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Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Brussels, 25 and 26 November 2013

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Main results of the Council

Education

*The Council adopted conclusions on **effective leadership in education and the global dimension of European higher education***

*It also held a debate, in public deliberation, on **open educational resources and digital learning**.*

Youth

*The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the **social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training**.*

*In public deliberation, ministers discussed the future **EU Work Plan for Youth**.*

Culture and Audiovisual

*The Council reached a general approach on the proposal for a directive on the **return of cultural objects** unlawfully removed from the territory of a member state.*

*The Council adopted conclusions on **media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment**.*

*The Council held a debate on the subject "**Connected Citizens: changing behaviour of viewers in the converged media environment**".*

Sport

*The Council adopted a recommendation on **promoting health-enhancing physical activity** across sectors.*

*The Council adopted conclusions on the **contribution of sport to the EU economy** and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion.*

*The Council also discussed **good governance in sport**.*

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ITEMS DEBATED

EDUCATION

Before starting on the agenda items, Minister Pavalkis wished to draw attention to the state of play on two important files in the field of Education:

- the declaration on the **European Alliance for Apprenticeships** ([14986/13](#)), a joint employment/education initiative, adopted by the Council (EPSCO) on 15 October 2013, aiming to support youth employment by promoting work based-learning;
- the **Erasmus+ Programme**, adopted by the European Parliament at the previous week's plenary session. Following the formal adoption by the Council in the beginning of December, the new programme can start, as scheduled, on 1 January 2014. It will benefit from a significant increase in funding in real terms: over 40% more than the programmes which it replaces. The minister underlined that, despite scarce resources at a time of economic difficulty, this demonstrates that expenditure on education is a vital investment for jobs and growth. It also sends a clear signal that the European Union remains committed to supporting young people, offering them other opportunities to improve their life prospects.

Finally, the Presidency updated ministers on the situation concerning the financing issues related to the **secondment of teachers in the European Schools**, which was an information point at the last Council in May. Following several rounds of discussions, the Board of Governors of the European Schools reached agreement last week on a new set of cost-sharing principles.

Leadership in education

The Council adopted conclusions on **effective leadership in education** ([15587/13](#)), inviting member states to make educational leadership more attractive, and in particular to support the autonomy of educational institutions and educational leaders in pedagogical matters and the internal allocation of resources, while ensuring that they have the necessary means to adapt and respond effectively to specific and changing local conditions.

The Presidency underlined that school leadership is considered second only to quality of teaching among the school-related factors that determine educational success. Leadership is clearly a major factor in raising aspirations, in providing support for pupils, parents and staff alike, and thus in fostering higher achievement levels.

The conclusions also call for the development of innovative approaches to educational leadership, for instance through the Strategic Partnership actions of the Erasmus+ programme, including by encouraging educational leaders to cooperate with companies, civil society associations and different levels of educational institutions, both internationally and within the local community.

The Commission also suggested that it would be important to lighten the administrative burden on leaders so that they could devote more of their time to fundamental issues such as the quality of learning, curriculum content and staff performance. This would of course also imply greater accountability.

The French delegation pointed out that in its view the main factor for effective school leadership and educational success was not the administrative autonomy of schools but their pedagogical autonomy.

European higher education

The Council also adopted conclusions on the **global dimension of European higher education** ([15117/1/13](#)), which call in particular for comprehensive strategic approaches towards internationalisation, in cooperation with the relevant stakeholders, covering three main areas: student and staff mobility; the internationalisation of curricula and digital learning; and strategic cooperation, partnerships and capacity-building.

The main purpose of internationalisation is to improve the quality of higher education and to better prepare learners in Europe to live in a global world and work in a global economy. The modernisation and internationalisation of higher education are also seen as key elements in enhancing the EU's drive for growth and jobs through innovation and research¹.

The Presidency underlined that the strength of Europe's higher education systems lies in the provision of high quality education and research, in the diversity of its institutions, and in its support for cooperation in areas where this provides added value, such as joint and double degree programmes, doctoral schools and studies, and international partnerships.

