Council of the European Union

EN

10627/16

(OR. en)

PRESSE 38
PR CO 37

OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3478th Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 24 June 2016

President **Bert Koenders**
Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu http://www.consilium.europa.eu/press

CONTENTS[1]

ITEMS DEBATED

Preparation for the June European Council 4

European Semester 4

Better law-making agreement - Legislative programming 5

Transparency 5

Any other business 5

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

– Transfer of jurisdiction in civil service cases to the General Court 6

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

– Tunisia: Council approves financial assistance 6

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

– Matrimonial property regimes and registered partnerships 6

– Schengen Evaluation - Belgium 7

– Visa waiver agreements with Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Solomon Islands 7

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

– Urban agenda 7

– A more R&I friendly, smart and simple cohesion policy 11

– EU strategy for the alpine region 11

[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.

CIVIL PROTECTION

– Main achievements of the EU in the first half of 2016 - Presidency report 11

AGRICULTURE

– Milk products - Increase in the ceiling for buying in of skimmed milk powder 12

RESEARCH

– European Institute of Innovation and Technology - Court of Auditors' report 12

TRANSPORT

– Eurocontrol - centralised services 12

CUSTOMS UNION

– Tariffs and quotas on certain products 13

TRANSPARENCY

– Public access to Council documents: 2015 annual report 13

ITEMS DEBATED

Preparation for the June European Council

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 18-29 June, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Netherlands presidency and the Commission.

The European Council is due to focus on:

– migration: the European Council will review the situation in all its aspects

– economic items: the European Council will endorse the country-specific recommendations, assess the first results of the European fund for strategic investments, endorse an agenda for the single market, address the completion of the Economic and Monetary Union and take stock of on-going action to fight tax fraud and tax evasion

– external relations: the European Council will discuss EU-NATO cooperation, discuss the Global Strategy and may, in the light of events, address other foreign policy issues

– UK referendum: the European Council will address the referendum's outcome

An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council on 24 May 2016.

European Semester

As part of the European Semester, the Council approved draft country-specific recommendations (CSR's) and forward them to the European Council for endorsement. The draft CSR's have also been approved in EPSCO and ECOFIN.

The European Semester involves simultaneous monitoring of the member states' fiscal, economic and employment policies during a six-month period every year. In the light of the guidance provided by the European Council, the member states will prepare their national reform programmes (economic and employment policies) and stability or convergence programmes (fiscal policies) for this year.

Council website: European Semester

Better law-making agreement - Legislative programming

The presidency briefed ministers on the state of play of the implementation of the interinstitutional agreement (IIA) on better law-making, including on impact assessments.

Ministers exchanged views on **legislative priorities for 2017** to provide an early input to the Commission's work programme for next year ahead of its letter of intent.

As part of the better law-making agreement the Commission consults the Council and the Parliament prior to adopting its annual work programme and duly takes account of their views.

The indicative timelines and concrete practical steps are outlined in the Council arrangements on annual programming adopted on 15 March 2016. In line with these arrangements the Commission will submit detailed information on the main elements guiding the preparation of its 2017 work programme in a letter of intent in September 2016. On that basis, the Council will hold an exchange of views with the Commission.

Following the adoption of its 2017 work programme in October, the Commission will present it to the Council in November 2016. The three institutions will then adopt a declaration to set out jointly their objectives and priorities for the following year and identify items of major political importance.

The presidency also informed the Council on the **implementation of the Commission's 2015 and 2016 work programme** (10092/16).

Transparency

Ministers exchanged views on the state of play in the implementation of the transparency aspects of the interinstitutional agreement on better law-making.

The discussion was based on a presidency note which sets out work progress on the three strands that the IIA offers with a view to improving transparency. These are a joint database on the state of play of legislative files, a joint register of delegated acts and greater transparency of trilogues.

Any other business

In public session the Slovak delegation informed the Council about its work programme for its upcoming Presidency of the Council of the EU.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Transfer of jurisdiction in civil service cases to the General Court

The Council adopted a regulation transferring from the Civil Service Tribunal to the General Court first-instance jurisdiction in disputes between the EU and its servants with effect from 1 September 2016 (22/16 + 9960/16). The regulation also dissolves the Civil Service Tribunal with effect from the same day. This measure is part of the reform of the General Court. It will entail an increase in the number of its Judges by seven on 1 September 2016 without changing the total number of Judges at the Court of Justice of the EU since it is a transfer of posts from one court to another. Appeals against decisions of the General Court in civil service cases will be dealt with by the Court of Justice.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Tunisia - Financial assistance

The Council adopted a decision providing a maximum of €500 million in macro-financial assistance to Tunisia

See press release

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Matrimonial property regimes and registered partnerships

The Council adopted, without discussion, two proposals for regulations (8115/16 + 8118/16) implementing enhanced cooperation in the area of matrimonial property regimes, on the one hand, and on the property consequences of registered partnerships, on the other.

