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3164th Council meeting

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Brussels, 10 and 11 May 2012

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Main results of the Council

Audiovisual and culture

The Council reached a partial general approach on two proposals for regulations:

- establishing the "Creative Europe" programme;
- establishing the "Europe for Citizens" programme.

*The Council adopted a decision designating the **European Capitals of Culture** for the year 2016.*

*Furthermore, the Council adopted **conclusions** on the digitisation and **online accessibility of cultural material** and digital preservation*

Sport

*The Council adopted conclusions on combating **doping in recreational sport**.*

*Ministers held a public debate on the future challenges in the **fight against doping**, including in recreational sport.*

Education

*The Council reached a partial general approach on the proposal for a regulation establishing the **"ERASMUS FOR ALL" programme**.*

*The Council also adopted conclusions on the **employability of graduates from education and training**.*

Youth

*The Council adopted conclusions on fostering the **creative and innovative potential of young people**. Furthermore, ministers had a public debate on the theme: **"Engaging with young people to release their potential"**.*

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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>).
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Youth

Ms Andrea ZLATAR VIOLIĆ

Minister for Culture

Ms Marija LUGARIĆ

Deputy Minister for Science, Education and Sport

ITEMS DEBATED

AUDIOVISUAL AND CULTURE

Digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material

The Council adopted conclusions on the digitisation and online accessibility of cultural material and digital preservation ([8832/12](#)). The conclusions aim to give new impetus to the digitisation process and constitute a response by the Council to the Commission recommendation of October 2011 ([16291/11](#)), which contains a set of updated and detailed measures for stepping up the digitisation of cultural heritage and its availability online.

Furthermore, the conclusions underline that digitisation turns cultural material into a lasting asset for the digital economy, creating huge opportunities for innovation and creativity¹. The Annex to the conclusions includes an indicative roadmap with priorities for the work of member states in this field during the next three years.

While the objectives set out in the roadmap take into account the limited public resources available, they are also intended to be ambitious enough to promote digitisation, the use of public-private partnerships, improve framework conditions for the on-line accessibility of cultural material and contribute to the further development of *Europeana*², the EU online public library launched in 2008. After less than four years, it is already allowing access to more than 20 million digitised objects and has become increasingly interactive.

Commissioner Kroes called on member states to mobilize the necessary funding for further developing Europeana and underlined the importance of reusing the digital cultural heritage.

¹ See also: *The Digital Agenda for Europe* ([9981/1/10](#)).

² <http://www.europeana.eu/>

“Europe for Citizens” programme (2014-2020)

In public deliberation, the Council reached a partial general approach on the proposal for a regulation establishing for the period 2014-2020 the “Europe for Citizens” programme ([18719/11](#)), which replaces the current programme of the same name that will expire in 2013.

Since the proposal is part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014 - 2020) currently under discussion, the partial general approach does not include the provisions with budgetary implications. As the proposed legal basis for the regulation is article 352 of the TFEU, the Council must adopt it unanimously , after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

Member states generally welcomed the proposal, which is a compromise resulting from the work in the Council preparatory bodies ([9095/1/12](#)) and seeks to increase the programme’s efficiency and visibility. The new programme has a simplified structure with three strands (*Remembrance, Civic participation and Valorisation*) and it aims to bring Europe closer to its citizens, as well as to improve citizens’ awareness and understanding of the European Union, which should ultimately increase citizens' participation in EU political life. The Commission proposes a budget of around EUR 229 million .

European Capitals of Culture

The Council adopted a decision officially designating Donostia-San Sebastián (Spain) and Wrocław (Poland) as European Capitals of Culture for 2016 ([8380/12](#)).

The European Capitals of Culture initiative was launched in 1985 in order to highlight in particular the richness and diversity of European cultures, celebrate the cultural ties that link Europeans and promote mutual understanding between people from different European countries. Since then, over 40 cities have been designated and until 2019 cities from two member states will be designated each year as European capitals of culture.