The Commission recalled the major role of the new Erasmus+ programme in the field of student and teacher mobility but underlined that this is a very complex process and that in this field "one size does NOT fit all". It also underlined that not only students but also university teachers will benefit from the possibilities offered by the new programme.

¹ See also

- Commission communication "European higher education in the world" ([12453/13](#))
- Council conclusions on the modernisation of higher education ([16746/11](#))

Open Educational Resources¹ and digital learning

Ministers were invited to outline during the debate the overall approach being adopted at national level concerning digital learning, including massive on-line open courses (MOOCs), and to share their views on how issues such as quality assessment and the recognition of skills and competences acquired by such means might be addressed. They were also asked to indicate how action at EU level might provide added value in this process.

The debate was launched by one of the guest speakers: Ms **Uschi SCHREIBER**, a business consultant who has worked extensively in the Far East. Ms Schreiber stressed that digital learning is not an option, it's already happening, in particular in countries like China and in Southeast Asia), where for instance in South Korea already at primary level schools are fully equipped with modern technologies and learning is already entirely digital.

She underlined that employers will increasingly require staff who are not only “digitally competent” but who are “digital naturals.” EU Member States had totake this into account in their education systems, particularly in the higher education sector. The EU is already lagging behind other regions of the world in this field.

Professor **AZZONE**, rector at the Politecnico di Milano, described his institution - which is a pioneer in distance learning in Italy - as a “traditional university facing the dual challenge of MOOCs” and globalisation. He argued that European universities should not try to replicate American levels of investment in on-line courses, but should instead aim to capitalise on areas where Europeperforms best and provides added value.

He explained that developing on-line courses is extremely expensive and time-consuming, posing particular problems for many European public universities which have high staff/student ratios and limited funding arrangements. He believes that in any case MOOCs alone cannot replace “traditional” forms of education and gave a concrete example from his instiution: the completion rate for “in class” courses is 70%,whereas that for “on-line” courses is merely 12%.

MOOCs could be blended with more traditional forms of teaching and learning to create a new educational model. Open Educational Resources of this kind could not only focus on factual contentin the technical or scientific fields, but could also be used to develop cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary and innovation skills.

¹ Teaching, learning, and research tools in the public domain that can be freely used.

The Commission agreed that digital revolution is already happening in schools, but said that we are perhaps not yet fully prepared to adapt to these new modes of learning. Innovative solutions are required and the new Erasmus + Programme can support this transition.

Every European classroom should be digital by 2020, said Commissioner Vassiliou, recalling however that currently fewer than 30% of children are being educated by digitally experienced teachers and 50% of them have not had any contact with digital learning. Yet digital skills are virtually indispensable in today's labour market and EU member states need to ensure that the workforce has sufficient IT skills to fill the estimated one million job vacancies in the ICT sector.

In general, ministers acknowledged that digital distance learning tools offer considerable opportunities: broadening access to education and thus benefiting isolated communities and less favoured students, increasing cost-efficiency and fostering innovation in education. For this reason, most member states have already developed, or are developing, initiatives in this field.

However, most ministers were also of the view these developments raise important issues at both national and European level. Several ministers recalled that the required infrastructure is not available everywhere and access to open resources is not always free. There are also many important issues relating to the quality of materials, the recognition of competences acquired by such means, the implications for teacher education, as well as legal issues concerning copyright and intellectual property rights.

A number of ministers also stressed that digital learning should not be the only approach to education. Digital and more traditional forms of teaching learning are not mutually exclusive. Teacher training was deemed crucial by many, as well as the need for students and graduates to exercise critical discernment.

Finally, a number of ministers - including some from countries with a great deal of experience in the field of digital learning - considered that we do not yet have enough data on the impact of MOOCs and that it is therefore still premature to begin discussing a possible European strategy in this field. Many of them underlined the usefulness of sharing good practices at European level and of making the best use of Erasmus + , as well as of Horizon 2020 programmes.

