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Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry, Research and Space)

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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

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY - 27 May 2019

Competitiveness 'check-up'

On the basis of a presentation by the Commission and a report from the Chair of the high level group on competitiveness and growth, ministers exchanged views on the impact of market competition on the competitiveness of the single market.

Ministers broadly agreed that competition remains an essential instrument for the competitiveness of the single market. A number of delegations, however, voiced the need to reconsider the definition of 'relevant market', in particular with regard to online platforms doing business on a global scale.

The EU's long-term industrial policy strategy and a new level of ambition for a competitive single market

The Council had a public policy debate on how to elaborate a comprehensive, long-term EU industrial policy strategy to ensure a sustainable and strong industrial development in the EU, as well as on how to strengthen and deepen the single market.

Ministers broadly agreed on the need for a strong EU industrial base, capable of facing global competition and of seizing the opportunities and addressing the challenges linked to digital transformation and to the transition towards a climate-neutral and circular economy. They reiterated the European Council's call on the Commission to present a comprehensive, long-term EU industrial policy strategy by the end of 2019, in close consultation with member states and stakeholders.

As regards the approach to the single market, ministers stressed their willingness to remove unjustified barriers to cross-border trade within the EU, in particular in the services sector. They called for a future single market that is digital by default, future-proof and centered on businesses' and citizens' needs and cross-border experiences. They invited the Commission to present a long-term action plan for better implementation and enforcement of single market rules by March 2020.

The Council also adopted conclusions on each of these two topics.

[Council conclusions on industrial policy strategy](#)

[Council conclusions on the single market](#)

Competitiveness of the tourism sector

The Council adopted conclusions on how to boost the competitiveness of the EU's tourism sector as a driver for sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion in the EU for the next decade.

With these conclusions, the Council invites the Commission to undertake an in-depth analysis of recent developments and future trends having an effect on the tourism sector and to pursue the most relevant policy on tourism with a vision for 2030 in order to maintain the EU's position as a world leader in this sector. It also invites member states to strengthen their cooperation and exchange of best practices and take the findings of the future Commission analysis into account when designing national tourism policies.

[Council conclusions on tourism](#)

Any other business

– *Current legislative proposals*

1. Directive on cross-border conversions, mergers and divisions

The Council was informed of progress achieved so far regarding the proposed directive, which introduces comprehensive procedures for cross-border conversions and divisions and provides for additional rules on cross-border mergers of limited liability companies established in an EU member state. It was noted that an informal agreement was reached with the European Parliament for the adoption of the directive at first reading.

2. Directive on the modernisation of the EU consumer protection rules

The Council was informed of progress achieved so far regarding the proposed directive, which modernises and reinforces EU consumer protection laws as part of the 'New Deal for Consumers' launched by the Commission in 2017. It was noted that an informal agreement was reached with the European Parliament for the adoption of the directive at first reading.

3. Directive on representative actions for the protection of the collective interests of consumers

The Council was informed of progress achieved so far regarding the proposed directive, which empowers qualified entities, such as consumer organisations, to seek redress on behalf of a group of consumers that have been harmed by an illegal commercial practice. It was noted that the preparatory bodies of the Council are still examining the proposed directive.

4. Regulation on the general safety of vehicles

The Council was informed of progress achieved so far regarding the proposed directive, which imposes enhanced safety standards for car manufacturers in a bid to significantly reduce the number of road casualties and injuries. It was noted that an informal agreement was reached with the European Parliament for the adoption of the regulation at first reading.

– ***Cooperation among market surveillance authorities on the safety of non-food products***

On the basis of a [note from the Commission](#), the Council was informed of the main findings of the Commission's assessment of the Rapid Alert System for dangerous non-food products (the RAPEX system). The RAPEX system enables quick exchanges of information among 31 European countries and the Commission. It helps track down dangerous products, remove them from the market and keep consumers, particularly vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly, safe.

– ***Better regulation***

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), the Council was informed of the actions undertaken by the Romanian presidency in the field of better regulation over the last five months, as well as of the conclusions drawn from these activities.

– ***Forum dedicated to auto industry (Craiova, 18 March 2019)***

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), the Council was informed of the outcome of the automotive industry forum held in Craiova on 18 March 2019, bringing together policy makers and relevant stakeholders. The forum provided an update on the latest developments in the automotive industry, with particular emphasis on clean vehicles, automated and connected vehicles and the competitiveness of the EU's automotive industry. The main conclusion was that the EU automotive industry is making important steps towards zero emissions, electric and autonomous vehicles.

– ***Circular Plastics Alliance - state of play***

On the basis of a [note from the Commission](#), the Council was informed of the latest state of play regarding the Circular Plastics Alliance and the future process. The Alliance is an initiative launched by the Commission in December 2018 in order to boost the EU market for recycled plastics through voluntary actions and commitments. The target is to reach 10 million tonnes of recycled plastics that will be used within the EU in 2025.

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

The Council was informed of the work programme of the incoming Finnish presidency as regards internal market and industry policies.

RESEARCH AND SPACE - 28 MAY 2019

Space

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), the Council had a policy debate on the EU's role as a global actor in the field of space. The debate focussed on how the EU can maximise the benefits of its space policy and consolidate its position as one of the world leaders in space-related activities.

Ministers called for more investment in space-related research and innovation. They stressed the importance of space as an enabler of economic growth, in particular its links with the digital economy. They reiterated the need for the EU to ensure autonomous access to space and to engage proactively in the ongoing discussions on global space governance.

