17](#)), Egypt ([11965/17](#)) and Jordan ([11966/17](#)) setting out the terms and conditions for their participation in the Partnership for Research and Innovation in the Mediterranean Area ([PRIMA](#)).

PRIMA aims to foster research and innovation capacities and to develop knowledge and common innovative solutions for improving the efficiency, safety, security and sustainability of agro-food systems and of water provision and management in the Mediterranean area.

On 30 May 2017, the Council authorised the opening of negotiations with Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco to conclude agreements laying down the terms and conditions for their participation in the PRIMA programme ([9111/17](#)).

The PRIMA programme requires international agreements to be concluded between the EU and third countries which are not associated with the EU's research framework programme 'Horizon 2020' to allow for their participation in PRIMA.

PRIMA is scheduled to run for ten years, starting in 2018.

CUSTOMS UNION

Tariffs and quotas on certain agricultural and industrial products

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulation [1388/2013](#) opening and providing for the management of autonomous tariff quotas of the EU for certain agricultural and industrial products ([15430/17](#)).

The regulation aims to ensure that adequate and uninterrupted supplies of products which are not produced in sufficient quantity in the EU can be imported at reduced or zero duty rates of the Common Customs Tariff duty for appropriate volumes, without disturbing the markets for such products.

SOCIAL POLICY

Statistics

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of Commission regulation (EU) .../... of XXX implementing regulation (EC) No 1177/2003 concerning Community statistics on income and living conditions ([12839/17](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 18 December 2017, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory application No 28/c/01/17 ([14563/17](#)).
