



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**“I/A” ITEM NOTE**

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from: Presidency

to: Permanent Representatives Committee / Council

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Subject: Report on proceedings in the Council's other configurations

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Delegations will find below a list of the most important decisions taken and issues currently under discussion in the Council's other configurations. This document should enable delegations to draw the Presidency's attention to any point which they believe has implications for the proper organisation of proceedings in the areas covered.

## **TRANSPORT, TELECOM AND ENERGY**

At its **meeting on 11 and 12 March 2010**, the Council discussed i.a.:

### **Transport**

#### Transportable pressure equipment

Pending the European Parliament's first reading opinion, the Council agreed on a general approach on the proposed Directive on transportable pressure equipment. This approach does not include the provisions on delegation of powers to the Commission for implementing acts which still need to be further discussed with the European Parliament. The purpose of the Directive is to update and streamline the provisions of the Directive of 1999 in the light of recent EU and international legislative developments.

#### Investigation and prevention of accidents in civil aviation

Pending the European Parliament's first reading opinion, the Council agreed on a general approach on a proposal for a Regulation on investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation. The objective of the proposed Regulation is to ensure that safety investigations are carried out expeditiously and to the highest standards in order to prevent future accidents. To this end, current informal cooperation among national safety investigation authorities will be transformed into a European network of civil aviation safety investigation authorities.

#### Second-stage air services negotiations with the US

The Council heard a report from the Commission on the state of play of the negotiations on a second-stage air services agreement with the US which is to further develop the EU-US Open Skies Agreement signed in 2007 and provisionally applied since March 2008. At the seventh round of negotiations, held in Madrid on 15-17 February 2010, significant progress was achieved in areas such as environmental protection, labour standards, competition rules and reciprocal recognition of regulatory decisions. A further round of negotiations would be held in Brussels on 23-25 March, with the aim of reaching agreement on the outstanding issues.

## **Energy**

### European strategy for growth and jobs

Following a presentation by the Commission of its communication "Europe 2020", the Council held a debate with a view to the preparation of the European Council on 25 and 26 March 2010.

Ministers focused their interventions on how European energy policy and in particular the development of energy infrastructure can contribute to stronger economic growth and more job creation in Europe. They also discussed the question how the Energy Council can contribute to the European strategy for growth and jobs.

### Notification of investment projects in energy infrastructure

The Council reached political agreement on the proposal for a Regulation concerning the notification to the Commission of investment projects in energy infrastructure within the European Union. The proposed Regulation aims at establishing a common framework for the notification by Member States of data and information on investment projects in energy infrastructure in the oil, natural gas, electricity and bio-fuel sectors, and on investment projects related to the capture and storage of carbon dioxide.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

At its **meeting on 15 March 2010**, the Council discussed i.a.:

### Strategy for jobs and growth

The Council had an exchange of views on the environmental aspects of the proposed European strategy for growth and jobs. Ministers were invited to comment on how environmental policies can maximise opportunities to speed up reforms towards a safe and sustainable low-carbon and resource-efficient economy, to underpin growth and job creation, and to give an additional impetus towards more sustainable development.

### Climate change

The Council adopted conclusions on the follow-up to the Copenhagen climate conference of December 2009. These conclusions evaluate the outcome of the conference, stress the opportunities for immediate implementation offered by the Copenhagen Accord and confirm existing EU positions on a number of issues. Furthermore, they invite the Commission to present an assessment of the comparability and adequacy of greenhouse gas emission reduction commitments by third countries as well as an impact assessment of the EU's conditional move to a 30% emissions cut.

### CO2 emissions from light-duty vehicles

The Council held a policy debate on the proposed Regulation setting emission performance standards for new light commercial vehicles as part of the EU integrated approach to reduce CO2 emissions from light-duty vehicles. The proposed Regulation aims to limit the average CO2 emissions from new light commercial vehicles to 175g CO2/km, phased in from 2014 to 2016. In addition the proposal envisages a long-term target of 135g CO2/km for 2020 and the obligation for manufacturers to pay penalties if their fleet fails to meet the objective.

### Biodiversity

The Council adopted conclusions on the EU and global vision and targets and the international ABS regime. In these conclusions, the Council agrees on a EU headline target of halting the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystems services in the EU by 2020, and restoring them in so far as feasible, while stepping up the EU contribution to averting global biodiversity loss.

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

At its **meeting on 16 March 2010** the Council discussed i.a.:

### Excessive deficit procedure - follow-up to decision on Greece

The Council examined a communication from the Commission assessing action taken by Greece in response to the decision it took on 16 February on the correction of Greece's excessive deficit. The Council welcomed the first report by Greece, submitted on 8 March, and the Commission's communication. It shared the Commission's view that Greece is appropriately implementing the Council's decision and Greece's stability programme. It welcomed the additional measures announced by the Greek government on 3 March, amounting to 2% of gross domestic product (GDP) and consisting of permanent revenue-increasing measures and permanent expenditure cuts in equal shares. In line with the Commission's assessment, the Council considered that these additional measures appear sufficient to safeguard budgetary targets for 2010, provided that they are implemented effectively, fully and in a timely manner.

### New EU Strategy for Growth and Jobs

The Council took note of the Commission Communication on "Europe 2020 – a European Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth". It held an exchange of views on the preparation of a new EU strategy, with a view to the European Council meeting held on 25 and 26 March. The Council adopted conclusions and agreed to forward them to the European Council.

