



Council of the
European Union

113731/EU XXVII.GP
Eingelangt am 27/09/22

EN

9910/21

(OR. en)

PRESSE 18
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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3805th Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 22 June 2021

President **Ana Paula Zacarias**
Portuguese Secretary of State for European Affairs

P R E S S

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CONTENTS¹**ITEMS DEBATED**

GENERAL AFFAIRS.....	3
EU coordination on COVID-19	3
Special European Council meeting on 24-25 May 2021	4
Conference on the Future of Europe	4
OTHER BUSINESS	5

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*FOREIGN AFFAIRS**GENERAL AFFAIRS*

– Conclusions on the functioning of the General Court	6
– Council Decision on the Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements (PMO)	6
– Council conclusions on Special Report No 6/2021 by the European Court of Auditors	7

INTERNAL MARKET

– Commission Regulation amending Annex XIV to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 (REACH)	7
– Commission Regulation amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products	8

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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.

ITEMS DEBATED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

EU coordination on COVID-19

The Council discussed the state of play on the COVID-19 EU coordination with a focus on the vaccination campaign, the ongoing work on digital green certificates, and the epidemiological situation and travel restrictions.

On 3 May, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission held a first trilogue on the digital green certificate, meant to facilitate free movement, with a view to conclusion in June. A second trilogue will take place on 11 May.

The ongoing technical work on COVID-19 interoperable digital certificates is part of the preparations for a common approach to the future gradual lifting of restrictions. Work is also ongoing on the revision of the Council Recommendation on travel from third countries.

[COVID-19: Council agrees its negotiating mandate on the Digital Green Certificate](#)

[Presidency press release on solidarity vaccines](#)

[COVID-19: research and vaccines](#)

[Video conference of the members of the European Council, 25 March 2021](#)

[COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic: the EU's response](#)

[COVID-19: travel and transport - Council updates recommendations on COVID-19 travel measures](#)

[\(background information\)](#)

[Commission proposes to ease restrictions on non-essential travel to the EU \(press release\)](#)

Special European Council meeting on 24-25 May 2021

The Council prepared for the special European Council meeting on 24-25 May 2021.

EU leaders will meet in Brussels to coordinate the EU response to COVID-19 and discuss the latest developments.

Heads of State or Government will also focus on climate change, following-up on the European Council conclusions of December 2020.

Lastly, the EU leaders will turn to external relations, with a strategic debate on Russia. The 25 March statement of the members of the European Council provided for a strategic debate to be held "at a forthcoming European Council meeting".

[Special meeting of the European Council, 24-25 May 2021](#)

[Provisional agenda](#)

Conference on the Future of Europe

Ministers for European Affairs were informed by the presidency about the state of play regarding the Conference on the Future of Europe, following the formal inaugural event on 9 May in Strasbourg.

Right before this formal event, the Conference's Executive Board met for the fourth time to discuss and agree on the remaining chapter of the Rules of Procedure, related with the Conference Plenary. With this, the Rules of Procedure have been completely finalised following the green light given by the Board, last 22 April, to the other two sections of the Conference's Rules of Procedure, notably that on citizens' participation and the Board's working methods. On that occasion, the Board was also informed about the practical modalities for the organisation of European Citizens' panels.

On 19 April the Conference on the Future of Europe digital platform was launched, allowing for the conversation to start with citizens across Europe. A number of ideas and events have already been posted on the platform.

[Conference on the Future of Europe: launch of the citizens' platform on 19 April](#)

[The Conference on the Future of Europe gets green light from the Council](#)

[Joint declaration](#)

[Conference on the Future of Europe - revised Council position \(3 February 2021\)](#)

[Conference on the Future of Europe - Council position \(24 June 2020\)](#)

OTHER BUSINESS

Ministers took stock of the Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process and EU-Switzerland relations.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The Council adopted a decision on the financial contributions to be paid by the parties to the European Development Fund to finance that Fund, including the second instalment for 2021 ([9499/21](#)).

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Conclusions on the functioning of the General Court

The Council has approved [conclusions](#) on the functioning of the General Court of the European Union as a follow-up to the report of the Court of Justice on the functioning of the General Court presented in December 2020. This report had been foreseen in the context of the reform of the judicial architecture of the Union in 2015, which resulted in the increase of the number of judges at the General Court in three phases, so that as from 1 September 2019 there are two judges per Member State, and the dismantling the former Civil Service Tribunal comprising 7 judges, whose posts were transferred to the General Court.

Council Decision on the Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements (PMO)

The Council has adopted a [Decision](#) entrusting to the European Commission - the Office for the Administration and Payment of Individual Entitlements (PMO) - the exercise of powers conferred on the appointing authority and the authority empowered to conclude contracts of employment related to the insurance against the risk of occupational disease or accidents.

Council conclusions on Special Report No 6/2021 by the European Court of Auditors

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report 06/2021 entitled "Financial instruments in cohesion policy at closure of the 2007–2013 period: verification work yielded good results overall, but some errors remained" ([9584/21](#)).

The Council takes note of the findings of the report, in particular that the Commission guidance was adequate, but more information was needed on how to assess the medium-sized enterprise (SME) status of final recipients. Audit authorities performed the necessary verifications, however certain errors remained undetected due to incomplete eligibility checks.

The Council also takes note of the findings that most weaknesses identified in the audit authorities' work were addressed in the Commission's guidance for 2014-2020 period.

The Council considers the report as a useful contribution on how to further improve the work of the Commission and the member states on verifying the eligibility of the declared expenditure with regard to financial instruments under shared management.

INTERNAL MARKET

Commission Regulation amending Annex XIV to Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 (REACH)

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annex XIV to regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning the Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH).

The proposed regulation amends annex XIV of REACH as far as the substances bis(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP), benzyl butyl phthalate (BBP), dibutyl phthalate (DBP) and diisobutyl phthalate (DIBP) are concerned.

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 ([6893/21](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

Commission Regulation amending Annexes II and III to Regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annexes II and III to regulation (EC) No 1223/2009 on cosmetic products.

The proposed regulation updates the above mentioned regulation as far as the use of substances deoxyarbutin and dihydroxyacetone in cosmetic products is concerned.

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 ([6871/21](#) + [ADD 1](#)).