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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 - 26 SEPTEMBER 2019

Developing our economic base:

- *Vision for a long-term strategy on sustainable growth*
- *Competitiveness 'check-up'*

On the basis of a [presidency report](#), the Council held an exchange of views on the key policy objectives that should form the basis of a **long-term EU strategy on sustainable growth**.

The strategy is part of the implementation of the [new EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024](#) adopted by the [European Council](#) in June 2019.

In the same context and on the basis of presentations by the Commission and the chair of the high-level group on competitiveness and growth, ministers exchanged views on the **external dimension of the EU's competitiveness** as part of the regular competitiveness check-up exercise.

Delegations broadly welcomed the integrated approach for sustainable growth as set out in the presidency's report.

There was agreement that any long-term strategy for sustainable growth should be based on synergies between carefully chosen and well-targeted measures from different policy areas.

A number of issues were particularly stressed during the debate :

- the need for an ambitious EU industrial policy
- enhanced implementation and enforcement of EU rules
- the need for a more efficient SME policy
- the swift removal of any remaining unjustified barriers to the free movement of services in the single market
- the need for a balanced approach between competitiveness and climate-neutrality
- re-thinking the application of competition law in the digital world

- ensuring a level playing field in our trade relations with major trade partners
- reducing administrative burdens and allowing for more flexibility in the application of EU rules

The outcome of these discussions will feed into the presidency's report to the October 2019 European Council on the implementation of the new EU Strategic Agenda.

Any other business

- ***Current legislative proposals - real driving emissions (RDE) regulation***

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), the Council was informed of progress achieved so far in the examination of the proposed regulation.

A number of delegations stressed the need for the swift adoption of the regulation in order to provide the automotive industry with legal certainty. Other delegations expressed the view that, in the light of recent technical progress, the conformity factors should be set at a much lower level than originally proposed.

The regulation sets the conformity factors to be applied when measuring the real driving emissions of light-duty vehicles. It also empowers the Commission to review these conformity factors annually in order to reflect technical progress in the accuracy of portable measuring equipment.

- ***Call of SME Envoy Network for a vigorous and forward-looking EU policy for small businesses***

On the basis of a [note from the German delegation](#), the Council was informed of a call by the SME envoy network for a vigorous and forward-looking EU policy for small businesses.

Several delegations endorsed the idea of a renewed EU policy in support of SMEs. One delegation called upon the presidency to hold a policy debate on SMEs at the next meeting of the Competitiveness Council.

– ***Outcome of a conference on support for SMEs***

On the basis of a [note from the Czech delegation](#), the Council was informed of the outcome of a conference dedicated to state aid and the definition of SMEs, held in Brno from 29 to 31 May 2019.

Several delegations were in favour of reviewing the definition of an SME at European level.

– ***European Battery Alliance - building a strong strategic battery value chain in Europe***

On the basis of a [note from the Commission](#), the Council was informed of the latest developments in the European battery alliance project, launched in October 2017. The alliance aims to support the development of a competitive, sustainable and innovative battery value chain in the EU.

The Commission stressed the need for even more European companies to join the alliance in order to enable the EU to become a market leader in the field of batteries.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION - 27 SEPTEMBER 2019

Developing our economic base: vision for a long-term strategy on sustainable growth

On the basis of a [presidency report](#), the Council continued the exchange of views on the key policies that should form the basis of a **long-term EU strategy for sustainable growth**. The strategy is part of the implementation of the [new EU Strategic Agenda 2019-2024](#) adopted by the European Council in June 2019.

Research ministers broadly endorsed the integrated approach for the innovation-led sustainable growth model, as well as the related policy objectives set out in the presidency's report to the Council. Several ministers expressed the hope that these objectives would be reflected in the Commission's future growth agenda.

It was broadly acknowledged that if the EU was to remain a global technology leader, it would need to attract more investment (both public and private) in cutting-edge and climate-neutral research and innovation, and to upgrade existing knowledge and skills.

Several delegations stressed the need for the EU to create a business environment that facilitates the uptake of research results and the deployment of available innovations by EU businesses, especially SMEs.

The outcome of these discussions will feed into the presidency's report to the October 2019 European Council on the implementation of the new EU Strategic Agenda.

Horizon Europe package: synergies with other programmes

On the basis of a [presidency note](#), ministers exchanged views on the possible **synergies** between Horizon Europe and other programmes. The aim of this exchange of views was to provide political guidance regarding the ongoing strategic planning process and the future negotiations on annex IV of Horizon Europe.

There was broad agreement around the table that synergies between Horizon Europe and the various other programmes are key to maximising their positive impact on the economy.

It was stressed that in order for synergies to work in practice, they should not only be designed properly in the legislative acts but they should also be implemented in close consultation with relevant stakeholders. A single set of clear rules and simple procedures for all relevant programmes, which will ensure complementarity and will avoid overlaps and unnecessary red tape, was considered essential to that effect.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Amendment of Annex XIV to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH)

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annex XIV to regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 concerning the registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH).

The regulation adds to annex XIV a number of chemical substances that have been found to be persistent, toxic, bioaccumulative or toxic for reproduction.

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 ([11483/19](#) + [ADD1](#)).

Amendment of part III of Annex II to Directive 2009/48/EC on the safety of toys

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending point 13 of part III of annex II to Directive 2009/48/EC on the safety of toys.

The regulation adapts the current migration limits for aluminium, from toys or components of toys, to technical and scientific developments.