The Spanish minister and the mayor of Wrocław gave brief presentations of their cities. Commissioner Vassiliou underlined that the designations must be the first step in a long- term development strategy for the cities and the region. She also indicated that the Commission has set up a support programme for helping cities to prepare for their year of activities.

"Creative Europe" programme

In public deliberation, the Council reached a partial general approach on the proposal for a regulation establishing the "Creative Europe" programme for the period 2014-2020 ([17186/11](#)), and bringing together the three current independent programmes: CULTURE, MEDIA and MEDIA *Mundus*. As this regulation is part of the Multiannual Financial Framework (2014 - 2020) currently under discussion, the partial general approach does not include the provisions with budgetary implications ([9097/12](#)).

This agreement constitutes a political mandate for succeeding Presidencies to engage in informal negotiations with the European Parliament during the second half of 2012 and with the aim of reaching overall agreement on the proposal early in 2013.

The main objectives of the programme are to promote cultural diversity and enhance the competitiveness of the cultural and creative sectors. The programme proposes a budget allocation of EUR 1,8 billion and is organized around three strands:

- a cross-sectoral strand, including a new financial facility for the cultural and creative sectors and measures promoting transnational policy cooperation;
- a CULTURE strand;
- a MEDIA strand.

Activities supported by the programme must present a potential European added value, and the programme will contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Europe 2020 strategy and its flagship initiatives.

Member states generally welcomed the structure of the programme as proposed by the Commission, provided that the cultural part and MEDIA-related part will be treated as separate strands, each having its own priorities, measures and budget. They also endorsed its specific objectives, such as the promotion of the transnational circulation of cultural and creative works and cultural workers, as well as the focus on audience development and improving access to European cultural and creative works.

Several member states underlined that the intrinsic value of culture must be preserved and that the overall programme should be re-balanced towards a more non-profit, cultural dimension. Some considered that the Culture strand should only fund small scale, non-commercial projects.

A number of member states called for adjustments to the committee procedure in order to strike a balance between the required flexibility in the programme's implementation and the need to ensure the appropriate involvement of member states.

Commissioner Vassiliou underlined that it would not be fair to exclude from funding every profit-making cultural or creative organization, since this would discourage them not only from seeking additional sources of financing but also from trying to be successful.

Ministers were also invited to have an exchange of views on the new **Cultural and Creative Sectors Facility** proposed in the programme, on the basis of a discussion paper prepared by the Presidency ([9291/12](#)). This loan instrument was designed to facilitate access to finance by cultural and creative enterprises, 80 % of which are small and medium-sized enterprises. The facility should also be seen in the context of the general focus on the contribution of small and medium-sized enterprises to jobs and growth.

Member states were generally favourable to this new instrument, considering it a step in the right direction but several member states pointed out that most SMEs in the cultural and creative sectors would need help in applying for financing and should have equal access to the Facility .

A number of member states expressed concerns that this new lending Facility would replace grants and be economically rather than culturally orientated.

Some member states were of the view that the Facility could reduce small and medium-sized enterprises dependence on public subsidies in some cases, while opening up new sources of revenue in others.

Many member states underlined the need for clear criteria, as well as the importance of a geographical balance regarding access to loans. Several ministers called for complementarity between the Facility and national and European subsidies.

The Commission underlined that the involvement of the European Investment Fund was a guarantee for the financial sector. It also indicated that the Facility would not replace grants and that 55% of grants in this sector already go to SMS with less than 10 employees.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

– Better Internet for Children

Commissioner KROES presented the Commission's communication on a European Strategy for a Better Internet for Children ([9486/12](#)), as a follow-up to the Safer Internet Programme¹ that will expire at the end of 2013. This communication is to be seen jointly with the proposal for a Connecting Europe Facility ([16006/11](#)) and is structured around four main actions:

- promoting high-quality content online for children and young people;
- raising the awareness of children, parents and teachers and developing their responsibility;
- creating a safe environment for children online by strengthening controls;
- fighting against child sexual abuse and child sexual exploitation.