This final adoption follows the opinion of the European Parliament adopted on 23 June.

For more information, see press release published after the adoption of the general approach:

Press release on the enhanced cooperation in the area of matrimonial property regimes and registered partnerships

Schengen Evaluation - Belgium

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2015 evaluation on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of data protection by Belgium.

Visa waiver agreements with Tuvalu, Marshall Islands, Micronesia and Solomon Islands

The Council adopted decisions on the signing and provisional application of the agreements between the European Union and Tuvalu, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia and the Solomon Islands on the short-stay visa waiver. According to the decisions, the agreements will be provisionally applicable from their scheduled date of signature.

The Council also decided to forward the draft decisions on the conclusion of the agreements to the European Parliament for its consent once the agreements have been duly signed.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Urban agenda

The Council adopted the following conclusions on an urban agenda for the EU:

"THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION:

1. RECALLS its conclusions of 18 November 2014, regarding the Sixth Cohesion Report, in particular paragraph 32, in which the Council encouraged the Commission and the Member States to continue the work towards an EU Urban Agenda ensuring that it is made in full respect of the principle of subsidiarity and competences under EU Treaties, taking into account the intergovernmental cooperation on the issue.

2. RECALLS the conclusions of the Commission Staff Working Document on the Results of the Public Consultation on the key features of an EU Urban Agenda[1] in which the Commission services indicated the actions they intend to implement.

3. RECALLS the European Parliament resolution of 9 September 2015 on the urban dimension of EU policies[2], in which the European Parliament underlined the importance of having a European Urban Agenda.

4. REFERS to its conclusions of 12 May 2016 on the New Urban Agenda prepared in the framework of the third United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Development (Habitat III).

5. UNDERLINES the importance and diversity of urban areas of all sizes and contexts in the EU and cooperation within functional urban areas and urban-rural linkages to achieve the objectives of the Union and related national priorities.

6. EMPHASISES that the Urban Agenda for the EU (hereafter: Urban Agenda) shall focus on overall EU objectives and challenges, relevant for all Member states, whilst taking into account the diverse urban profile of Member States**.**

7. RECOGNIZES that there is a need to enhance the complementarity of policies affecting urban areas and to strengthen their urban dimension.

8. UNDERLINES the contribution of specific EU policies, in accordance with the legal and institutional structures already in place, in particular Cohesion Policy, to the implementation of the Urban Agenda and meeting the objectives of sustainable urban development, thus contributing to the objectives of Europe 2020.

9. UNDERLINES that one of the objectives of the Urban Agenda is to improve the accessibility and coordination of existing funding possibilities and to contribute to their simplification. It will not create new EU funding sources or aim at higher allocations for urban authorities, nor affect the current distribution of legal competences and existing working and decision-making structures nor will it transfer competences to the EU level (in accordance with Articles 4 and 5 of TEU).

---

1 Doc. 9395/1/15 REV 1.

2 (2014/2213(INI)).

10. AFFIRMS that each stakeholder is free to determine its own level of participation in the Urban Agenda and that the outcomes of the partnerships can be regarded as non-binding contributions to the design of future and the revision of existing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives, as described in the Pact of Amsterdam.

11. AGREES on the need for better involvement of relevant key partners, including representatives of urban and regional authorities, in the preparation as well as the evaluation of EU policy through existing opportunities for consultation available to Member States.

12. WELCOMES the Urban Agenda as set out in the Pact of Amsterdam, agreed between EU Ministers responsible for urban matters during their informal meeting of 30 May 2016.

13. CALLS ON the Commission:

a) to play an active role and continue facilitating the implementation of the Urban Agenda within its existing budgets, including the provision of basic technical assistance to the Partnerships from 1 January 2017 onwards;

b) to align its actions on strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies to the Urban Agenda;

c) to further strengthen its coordination and streamlining of policies directly or indirectly impacting on urban areas in a transparent way, in order to enhance the complementarity of the policies and strengthen their urban dimension, in particular in the areas of Better Regulation, Better Funding and Better Knowledge;

d) to set up a one-stop-shop for matters regarding the Urban Agenda and the urban dimension of EU policies and thereby to facilitate full, reliable and customised information for urban areas and stakeholders;

e) to ensure the continuity, coherence and coordination of the Urban Agenda by supporting, where relevant, the implementation of the set of actions of the Urban Agenda, particularly the work of the Partnerships;

f) to consider, after guidance by the DG Meeting on Urban Matters, in a transparent manner and where appropriate, the results and recommendations of the Partnerships when drafting relevant proposals for and reviewing EU legislation, instruments and initiatives;

g) to continue to work with urban authorities and their representative organisations through the various existing opportunities for consultation and feedback offered, when developing new policy and legislative initiatives and evaluating existing EU strategies, policies and legislation;

h) to continue to explore improved assessments of urban impacts, where relevant, as part of the impact assessments, using available tools and including stronger stakeholder involvement;

i) to report back to the Council regularly, for the first time in the course of 2017, on the implementation and results of the Urban Agenda.