OTHER BUSINESS

– Cyprus data in the OECD surveys

The Council took note of information from the Cyprus delegation on the difficulties it encounters to become a member of OCDE ([15903/13](#)). It requested the support of its EU partners in order to ensure equal treatment in OECD activities in the field of education and that in the future, data contributed by Cyprus is handled in the same way as all other EU member states.

The French, Greek and Romanian delegations supported CYPRUS. The Commission, expressed its solidarity with CY, and informed ministers that it had sent a letter to OCDE's general-secretary on this issue, asking him to find a solution to the problem.

– **Work programme of the incoming Presidency**

The Council took note of information from the Greek delegation on the work programme of the future Presidency, which will include the following priorities:

- Developing skills through innovative education and training
- Reducing early school leaving
- Foreign language skills
- Promoting vocational education and training
- Pre-school education
- Quality Assurance at all levels of education and training

YOUTH

Young people not in employment, education or training

The Council adopted conclusions on enhancing the **social inclusion of young people not in employment, education or training** ("NEETS") ([15770/13](#)), which seek to address the problem of NEETs in a more systematic way, by including a series of policy measures covering prevention, education, training and non-formal learning, voluntary activities, the transition from education to employment, and employment itself.

Ministers acknowledged that this is a major priority for the EU since the exclusion of unemployed young people from social security rights is also becoming an increasingly serious social issue.

The Commission recalled that the EU had already put into place several important schemes and initiatives to deal with youth unemployment. The Commissioner underlined that NEET's are not an homogeneous group, so measures to tackle the problem must be adapted accordingly.

Several ministers also recalled that youth work - although not replacing paid employment - can contribute to reduce social exclusion and increase employability.

EU Work Plan for Youth

Most ministers acknowledged during the debate that the economic and financial crisis that has dramatically shaken the youth sector since 2008 has changed the whole environment in which youth policy operates. The EU and its member states therefore need to address urgently the high youth unemployment rates¹ and the consequences of the current crisis on young people, in particular since it is likely that youth unemployment will remain high in the coming years.

¹ More than 5.7 million young people (23.6 %) in the EU were without a job in January 2013 and 30 % of unemployed people under the age of 25 in the Union have been unemployed for more than twelve months. The economic cost of this situation - in terms of benefits paid out, lost tax revenue and earnings foregone - was estimated by the EU Agency Eurofound at 153 billion per year, or 1.2 % of EU GDP.

Ministers agreed in general that there was a clear need to develop a medium-term structured plan, with a limited number of key initiatives in specific youth policy areas to be achieved within realistic timetables to enable years. This plan should be capable of responding quickly to developments affecting youth and focus on social inclusion. It should also adapt the aims of youth policy to the targets of the EU 2020 Strategy¹.

Many ministers considered that cross-sectoral cooperation should be strengthened and implemented on all levels, in particular regarding education and training and employment policy areas.

A number of ministers also called for a positive youth policy vision: young people should be at the heart of European construction, should be involved in democratic life of their countries. Several ministers recalled the challenges relating to immigration.

One of the priorities for the work plan should be developing useful skills for youth, therefore traineeships and apprenticeships should also be increased, as well as recognition of formal and non formal learning.

A number of ministers underlined the importance of investing on vocational training and several others ministers considered that health and well-being issues should also be addressed. Youth entrepreneurship should also be promoted.

It was suggested by many that the EU Work Plan for Youth should be an instrument to speed up the practical implementation of current initiatives, such as the Youth guarantee scheme and the Youth Employment package.

Other business

– *EU Youth Conference*

The Council was briefed by the Presidency on the outcome of the EU Youth Conference ([14177/13](#)), which was held from 9 to 12 September in Vilnius, under the general theme of social inclusion of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEETs).

The EU Youth Conference is an element of the "structured dialogue" process, which brings together young people and policy makers across the European Union to jointly discuss and inform the development of youth policy at national and European level.