Space-related activities are widely seen as a long-term driver for innovation that enables progress on a wide spectrum of other activities, from basic research to societal and economic applications, safety and security. They support decision and policy makers in developing, implementing and monitoring a wide range of sectoral policies, such as environment, agriculture, fisheries, transport or digitalisation and create new opportunities to address global challenges.

Furthermore, ministers prepared the meeting of the Space Council, which took place on the same day in the margins of the Competitiveness Council.¹ In this context, the Council adopted conclusions on space as an enabler.

[Council conclusions on space as an enabler](#)

[EU Space policy \(background information\)](#)

¹ The Space Council is a forum enabling the EU and the European Space Agency (ESA) to facilitate and coordinate cooperative activities on European space policy. ESA is composed of 22 member states: Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom (which are also EU Member States) + Norway and Switzerland. Canada also sits in the Council and takes part in some projects under a Cooperation Agreement. Slovenia is an Associate Member. Seven other EU member states have Cooperation Agreements with the ESA: Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta and Slovakia. Read more about the ESA at www.esa.int.

Research and innovation

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), the Council held a public policy debate on the strategic choices at EU level that will ensure that research and innovation remain a strong driving force for the competitiveness of the EU economy.

Several ministers stressed the importance of an adequate budget for 'Horizon Europe', the next multiannual framework programme on research and innovation, as well as of increased investment in research and innovation at national level.

They also called for more efficient exploitation of synergies between various investment projects with a view to maximising the ensuing benefits. Finally, they highlighted the need for an appropriate regulatory framework, including state aids, conducive to innovation.

The March 2019 [European Council](#) had concluded that, in order to remain globally competitive in key technologies and strategic value chains, the EU needed to encourage more risk-taking, and step up investment in research and innovation.

Any other business

– *Common declaration on the future role of BIOEAST*

On the basis of a [paper from the Slovak delegation](#), the Council was informed of the signature by the ministers of agriculture and ministers of research of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia of a common declaration on the future role of the BIOEAST initiative in the context of Horizon Europe.

– *Black Sea strategic research and innovation agenda*

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), the Council was informed of the launch of the abovementioned agenda at the Bucharest conference on 'Sustainable development at the Black Sea' on 8-11 May 2019. The aim of the strategic research and innovation agenda is to streamline the financial and scientific resources made available for research and innovation within the scope of the blue economy in the Black Sea area.

– *Work programme of the incoming presidency*

The Council was informed of its future work programme under the incoming Finnish presidency in the fields of space and research and innovation.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Amendment of regulation (EC) No 2003/2003 on fertilisers*

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission regulation amending regulation (EC) No 2003/2003 of the European Parliament and of the Council relating to fertilisers for the purpose of adapting annexes I and IV.

This regulation stipulates the inclusion of isomeric mixture of 2-(3,4-dimethylpyrazole-1-yl)-succinic acid and 2-(4,5-dimethylpyrazole-1-yl)-succinic acid ('DMPSA'), a nitrification inhibitor, in annex I to Regulation (EC) No 2003/2003. The inclusion of DMPSA in annex 1 requires the addition of an analytical method to be applied to the official controls of this fertiliser type in annex IV to that Regulation. Furthermore, methods 1, 9 and 10, in annex IV, will also be amended.

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 ([7558/19+7558/19 ADD 1](#)).

Defining units of measurement as regards the International System of Units

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission directive amending, for the purpose of adaptation to technical progress, the annex to Council directive 80/181/EEC as regards the definitions of the units of measurement to be used in the EU.

The directive aligns these definitions with the latest ones adopted by the General Conference on Weights and Measures (CGPM) set up by the Metre Convention signed in Paris on 20 May 1875.

The Commission directive is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the directive, unless the European Parliament objects ([7685/19](#)).

Delegated regulation on classes of performance regarding air permeability

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation supplementing regulation (EU) No 305/2011 laying down harmonised conditions for the marketing of construction products by establishing classes of performance in relation to air permeability for rooflights of plastics and glass and roof hatches.

The regulation stipulates that the standards cited therein, covering rooflights of plastic and glass and roof hatches, should include a classification for the performance of the products covered by them in relation to the essential characteristic air permeability.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects ([7627/19+7627/19 ADD 1](#))

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Sanctions on Iran

The Council completed the review of the restrictive measures against Iran. A number of proliferation-related measures and restrictions remained in place even after Implementation Day (16 January 2016) of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). These concern inter alia the arms embargo, restrictive measures related to missile technology, restrictions on certain nuclear-related transfers and activities, and provisions concerning certain metals and software which are subject to an authorisation regime. Following the review, the Council updated the information related to 17 entries on the list of those under sanctions.

[EU restrictive measures against Iran](#)

ENVIRONMENT

EU Ecolabel for TVs, growing media, soil improvers and mulch

The Council decided not to object to a Commission decision concerning the period of validity of the ecological criteria for the award of the EU Ecolabel to certain products, and of the related assessment and verification requirements ([9094/19](#), [7557/19](#)).

This decision concerns the following product groups:

- televisions
- growing media, soil improvers and mulch.

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

FISHERIES

Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean: position on UK membership of the Convention

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken on behalf of the EU in the framework of the Convention for the Conservation of Salmon in the North Atlantic Ocean (NASCO) as regards the application for accession to that Convention submitted by the United Kingdom.

The NASCO Convention currently applies to the United Kingdom as a result of the EU being a contracting party to that convention.

However, in the event of the absence of a withdrawal agreement of the UK from the EU, the Treaties would cease to apply to the UK, and so would the NASCO Convention.

In this context, on 28 February 2019, the UK submitted an application to accede to the NASCO Convention and consequently to become a member in its own right.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 27 May 2019, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory application No 12/c/01/19 ([8433/19](#)).