– The Audiovisual Media Services Directive

The Commission presented its first report ([9500/12](#) + [ADD 1](#)) on the application of directive 2010/13/EU² ("the Audiovisual Media Services Directive"), which aims to ensure the free circulation of audiovisual media services as an internal market instrument, while ensuring the protection of important public policy objectives. Article 33 of the directive requires the Commission to publish a report on its application every 3 years.

The first part of the report therefore makes an assessment of the implementation of the directive for the period of 2009-2010 and the second part addresses in a prospective way the influence of important technological changes on the regulatory framework.

¹ Decision 1351/2008/EC.

² OJ L 95, 15.4.2010

Commissioner Kroes pointed to the current fragmentation of the European market and underlined the need for Europe to take the lead and not miss decisive opportunities. The Commissioner also announced that the Commission had set up the EU Media Future Forum to analyse the trends in this field.

– State aid for films and other audiovisual works

The Council took note of information from the Austrian, French, German and United Kingdom delegations (9255/12) regarding the draft Commission communication on state aid for films and other audiovisual works¹, which was published in March this year and is expected to be adopted by the Commission during the second half of 2012. Its aim is to establish criteria for assessing the compatibility of national, regional and local film and audiovisual support schemes with EU state aid rules.

Those delegations were concerned by the impact of this communication on the competitiveness of the European film industry. Several delegations underlined that film is a cultural good that needs to be supported and cannot simply be covered by the general state aid rules. Furthermore, it generates jobs in Europe. One member state voiced concern about the consequences for European linguistic diversity, in particular in smaller countries. Those member states have been invited to a meeting with the Commission at the beginning of June to discuss these issues.

– Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Council took note of information from the Cypriot delegation on its programme for the second half of 2012 in the culture and audiovisual field. The main priorities of the future Presidency will be to:

- Make progress regarding both "Europe for Citizens" and "Creative Europe" programmes;
- Enhance the intrinsic value of culture and reinforce culture governance;
- Examine a proposal for a decision on European Capitals of Culture beyond 2019;
- Adopt a Council recommendation on the European cinema in the digital era.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/competition/consultations/2012_state_aid_films/draft_communication_en.pdf

SPORT

Doping in recreational sport

The Council adopted conclusions on combating doping in recreational sport ([8838/12](#)), with a view to raising awareness and defining a common framework for this matter, as well as identifying best practices.

The fight against doping in professional and elite sports continues to be a key element in safeguarding the integrity of sport. Unfortunately, doping problems have also spread to recreational sports, to competitive amateur sports, fitness centres and even beyond the sporting sphere.

The international fight against doping in elite and professional sport aims at achieving fair play in sport by way of control and sanctions. However, in the field of recreational sports, the goal of anti-doping measures is different: the focus is to safeguard the health of the exercising population and the integrity of recreational sport environments. In addition, trafficking in doping substances targeted at users in recreational sports makes this an issue of international concern.

In particular, the conclusions call for:

- the development of educational programmes, information campaigns or other preventive measures regarding doping in recreational sport;
- close cooperation between public authorities, the sports movement and the fitness sector on developing joint projects, guidelines and regulations;
- a framework of effective and appropriate national measures for the investigation and sanctioning of the production, trafficking, distribution and possession of doping substances in recreational sport.

Furthermore, the conclusions also suggest that the mandate of the Expert Group on Anti-Doping established under the EU Work Plan for Sport 2011-14¹ should be extended to cover the fight against doping in recreational sports. This work would focus mainly on prevention, education and exchanging best practices.

¹ [5597/11](#).

Future challenges in the fight against doping

Ministers held a public debate on the future challenges in the fight against doping, including in recreational sport, on the basis of a Presidency discussion paper ([8837/12](#)). The aim of the debate was to provide guidelines for future EU cooperation in this field.