### Exit strategies: support schemes for the financial sector

The Council adopted conclusions, and agreed to submit them to the European Council, with a view to its spring meeting (25 and 26 March). It welcomed the EFC report and took note that concrete improvements have been registered in the functioning of financial markets, but also of the signs of fragility which are still present in EU banks and bank lending and that the situation is far from normal. The Council also took note of the fact that there are still problems in some parts of the banking sector which need to be addressed urgently by adequate restructuring. It invited the

Commission to continue its work, in cooperation with the ECB and finalise its assessment on bank debt guarantees, and in particular on the cost of guaranteed and not guaranteed funding and on the evolution of market funding in the EU banking sector. It also invited the EFC to promptly discuss the results of such assessment, to promote a coordinated phasing out of support measures among Member States, to further analyse how to avoid negative spill-over effects considering specific circumstances in Member States, as well as to monitor the developments in the financial markets and to report to the Council on a regular basis as well as in view of the European Council of June 2010.

#### Exit strategies: crisis-related measures in labour and product markets

The Council agreed on a number of principles for the withdrawal of temporary measures in product and labour markets, while emphasising that country-specific conditions, including the economic situation and different fiscal constraints, should be taken into account. They should also be seen as complementary to and consistent with earlier agreements on fiscal and financial sector exit strategies and the end of the temporary state aid framework in December 2010.

#### Financing of policies to deal with climate change

The Council adopted conclusions reaffirming the EU and its Member States' commitment to contribute EUR 2.4 billion annually over the period 2010-2012 and CALLS on other parties to announce their fast start contributions. It also underlined that the EU and its Member States are ready to present a preliminary state of play on these commitments at the UNFCCC session in Bonn (31 May – 11 June 2010) and submit EU-coordinated reports on the implementation of this commitment at the Cancún Climate Conference and thereafter on an annual basis and ENCOURAGES other contributors to do so as well.

## **AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES**

At its **meeting on 29 March 2010**, the Council discussed i.a.:

### The Common Agriculture Policy and the EU 2020 Strategy

The Council held an exchange of views on agriculture and the CAP in the perspective of the EU 2020 strategy. Ministers discussed in particular the potential of agriculture and the CAP to make an active contribution to meeting future challenges in the EU 2020 strategy and the need to ensure that the strategy does not interfere with or call into question the funding of the CAP whose objectives are set out in the treaties and which contribute to the achievement of the new European priorities.

### Situation on the dairy market

The Council took note of a Commission quarterly report on the dairy market. According to latest figures average producer milk prices in the EU have reached a level of around 28 cents per litre which is close to the seasonal long-term average. It is recalled that, as a reaction to the crisis in the dairy sector, the Commission undertook in May 2009 to report every three months on the situation on the dairy market.

## **JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

At its **meeting on 23 April 2010**, the Council discussed i.a.:

### EU-US agreement on financial messaging data for counter-terrorism investigations

The Council reached political agreement on a negotiating mandate for an EU-US agreement on the processing and transfer of financial messaging data for purposes of the US Terrorist Finance Tracking Programme (TFTP). It asked the Commission, who will be the main negotiator for the EU assisted by a Council working party, to start official negotiations with the US as soon as the political agreement is confirmed by the formal adoption of the mandate at a later Council.

### Visa requirements imposed by Canada on Czech nationals

The Council was briefed by the Commission and the Czech Delegation on the issue of the visa requirement imposed by Canada on Czech nationals. The Council expressed solidarity with the Czech Republic stressing that the measure adopted by Canada is a matter which impacts on the Union as a whole. The Council reiterated its call for the restoration of visa free travel for Czech nationals to Canada and agreed to continue to monitor the situation closely.

### Action plan implementing the Stockholm programme

Ministers heard a presentation by the Commission on its recommendations for an action plan implementing the Stockholm Programme. Ministers welcomed the Commission paper, stressed, however, that the action plan should more closely mirror the objectives set out in the Stockholm Programme itself. The Council asked its preparatory bodies to swiftly start consultations on the action plan with a view to adopt the it in June 2010.

### European protection order

The Council held a public debate on the state of play regarding the initiative for a directive on a European protection order aimed to facilitate and enhance the protection granted to victims of crime, or possible victims of crime, who move between EU member states.

A majority of member states spoke out in favour of the presidency approach and supported the most recent compromise texts. The goal of the presidency is to continue work in the Council preparatory bodies with a view to reach a political agreement in June and to forward the agreed text to the European Parliament (EP). In the meantime, informal contacts with the EP will continue in view of the high political importance of the file.

### EU accession to the ECHR

In a public debate, the Council examined the state of play of the EU's accession to the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR). Among the outstanding issues are the establishment of a "co-respondent" mechanism, the safeguarding of the competences of the European Court of Justice (ECJ), the accession of the EU to ECHR protocols as well as the EU negotiator. The Council welcomed the work carried out in the Council working parties and called for an adoption of the negotiating mandate as soon as possible.

## E-Justice

The Council heard from the Commission on the state of play regarding the launch of the European e-Justice portal. Work is well advanced and it is suggested to officially launch the portal at an event where justice ministers, representatives of the European Parliament and of the Commission are present. The presidency wished the portal to be launched as soon as possible, before the end of the first semester 2010.

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