¹ See also: Council conclusions on maximising the potential of youth policy in addressing the goals of the Europe 2020 Strategy ([8576/13](#)).

– *Work programme of the incoming Presidency*

The Council took note of information from the Greek delegation on the work programme of the future Presidency, which will include the following priorities:

- Social inclusion (in particular, through culture and entrepreneurship)
- Promote access to new technologies, in particular in remote areas

CULTURE AND AUDIOVISUAL

Before starting on the formal agenda items, Minister Birutis wished to draw attention to the state of play on several important files in this field;

- the Creative Europe programme was adopted by the European Parliament at its last week's plenary session. Following the formal adoption by the Council in December, the new programme can start, as scheduled, on 1 January 2014;
- the European Parliament also gave its consent to the **Europe for Citizens** programme last week. The programme will hopefully enter into force still this year, but two member states have yet to complete their national proceedings to be able to adopt the regulation;
- the negotiations with the Parliament concerning the decision on the **European Capitals of Culture** (2020-2033) are almost concluded, only one issue still pending.

Return of cultural objects

The Council adopted a general approach ([16027/13](#)) on the proposal for a directive **on the return of cultural objects unlawfully removed from the territory of a member state** ([10471/13](#) + [ADD1](#) + [ADD2](#)), reviewing directive 93/7/EEC¹.

The aim of the proposal is to improve the efficiency of the mechanisms to secure the swift return of cultural objects classified as national treasures², which were illegally removed from a member state before 1 January 1993. The need to protect national treasures was linked to the abolition of EU's internal borders between which came into effect on 1 January 1993.

In general, the Council accepted the main changes introduced by the Commission proposal into the current legislation, such as:

- deletion of the annex, which specifies categories of cultural objects eligible for return, together with financial and age thresholds. Thus, any cultural object that a member state defines as a national treasure will be eligible for return;

¹ OJ L 74, 27.3.1993.

² Within the meaning of Article 36 TFEU.

- extension of deadlines so that member states would have five months, instead of the current two months, to check that the object discovered in another member state is a national treasure, and three years instead of one year to initiate the return proceedings before the competent national court;
- placing the burden of proof on the possessor for compensation purposes;
- use of the Internal Market Information System¹ to improve administrative cooperation and information exchanges between national authorities.

Given the proposal to remove the annex, the reference to the Committee on the export and return of cultural goods which was responsible for its application has been deleted. However, the Council wished to keep a platform for the exchange of experience and best practices in this field and requested the Commission to establish an expert group for that purpose. Furthermore, the Council extended the period for transposition of the directive into national law to 18 months instead of the 12 months proposed by the Commission.

The Commission stressed that the setting up of an expert group interferes with its institutional prerogative. It also wishes to keep the original 12 months it had proposed for the transposition period.

The adoption of a general approach has paved the way for the incoming Greek Presidency to start informal negotiations with the European Parliament with the aim of adopting the proposal before the end of this Parliament's term. The competent EP Committee (CULT) vote on the proposal is scheduled for 21 January 2014.

Media freedom and pluralism

The Council adopted conclusions on **media freedom and pluralism in the digital environment** ([15774/13](#)), which essentially address three main issues: ensuring transparency of media ownership, the protection of journalists from undue (political and economic) influence and protection of journalistic sources, as well as the independence of audiovisual regulators.

¹ OJ L 316, 14.11.2012.

The conclusions underline that ensuring high levels of media freedom and pluralism constitutes one of the pillars of democratic systems - one of the core values on which the EU is founded - and it is also a principle enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. Moreover, it is also crucial for the EU to be credible when negotiating on these issues with acceding countries and in international fora.

The Commission welcomed the call from the Council to support Media Pluralism Monitor (independent monitoring tool to assess risk to media pluralism in the EU) and to enhance the protection of journalists. In response to the Council's invitation to strengthen the cooperation between national audiovisual regulators, the Commission announced that it will formalise the current working group in this field. Regarding the transparency of media ownership, the Commission stated it will assess this issue further. Finally, the Commission underlined that any work which it may do in this area will be within its competence.