This matter was also discussed at lunchtime during the "structured dialogue" between the Presidency, the extended troika, Commissioner Vassiliou, representatives of the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, and representatives of the sports movement (in particular, the International Olympic Committee, WADA, the European Elite Athletes Association, the European Health and Fitness Association, the European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation and the International Sport and Culture Association).

Ministers discussed the legal, ethical and operational dimensions, such as issues associated with athletes' privacy and legal rights, proportionality of anti-doping measures, how to make the most effective use of resources and if and how international cooperation between public authorities and international bodies can be strengthened to overcome these problems.

The Commission recalled that the EU has taken an active role in the fight against doping in sport and there are already well-established practices and traditions within the Council¹ for combating doping in professional and elite sports. EU cooperation in the fight against doping is also closely linked to the work carried out within the Council of Europe, of which all EU member states are members, as well as in the framework of the UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport.

Most member states acknowledge that this is a public health problem and that there is a direct link between recreational and elite sports in terms of doping. Therefore the focus should be on prevention and information campaigns, starting as soon as possible with young athletes because it is important to establish healthy habits from the beginning. Some member states also underlined that sports organizations must also assume their responsibilities in tackling this problem.

Many member states underlined the importance of the revision of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA)² Code currently under way in order to have an harmonized set of international rules.

¹ See also:

- *White Paper on Sport (COM(2007) 391 final)*
- *Commission communication : "Developing the European Dimension in Sport" ([5597/11](#)).*

² <http://www.wada-ama.org>

A number of member states also welcomed the good work carried out by the expert group and were of the view that it should have an important role to play in coordination and cooperation within the EU, as well as in the exchange of best practices.

Several member states expressed concern about the exchange of athletes' personal data with countries which do not have the same level of guarantees concerning protection of personal data as in the EU.

Some member states also drew attention to the fact that the constant development of new doping methods and substances has led to an increase in the costs of testing and proposed that cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry be strengthened .

Finally, Commissioner Vassiliou recalled that the provisions on sports of the new "Erasmus for all" Programme also constituted an important tool for addressing this problem.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Council took note of information from the Cypriot delegation regarding its programme for the second half of 2012 in sport- related matters. The priorities of the future presidency will be, in particular:

- Promoting health enhancing activities;
- Contributing to the revision of the WADA Code.

EDUCATION¹**"Erasmus for All"**

The Council agreed a partial general approach on the proposal for a regulation establishing the "Erasmus for All" programme for the period 2014-2020 ([17188/11](#)), for which the Commission proposes a significant increase in funding compared with the current budget. The agreement however excludes any provisions with budgetary implications, pending further developments on the negotiations currently under way on the 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework.

Rather than being organised primarily along sectoral lines (schools, higher education, youth projects, etc.), the new programme will focus on three types of key action: learning mobility, cooperation for innovation and good practices, and support for policy reform. Emphasis will also be placed on activities which have a systemic impact and provide clear EU added value, while efforts will be made to streamline management of the programme and administrative procedures.

The programme will also support the EU's endeavours to overcome one of the most difficult economic periods in its history, notably by aligning itself very closely with the Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs, in which education and training play an essential part.

The Council preparatory bodies have worked intensively on the proposal since January and the agreement reached on the basis of a Presidency compromise text ([9098/12](#)) constitutes a political mandate for future Presidencies to engage in informal negotiations with the European Parliament during the second half of 2012 with a view to reaching overall agreement on the proposal early in 2013.

The main changes introduced in the Commission's proposal are the following:

- a separate youth chapter with a separate budget for youth : many member states called for greater visibility for the youth field, some of them wanting an entirely separate programme;

¹ The Council session was preceded by a dinner with the social partners on Monday. The participants had an exchange of views on "Erasmus for all", in particular concerning the transition between education and work and youth unemployment.

