



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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3235th Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 22 April 2013

President

Mr Eamon GILMORE

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs and
Trade

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Main results of the Council

*The Council took note of a draft annotated agenda of the **European Council meeting on 22 May.***

*The Irish presidency informed ministers on the state of play in the discussions with the European Parliament on the next **multiannual financial framework (MFF)** and received guidance from ministers for the negotiations with the European Parliament.*

*The Council heard a presentation by the Commission of joint reports by the Commission and the High Representative on **Kosovo and Serbia**, as well as a Commission report on the **former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.***

*The Council took note of an initiative for a new and more effective mechanism to safeguard **fundamental values** in member states.*

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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.

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PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:

Mr Didier REYNDERS

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs,
External Trade and European Affairs

Bulgaria:

Mr Ivan NAIDENOV

Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs

Czech Republic:

Mr Karel SCHWARZENBERG

First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign
Affairs

Denmark:

Mr Nicolai WAMMEN

Minister for European Affairs

Germany:

Mr Guido WESTERWELLE

Mr Michael LINK

Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs

Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Estonia:

Mr Urmas PAET

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ireland:

Mr Eamon GILMORE

Ms Lucinda CREIGHTON

Tánaiste (Deputy Prime Minister) and Minister for
Foreign Affairs and Trade

Minister of State for European Affairs (Departments of the
Taoiseach and Foreign Affairs and Trade)

Greece:

Mr Dimitris AVRAMOPOULOS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Spain:

Mr Alfonso DASTIS QUECEDO

Permanent Representative

France:

Mr Thierry REPENTIN

Minister for European Affairs

Italy:

Mr Enzo MOAVERO MILANESI

Minister responsible for European Affairs

Cyprus:

Mr Ioannis KASOULIDES

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Latvia:

Mr Edgars RINKĒVIČS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Lithuania:

Mr Linas LINKEVIČIUS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean ASSELBORN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs

Hungary:

Mr János MARTONYI

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Mr George VELLA

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Netherlands:

Mr Frans TIMMERMANS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Austria:

Mr Reinhold LOPATKA

State Secretary for Foreign Affairs

Poland:

Mr Marek PRAWDA

Permanent Representative

Portugal:

Mr Miguel MORAIS LEITÃO

State Secretary attached to the Minister for Foreign
Affairs, with responsibility for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Titus CORLĂȚEAN

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Slovenia:

Mr Igor SENČAR

State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Slovakia:

Mr Peter JAVORČÍK

State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Finland:

Mr Alexander STUBB

Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade

Sweden:

Mr Carl BILDT

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Ms Birgitta OHLSSON

Minister for European Union

United Kingdom:

Mr David LIDINGTON

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

High Representative

Ms Catherine ASHTON

High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

Commission:

Ms Viviane REDING

Vice President

Mr Štefan FÜLE

Commissioner

Mr Janusz LEWANDOWSKI

Commissioner

The government of the acceding state was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Ms Vesna PUSIĆ

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED**Multiannual financial framework - *public session***

The Irish presidency informed ministers on the state of play in the discussions with the European Parliament on the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) and received guidance from ministers for the negotiations with the European Parliament.

Since the February European Council the Irish presidency has had extensive contacts with the European Parliament on the MFF. Work has also started in Council on the MFF regulation and the interinstitutional agreement on cooperation in budgetary matters and on sound financial management. The Irish presidency's objective is to reach agreement with the Parliament on the MFF by the end of June and to translate the overall MFF agreement into legal texts. It also aims to reach agreement on the around 70 pieces of sector-specific legislation underpinning the EU's funding programmes. This would allow the new programmes to start on time in January 2014.

Ministers supported the presidency's efforts to find a compromise with the European Parliament on the next MFF in a timely manner. Ministers expressed their willingness to discuss the four key elements of the European Parliament's resolution (flexibility, revision, own resources and unity of the budget). Some ministers also stressed that substantial elements of the Parliament's demands had already been agreed by the European Council in February, in particular as regards flexibility.

With regard to draft amending budget no 2 for 2013 (by which the Commission proposes to increase the 2013 EU budget by EUR 11.2 billion and which the European Parliament links to the MFF), the Council expressed its willingness to work urgently and constructively on the Commission proposal with a view to reaching agreement in order to meet clearly justified payment needs. The Council will also follow very carefully the evolution of the budget through the year and take any necessary further steps to ensure that the EU can fulfil its obligations.

