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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3614th Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 17 April 2018

President **Ekaterina Zaharieva**
Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria

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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

EU electoral law

The Council discussed amendments to the 1976 Electoral Act which lays down a number of common rules concerning elections to the European Parliament.

The main change concerns the introduction of an obligatory minimum threshold of between 2% and 5% for constituencies with more than 35 seats in the EP elections. This rule would also apply to single-constituency member states.

The Council will continue efforts to reach an agreement on this file as soon as possible.

Rule of law in Poland

The Council discussed the situation with regard to the rule of law in Poland.

The Commission updated ministers on the latest developments in its dialogue with the Polish authorities.

Ministers encouraged the Commission and the Polish authorities to continue their dialogue with a view to achieving concrete results.

The Council will return to this issue at its next meeting.

Enlargement package

Ministers heard a presentation from the Commission on its new enlargement package.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Handling of documents internal to the Council

The Council endorsed updated guidelines for the handling of documents internal to the Council ([7695/18](#)). The guidelines were adjusted to reflect changes in working practices since 2011. A wider revision of the guidelines will take place at a later stage. It will include the setting out of a comprehensive set of guidelines regarding the full life cycle of such documents, including elements regarding the criteria for marking documents as LIMITE and the review of the LIMITE status of such documents.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Relations with Algeria

The Council approved the EU position for the EU-Algeria Association Committee regarding modification of the conditions of application of the preferential tariffs for agricultural products and processed agricultural products set out in Article 14 of the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement establishing an Association between the European Community and its member states and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria (Algeria).

In view of the difficulties faced by Algeria in dismantling customs duties for agricultural products and processed agricultural products, the EU and Algeria reached an agreement on acceptable modifications to the basic duties, quantities and schedule initially established for dismantling tariffs, in accordance with the conditions laid down in Protocol Nos 2 and 5 to the Association Agreement.

The Euro-Mediterranean Agreement was signed on 22 April 2002 and entered into force on 1 September 2005.

See the Council decision (7682/18)

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**EEA Agreement - Incorporation of EU legislation**

The Council adopted two decisions establishing the EU position to be taken in the Joint Committee of the European Economic Area (EEA).

The purpose of the first decision is to incorporate Commission Regulation (EU) No 1305/2014 on the technical specification for interoperability relating to the telematics applications for freight subsystem of the rail system in the European Union into annex XIII (Transport) of the EEA Agreement.

The purpose of the second decision is to incorporate the following EU acts into annex XXII (Company law) of the EEA Agreement:

- Regulation (EU) No 537/2014 on specific requirements regarding statutory audit of public-interest entities
- Directive 2014/56/EU amending Directive 2006/43/EC on statutory audits of annual accounts and consolidated accounts

In addition, for the EEA Agreement to function well, Protocol 37 to the EEA Agreement is extended to include the Committee of European Auditing Oversight Bodies (CEAOB) set up by Regulation (EU) No 537/2014, and Annex XXII to the EEA Agreement is amended in order to specify the procedures for association with this Committee.