- programme management: a single management committee, but it will meet in specific configurations, if deemed necessary, and member states would send the relevant representatives. Most member states and the Commission stressed the need for consistent implementation, as well as improved coordination at national level to achieve cost-efficiency;
- support for academic institutions: keep the six academic institutions which are active in the field of European integration studies and which currently receive funding from Lifelong Learning ;
- a special provision to ensure access to the Programme for people with special needs or with fewer opportunities;
- national agencies' allocations for learning mobility funds : minimum allocations for each of the different education and training sectors, in order to minimise imbalances between member states which might occur owing to geographical situation or differences in the cost of living;
- a reference to European values in article 3 of the regulation.

Commissioner Vassiliou emphasized that the innovative integrated approach of Erasmus for all must be preserved and that the distinction between the youth field and the other parts of the programme was in fact artificial. She welcomed the fact that the fundamental principles underpinning its proposal had been maintained in the Presidency compromise package. However, she regretted some of the changes made, in particular the creation of a separate youth chapter and budget, the removal of specific indicators and the rejection of the Commission's proposal for a single coordinating body as National Agency in each Member State.

Finally, Commissioner Vassiliou also considered that the important budget allocation proposed for the programme will send a clear signal to young people and also to the adult learners that Europe is strongly committed and will have the means to tackle their problems.

Employability of graduates

The Council adopted conclusions on the employability of graduates from education and training ([9100/12](#)). Their purpose is to establish a European benchmark for identifying those education and training policies which boost the employability of graduates from general education, vocational education and training and higher education and help to ensure successful transitions from education to work.

In recent years, a number of initiatives have been developed at both European and national level aimed at bringing the worlds of education and employment closer together, notably by encouraging partnerships between education and training institutions and enterprises, closer alignment of curricula with labour market needs, more placements in companies, and the development of entrepreneurship education.

The benchmark will measure the share of graduates entering employment within three years of graduating and - on a more qualitative note - will look at the match between educational attainment and the occupations pursued during the first years of employment.

By adding such a benchmark to the six others already adopted in the field of education and training¹, the EU is signalling its determination to tackle the education challenges highlighted within the Europe 2020 Strategy, not least by ensuring that young people leave education with the right skills and competences to obtain their first job.

The Commission recalled that the goal in this field is to come back to the European headline target of 82% of young graduates in employment by 2020. It will make an assessment of the employability benchmark in 2014.

¹ *See also:*
- *Strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training (OJ C 119, 28.5.2009);*
- *Council conclusions of November 2011 on developing a benchmark for learning mobility.*
([16745/11](#)).

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Student grant and loan systems for higher education

The Council took note of information provided by the Luxembourg delegation on its concerns regarding the criteria underpinning the student grant and loan systems for higher education, *in particular the residence permit requirement (9101/12)*. Scholarships should not be considered a social benefit, but as support for higher education studies.

CZ, SE, AU, NL, DK delegations supported the Luxembourg delegation. COM recalled that the right of equal treatment for migrant workers is a fundamental right and that a decision from the Court of Justice on this issue is pending.

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Council took note of information from the Cypriot delegation regarding its programme for the second half of 2012 in the field of education and training. The main priorities of the future Presidency will be:

- Combating illiteracy;
- Promoting excellence in education (in the framework of the Copenhagen process);
- Enhancing the link between training and higher education;
- Promoting excellence in teaching and learning;
- Monitoring the European Semester in the education and training field.

YOUTH

Creative and innovative potential of young people

Youth unemployment is at record levels in many member states, early school leaving remains a serious problem and there are low levels of participation and representation of young people in the democratic process and in the societies in which they live .

The Council adopted conclusions on fostering the creative and innovative potential of young people ([8700/12](#)). They establish a thematic group with the participation of experts from member states and the Commission with the aim of sharing best practices on how to promote the creativity and innovative capacity of young people by identifying competences and skills acquired through non-formal and informal learning relevant to employability.

The conclusions also call on member states to make the best use of the Youth in Action Programme and, without prejudice to on-going negotiations, possibly of other existing and future EU programmes and funds, including the European Social Fund.