Following the Council's discussion the presidency will renew its contacts with the European Parliament and ask Coreper¹ to continue work on the MFF regulation and the interinstitutional agreement. The General Affairs Council will return to the MFF for a more substantial discussion on 21 May. Draft amending budget no 2 for 2013 will be examined in parallel by Coreper and is due to be discussed by the Council for Economic and Financial Affairs on 14 May.

On 8 February 2013 the European Council reached agreement on the next MFF, providing a mandate to the Irish presidency for the negotiations with the European Parliament ([37/13 + COR 1 REV 1](#)).

¹ The Permanent Representatives Committee is composed of the ambassadors of the 27 EU member states. Its role is to prepare decisions of the Council.

On 13 March, the European Parliament adopted a resolution setting out its position for the negotiations on the next MFF (<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0078+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>).

Further information on the negotiations may be found on the Council's MFF webpages: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/special-reports/mff>

Preparation of the May European Council

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda, drawn up by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the Irish presidency and the Commission, for the European Council meeting to be held on 22 May ([7623/13](#)).

The European Council will focus on:

- Economic policy:
 - Energy (completion of the Internal Energy Market and interconnections; increase of investments in modern energy infrastructure; high energy prices);
 - Tax policy (improving the efficiency of tax collection; tackling tax evasion and fraud);
- Other items:
 - Deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union (taking stock of work);
 - External relations (specific issues in the light of events).

The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis for draft conclusions, to be prepared in the run-up to the meeting.

Initiative on democracy, human rights and rule of law

The Council took note of an initiative by Denmark, Finland, Germany and the Netherlands for a new and more effective mechanism to safeguard fundamental values in member states and had a first comprehensive discussion on the subject.

The Commissioner in charge of justice, fundamental rights and citizenship, Vice President Viviane Reding, gave an overview of the existing mechanisms for the protection of fundamental rights and the rule of law.

Reports on Kosovo, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

The Council heard a presentation by the Commission of joint reports by the Commission and High Representative on Kosovo and Serbia (8742/13 and 8740/13 respectively), as well as a Commission report on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. The Council took note of progress made by all three countries in the areas identified in the Council conclusions of 11 December 2012 ([17604/12](#)). The Council in particular welcomed the agreement reached last Friday between Kosovo and Serbia on the principles governing the normalisation of the relations between them. Ministers acknowledged the historic dimension of the deal, congratulated the two countries' Prime Ministers for their political commitment and thanked the Commission and the European External Action Service for helping to broker the deal.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed Ms Cristina MAZAS PÉREZ-OLEAGA (Spain) as a member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([8238/13](#)).

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Temporary judges for the civil service tribunal

The Council adopted a decision appointing the following three persons as temporary judges to the Civil Service Tribunal for a period of four years:

- Mr Haris Tagaras (former judge at the Civil Service Tribunal),
- Mr Arjen W.H. Meij (former judge at the General Court) and
- Ms Verica Trstenjak (former advocate-general at the Court of Justice and former Judge at the General Court).

Where necessary, they will be called upon to perform their duties in this order.

The Council decision is in line with the protocol on the statute of the Court of Justice of the EU which provides for the possibility of attaching temporary judges to the specialised courts in order to cover the absence of judges who are prevented from participating in the disposal of cases for a lengthy period of time.

ENLARGEMENT

Relations with Albania

The Council adopted the EU position for the fifth meeting of the EU-Albania Stabilisation and Association Council, to be held in Luxembourg on 23 April 2013.

Croatia

The Council adopted the following conclusions on Croatia:

"The Council welcomes the Commission's monitoring report of 26 March 2013 on Croatia's accession preparations and the accompanying monitoring tables, and its conclusion that Croatia is generally meeting the commitments and requirements arising from the accession negotiations in all chapters.

Recalling previous Council Conclusions, the Council commends Croatia for the results achieved, noting that it has completed the ten priority actions identified in the Commission's comprehensive monitoring report of October 2012. Croatia has shown the will and ability to fulfil all other commitments before accession and is expected to complete its final preparations for membership.