14. CALLS ON the Member States:

a) to take the appropriate steps for the implementation of the Urban Agenda and engage, as appropriate, relevant bodies at all levels of government in the implementation of the Urban Agenda, in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity;

b) to promote, as appropriate and in line with the proportionality principle, the improvement of the knowledge base of, and the proportionate collection of data on urban development issues and strengthen in cooperation with the European Commission the data exchange on urban areas, taking into account the need to minimise administrative burdens as much as possible and using existing tools and instruments.

15. ENCOURAGES the local and regional authorities to take the appropriate steps for the implementation of the Urban Agenda, in line with their respective competences and the principle of subsidiarity.

16. INVITES the European Parliament to consider, where appropriate, the results and recommendations of the Partnerships after guidance by the Directors General responsible for Urban Matters, for the agenda of relevant Committees when discussing relevant new and existing EU legislation.

17. INVITES the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to provide input, within their competences, for the further development of the Urban Agenda.

18. INVITES the European Investment Bank:

a) to support the development of better funding approaches in the urban context, including through financial instruments, in cooperation with the European Commission;

b) to reflect, where relevant, the outcomes of the Urban Agenda as appropriate in its urban lending, grant-loan blending and advisory services approach in the urban context taking into account the need to support sustainable urban development strategies and without jeopardising its financial discipline."

A more R&I friendly, smart and simple cohesion policy

The Council adopted conclusions on "A more R&I friendly, smart and simple Cohesion Policy and the European Structural and Investment Funds more generally" (9863/16).

EU strategy for the alpine region

The Council agreed to send the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region, as set out in in the Council conclusions 14613/15, for endorsement to the next meeting of the European Council.

CIVIL PROTECTION

Main achievements of the EU in the first half of 2016 - Presidency report

The Council took note of report which outlines the main achievements of the EU in the field of civil protection during the Netherlands presidency in the first semester of 2016 (10019/16).

The central theme during the Netherlands presidency was the raising of awareness of disaster prevention, by addressing the protection of people, property and the environment against all kinds of natural and man-made disasters.

Civil protection was also very much involved in the response to the ongoing migration and refugee crisis, both at national and EU levels, including through the activation of the Union Civil Protection Mechanism by several participating states.

AGRICULTURE

Milk products - Increase in the ceiling for buying in of skimmed milk powder

The Council adopted an amendment to regulation 1370/2013 fixing certain aids and refunds related to the common organisation of the markets in agricultural products.

The new measure increases the quantitative limitation for the buying in of skimmed milk powder (SMP) at a fixed price in the context of public intervention (10166/16) from 218 000 to 500 000 tonnes in 2016. The Italian delegation entered a declaration concerning the agreed modification (10174/1/16 REV 1).

The adopted regulation seeks to help the milk sector in the prevailing severe market situation.

RESEARCH

European Institute of Innovation and Technology - Court of Auditors' report

Following the European Court of Auditors' special report 4/2016 on recommendations to improve the functioning of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT), the Council adopted the following conclusions: 9959/16.

In its conclusions, the Council invites the Commission and the EIT to pay utmost attention to the recommendations and calls on them to report to the Council on the actions taken by mid-2017.

The EIT was established in 2008 with the aim to promote the integration of the three sides of the knowledge triangle: education, science and business.

TRANSPORT

Eurocontrol - centralised services

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken by the member states on behalf of the EU within the Permanent Commission of Eurocontrol as regards the decisions to be adopted on centralised services.

CUSTOMS UNION

Tariffs and quotas on certain 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 (9707/16).

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.

The Council also adopted a regulation amending regulation 1387/2013 suspending the autonomous Common Customs Tariff duties on certain agricultural, fishery and industrial products (9708/16).

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to Council documents: 2015 annual report

The Council approved its report on the implementation of regulation 1049/2001 regarding public access to documents in 2015.

The report provides statistical information on requests for access to documents addressed to the Council in 2015 (Council's public register of documents).

It also identifies the main trends and features of requests for access to Council documents and reviews complaints to the Ombudsman as well as rulings given by the European Courts in cases concerning the Council's implementation of the regulation.

See also press release