The conclusions are also based on the various initiatives launched during the European Year on Creativity and Innovation (2009) and reflect the overall priority of the current Team Presidency (PL, DK and CY), which is youth participation.

As a follow-up to this issue, ministers also discussed in public debate the subject "**Engaging with young people to release their potential**", on the basis of a Presidency discussion paper ([8833/12](#)).

More than 20% of 15 – 24 year olds on the EU labour market are unemployed, which means more than five million young people. Moreover, 28 % of these young people are long-term unemployed. The situation differs widely between regions and member states, but in some countries youth unemployment rates are as high as 50%.

The aim of the debate was to identify cross-sectoral measures to address the current high youth unemployment rate and explore how non-formal and informal learning could play a valuable role to release the potential of young people ¹.

Most member states are already implementing measures for reforming their labour markets and are developing various initiatives on employment, education and training aimed at reducing the alarming rates of youth unemployment.

A large number of member states underlined that work in voluntary activities and youth organisations are strategic channels for developing the skills and competences of young people, allowing them to acquire experience and contributing to enhancing their sense of responsibility.

Many member states considered that entrepreneurship education – the smooth and swift transition from education to work through apprenticeships, training in enterprises, vocational courses- is one of the keys to tackling youth unemployment. Others pointed out that the acquisition of cultural competences can also contribute to social inclusion.

Several member states also recalled the important contribution of the Youth in Action Programme and stressed the need for an optimal use of other European tools in this field, such as the European Social Fund.

Commissioner Vassiliou pointed to the recent Youth Opportunities Initiative as another valuable tool to combat youth unemployment and promote social inclusion and she also stressed the need to modernize European education systems.

The Commissioner underlined that non-formal and informal education are sometimes the only way for marginalized youth to acquire qualifications. Those forms of education should be recognized and valued and this is indeed been taken into account in the new programme “Erasmus for all”.

¹ See also:

- Renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018), OJ C 311, 19.12.2009.
- Youth Opportunities Initiative (5166/12).

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Work programme of the incoming Presidency

The Council took note of information from the Cypriot delegation regarding its programme in the field of youth policy for the second half of 2012 . The main priorities of the future Presidency will be:

- Foster youth participation and social inclusion, in particular regarding young people from migrant backgrounds;
- Promote the integration of young people in society;
- Organization of the World Youth Council (11-13 September 2012).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Relations with Montenegro**

The Council decided to publish in the Official Journal decision No 1/2011 of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council, see [3603/1/11 REV 1](#). The decision, adopted on 21 June 2011, amended the rules of procedure of the EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Agreement with a view to setting up two joint consultative committees.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Financial Assistance to Georgia**

The Council adopted a decision providing further macro-financial assistance to Georgia ([5682/12 ADD 1](#)).

Risk-sharing instruments

The Council adopted a regulation amending Council regulation 1083/2006 as regards certain provisions relating to risk sharing instruments for Member States experiencing or threatened with serious difficulties with respect to their financial stability ([PE-CONS 15/12](#))

ENVIRONMENT

Biocidal products regulation

The Council adopted a regulation concerning the placing on the market and use of biocidal products ([PE-CONS 3/12](#)), which include insecticides, disinfectants and repellents, but not medicines or agricultural pesticides. The regulation will apply from 1 September 2013 with a transitional period for certain provisions. (See press release, [9757/12](#))

EU Ecolabel

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission decision establishing the ecological criteria for the award of the EU Ecolabel for printed paper ([8383/12](#)).

The EU Ecolabel was established by regulation 66/2010¹ and is awarded to products with a reduced environmental impact during their entire life cycle.

The draft decision is subject to what is known as the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. Now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

¹ OJ L 27, 30.1.2010.

CULTURE

European Capitals of Culture

The Council adopted a decision on the practical and procedural arrangements relating to the nomination by the Council of the two members of the selection panel and the monitoring and advisory panel for the 'European Capital of Culture' Community action for the period 2013-2015 ([8992/12](#)).