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 ([11477/19](#)).

Amendment of Appendix C to Annex II to Directive 2009/48/EC on the safety of toys

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending appendix C to annex II to Directive 2009/48/EC on the safety of toys.

The regulation sets the recommended limits for formaldehyde in different toy materials, such as polymeric toy materials, resin-bonded wood toy materials, textile toy materials, leather toy materials, paper toy materials and water-based toy materials.

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 ([11481/19](#)).

ENVIRONMENT

Waste management sector: new EMAS sectoral reference document

The Council decided not to oppose the Commission decision on the adoption of a sectoral reference document, under the Community eco-management and audit scheme EMAS, which identifies specific environmental performance indicators and benchmarks of excellence. This sectoral reference document addresses two types of organisations in the waste management sector: waste management companies (public and private), including companies implementing producer responsibility schemes, and waste authorities (public administrations in charge of waste management, mainly at local level).

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 ([1370/19+ADD1](#)).

AGRICULTURE**Endorsement of the Katowice Declaration on forests**

The Council formally endorsed the Ministerial Katowice Declaration on Forests for the Climate, which had been agreed on at the 24th session of the Conference of the Parties (COP 24) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), held in Katowice, Poland, from 2 to 14 December 2018.

The declaration addresses suggestions for limiting global warming and achieving the long-term temperature goal by acknowledging forests as reservoirs of greenhouse gases and as key components in the fight against climate change ([11794/19](#)).

FISHERIES**Amendments to 2019 fishing opportunities**

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulations [2018/2025](#) and [2019/124](#) as regards certain fishing opportunities. These amendments concern the following stocks:

- anchovy (*Engraulis encrasicolus*) in ICES subareas 9 and 10 and in Union waters of CECAF division 34.1.1
- cod (*Gadus morhua*) from the North Sea to the Eastern Channel
- horse mackerel (*Trachurus spp.*) between ICES divisions 8c and 9a
- Greenland halibut (*Reinhardtius hippoglossoides*) in international waters of 1 and 2
- red seabream (*Pagellus bogaraveo*) in ICES subarea 10

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Barents Euro-Arctic Ministerial meeting

The Council approved the text of the draft Barents Euro-Arctic Council Umeå Declaration, which is expected to be adopted on 3 October in Umeå, Sweden.

[Barents Euro-Arctic cooperation](#) (website)

EU-Moldova relations

The Council approved the EU position for the 5th EU-Republic of Moldova Association Council (Brussels, 30 September 2019).

[EU-Moldova Association Council, 30/09/2019](#)

EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia

The Council today extended the mandate of EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia by six months, until 31 March 2020.

The deployment of the operation's naval assets will remain temporarily suspended as EU member states continue to work in the appropriate fora on a solution on disembarkation, as part of the follow-up to the June 2018 [European Council](#) conclusions. The EU member states stand ready to revert to this matter whenever necessary to provide the operation commander with possible new guidance regarding the deployment of the operation's naval assets. The operation will continue to implement its mandate accordingly.

The operation's core mandate is to contribute to the EU's work to disrupt the business model of migrant smugglers and human traffickers in the Southern Central Mediterranean. The operation also has supporting tasks. It trains the Libyan coastguard and navy, monitors the long-term efficiency of the training and contributes to the implementation of the UN arms embargo on the high seas off the coast of Libya. In addition, the operation also conducts surveillance activities and gathers information on illegal trafficking of oil exports from Libya, in accordance with the UN Security Council resolutions. As such, the operation contributes to EU efforts to secure the return of stability and security in Libya and maritime security in the Central Mediterranean region.

EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia was launched on 22 June 2015 and is part of the EU's comprehensive approach to migration. The operation commander is Rear Admiral Credendino, from Italy, and the headquarters of the operation are located in Rome.

[EUNAVFOR MED Operation Sophia](#)

Sanctions on Venezuela

The Council has added 7 members of the Venezuelan security and intelligence forces to the list of persons subject to restrictive measures. The measures include a travel ban and an asset freeze. The persons listed are involved in torture and other serious violations of human rights. Four of them are linked to the death of Captain Acosta Arévalo.

Today's decision brings to 25 the total number of individuals under sanctions in view of the situation in Venezuela. It is a direct follow-up to the declaration issued by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on 16 July 2019 where the EU indicated that it was ready to start work towards applying targeted measures for those members of the security forces involved in torture and other serious violations of human rights.

The declaration underlined that the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights confirmed in a clear and detailed manner the extent and seriousness of the human rights violations, the erosion of the rule of law and the dismantlement of democratic institutions in the country. Moreover, the declaration mentioned the tragic death of Captain Acosta Arévalo while in custody of the Venezuelan security forces as a stark example of the continued deterioration of the human rights situation.

Restrictive measures by the EU on Venezuela were introduced in November 2017. They include an embargo on arms and on equipment for internal repression as well as a travel ban and an asset freeze on listed individuals. These restrictive measures are intended to foster a peaceful, political and democratic solution, through credible, transparent and internationally monitored presidential elections, leading to the restoration of democracy, rule of law and human rights in Venezuela. They are flexible and reversible and designed not to harm the Venezuelan population.

[Council decision 2017/2074 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela, Official Journal of 27 September 2019](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Venezuela, 27 September 2019](#)

[Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Venezuela, 16 July 2019](#)

[The Council's response to the crisis in Venezuela](#)