The Council notes that Croatia's forthcoming accession is the result of a rigorous negotiation process and of close monitoring during pre-accession preparations. Building on the achievements to date, Croatia is expected to continue developing its track records in the field of the rule of law, notably in the fight against corruption and the handling of domestic war crimes cases. The Council also welcomes important initial steps on urgently needed structural reforms that have been taken to improve competitiveness and growth prospects in the economy, encourages further progress, and welcomes the informal participation of Croatia in the 2013 European Semester.

The Council reaffirms the unequivocal commitment of the European Union to the European perspective of the Western Balkans, which remains essential for the stability, reconciliation and future of the region. It remains firmly committed to taking the enlargement process forward on the basis of agreed principles and conclusions. Aside from the clear benefits to itself and the EU, Croatia's accession demonstrates that, when conditions are met, the EU delivers on its commitments in this regard. Noting Croatia's commitment that bilateral issues should not obstruct the accession process, the Council looks forward to Croatia continuing to play an active and positive role in regional cooperation in the Western Balkans.

Welcoming progress in the ratification process, and subject to the completion of remaining ratification procedures, the Council looks forward to welcoming Croatia as a member of the European Union on 1 July 2013."

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Mobility partnership Morocco-EU

The Council confirmed the agreement on the joint declaration establishing a mobility partnership between the Kingdom of Morocco and the European Union and its member states (6139/13 ADD 1 REV 1), within the framework of the implementation of the Global Approach to Migration.

Mobility partnerships are established in cases where they bring added value, both to the EU and the third country, with regard to the management of migration flows. To date, mobility partnerships have been established with Armenia, Cape Verde, Georgia and Moldova.

In its conclusions of June 2011 (EUCO [23/1/11](#)), the European Council called for the launch of a dialogue on migration, mobility and security with the Southern Mediterranean countries that should lead to the conclusion of mobility partnerships between the EU and the countries concerned.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Taxation

The Council adopted decisions authorising:

- Latvia to introduce a special measure derogating from point (a) of Article 26(1) and Articles 168 and 168a of Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax;
- France to apply differentiated levels of taxation to motor fuels in accordance with Article 19 of Directive 2003/96/EC;
- France to apply a reduced rate of taxation to unleaded petrol used as motor fuel and consumed in Corsica in accordance with Article 19 of Directive 2003/96/EC.

STATISTICS

National and regional accounts

The Council adopted a regulation on the European system of national and regional accounts, following an agreement with the European Parliament at first reading ([77/12](#)).

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

EU statistics

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU in the EEA joint committee concerning an amendment to annex XXI (statistics) to the EEA agreement ([6911/13](#)).

This decision aims to amend annex XXI (statistics) to the EEA agreement by incorporating Commission regulation (EU) No 555/2012 amending regulation (EC) No 184/2005 on EU statistics concerning balance of payments, international trade in services and foreign direct investment, as regards the update of data requirements and definitions.

Free movement of workers

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU in the EEA joint committee concerning an amendment to Protocol 31 to the EEA agreement ([6914/13](#)).

This decision aims to amend Protocol 31 on cooperation in specific fields outside the four freedoms in order to include cooperation on free movement of workers, coordination of social security systems and measures for migrants, including migrants from third countries.

Maximum residue levels of pesticides

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be taken, on behalf of the EU in the EEA joint committee concerning an amendment to annex II to the EEA agreement ([6970/13](#)).

This decision aims to amend annex II (technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) in order to incorporate Commission implementing regulation (EU) No 788/2012 concerning a coordinated multiannual control programme of the Union for 2013, 2014 and 2015 to ensure compliance with maximum residue levels of pesticides and to assess the consumer exposure to pesticide residues in and on food of plant and animal origin.

EMPLOYMENT**Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Austria and Italy**

The Council adopted three decisions mobilising a total amount of EUR 12.7 million under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), providing support for workers made redundant in Austria and Italy.

An amount of EUR 3.94 million is allocated to dismissed workers of Austria Tabak GmbH and its 14 suppliers which suffered from a significant reduction of the EU market share and from a delocalisation of production to third countries. An amount of EUR 5.04 million is mobilised for former workers of the Italian domestic appliances sector which faced a significant downturn in its production due to a drop in domestic and European demand and growing competition from China and Turkey. A further EUR 3.69 million is made available for workers made redundant from Agile S.r.l, an Italian company operating in the information and communication technology sector, which became insolvent owing to a downturn in the ICT market.