In line with the decision establishing a Community action for the European Capitals of Culture ¹, the first step in this nomination process is the selection, through a voluntary draw, of two member states that will recommend one expert each. The Council confirmed that Austria and Estonia were selected at the meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee on 25 April 2012.

SOCIAL POLICY

Coordination of social security systems regulation

The Council adopted a regulation amending regulations 883/2004 and 987/2009 on the coordination of social security systems, following a first-reading agreement with the European Parliament ([PE-CONS 11/12+COR1+REV1](#)).

The amendments are aimed *inter alia* at providing a satisfactory solution in the case of wholly unemployed, formerly self-employed, frontier workers who were insured in their country of activity against unemployment and who returned to their member state of residence where no insurance against the risk of unemployment exists.

¹ Decision 1622/2006 (*OJ L 304, 3.11.2006*).

INTERNAL MARKET

Interconnection of business registers

The Council adopted a directive setting up a system for the interconnection of central, commercial and companies registers aimed at improving access to up-to-date and trustworthy information on companies ([5/12](#) and [9358/12 ADD1](#)).

Under the new directive, all EU member states will engage in enabling electronic communication between registers and transmitting information to individual users in a standardised way, by means of identical content and interoperable technologies, throughout the Union.

For more information see press release [9648/12](#).

ENERGY

Ecodesign requirements for glandless stand-alone circulators integrated into products

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of its regulation amending Commission regulation (EC) No 641/2009 as regards ecodesign requirements for glandless stand-alone circulators integrated into products ([7975/12](#)).

The draft regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. Now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

TRANSPORT

Rules on maintenance of light aircraft

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a regulation updating the rules on maintenance of light aircraft so as to better adapt them to the design and type of operation of such aircraft ([7696/12](#)).

The draft regulation, which amends the regulation of 2003 on the continuing airworthiness of aircraft, is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

Fees levied by the European Aviation Safety Agency

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a regulation updating the rules on the fees and charges levied by the European Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) ([8858/12](#)). The update reflects the extension of the scope of the agency's activities by regulation 216/2008 on EASA and introduces more detailed rules on the way those fees and charges are to be paid.

The draft regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

Air services agreements with Sri Lanka and Macao *

The Council authorised the signing and provisional application of agreements on certain aspects of air services with Sri Lanka (Council decision: [8174/12](#); text of agreement: [8176/12](#)) and the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (Council decision: [8178/12](#); text of agreement: [8179/12](#)).

The agreements supersede or complement the existing bilateral agreements that individual EU member states have with Sri Lanka and Macao, bringing their provisions into line with EU law. The issues covered include, in particular, non-discriminatory access of all EU air carriers to routes between the EU and Sri Lanka or Macao, competition rules, and, as far as Macao is concerned, the taxation of aviation fuel.

Technical specifications for interoperability of European railways

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of three decisions updating technical specifications for interoperability of the trans-European rail system relating to rolling stock, control-command and signalling, infrastructure, energy, operation, traffic management, safety in railway tunnels and persons with reduced mobility ([8350/12](#), [8370/12](#), [8385/12](#)).

The draft decisions are subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny; now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt them, unless the European Parliament objects.

HEALTH

Pharmacovigilance - Enforcement of obligations

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 658/2007 concerning financial penalties for infringement of certain obligations in connection with marketing authorisations of medicinal products for human and veterinary use in the EU ([6292/12](#)).

The draft regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. Now that the Council has given its consent the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**37th meeting of the EEA Council**

The Council established the European Union's common position for the 37th meeting of the European Economic Area Council which will be held on 14 May 2012.

TRANSPARENCY**Public access to documents**

The Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application No 08/c/02/12 ([8359/12](#)).

WRITTEN PROCEDURES**Antidumping measures - Sodium cyclamate - China**

On 7 May, the Council adopted a regulation amending regulation 492/2010 imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of sodium cyclamate originating in, inter alia, China ([8594/12](#)).