Connected Citizens

Ministers had a debate on the subject "**Connected Citizens: changing behaviour of viewers in the converged media environment**", in the context of the revision of the Audiovisual Media Services directive expected next year and also in the light of the Commission's Green Paper "Preparing for a fully converged audiovisual world"([8934/13](#)).

In order to promote a more dynamic and free-flowing debate, the Presidency invited a guest speaker, **Mr. Dean Donaldson**, who is a well-known expert and researcher in the field of converged media. He is particularly known for his consumer-focused perspective.

Mr Donaldson considers that the distinction between linear and non-linear broadcasting doesn't have any sense anymore. The traditional patterns of media consumption have radically changed in the last few years. He argued – with the support of a very dynamic audiovisual presentation – that:

- 88% of viewers are looking simultaneously at another device when watching TV;
- 86% of TV channels are never watched, most people watch videos on their PCs;
- PC shipments have for the first time decreased by 13%;

- the speed of downloading is constantly increasing;
- TV, smart phones, tablets can already be interconnected

The current trend for audiovisual consumption can be resumed in the slogan: **“Whatever, whenever, wherever!”**

In general, ministers agreed that there are certain values that must be preserved regardless of the device, such as cultural diversity, media pluralism, consumer protection, in particular protection of children, promotion of European audiovisual works and fair competition between content providers.

While member states generally shared Mr Donaldson's view that having different sets of rules for linear and non-linear media services is obsolete, there was a diversity of opinions as to how to react to this in terms of regulation.

Some member states considered that the 2010 Audiovisual Media Services directive¹ - which sets strict rules for scheduled broadcasting, but fewer and less stringent rules for online services - is no longer adapted to the new digital environment, while other member states thought that it still could be the main regulatory framework perhaps with just a few modifications.

Some member states argued that Internet is a global market and therefore very difficult to control, further regulation should be "smart", perhaps focusing on advertising and protection of minors. In this context, a number of member states insisted on the importance of promoting media literacy.

Several member states underlined the importance for the EU to focus on high-quality content, on providing more diversified supply which gives viewers more choice, and on guaranteeing equal access to all types of devices.

Any other business

- *Towards a cultural strategy in the digital era*

The Council took due note of the information presented by the French delegation ([15806/1/13](#)), in the follow-up of the European Council on "Innovation and the Digital Agenda" of 24-25 October and taking into account the fact that the EU Work Plan for Culture 2011-2014 will expire next year.

¹ OJ L 95, 15.4.2010.

The main goal of the proposed strategy is to enable the European Union and its member states to develop actions and instruments adapted to the aim of promoting cultural diversity in the new digital environment. The strategy should allow for an effective integration of the cultural dimension in all policies of the Union, such as internal market, taxation, competition, state aid, trade, etc.

Several ministers welcomed the French proposal and showed willingness to examine it further. while other member states underlined the fact that most of these issues are of national competence.

Ministers in general agreed that the French paper contain many important issues. In particular they underlined the need to apply the same VAT rate on print and e-books which would encourage reading among citizens. Regarding copyright, ministers agreed that the European framework for copyright could be useful if it manages to strike a right balance between users' access to content, needs of economy and remuneration of creators.

The Commission considered that it is necessary to act across sectors to support cultural and creative sectors, in line with Europe 2020. In this regard, it recalled that the new Creative Europe programme already takes the digital shift into account.

– ***Work programme of the incoming Presidency***

The Council took note of information from the Greek delegation on the work programme of the future Presidency, which will include the following priorities:

- Directive on the return of cultural objects and on the decision on the European Capitals of Culture 2020-2033 (conclusion of negotiations);
- Cultural heritage, with a focus on innovative ways of financing and audience development;
- Cultural and creative sectors with a focus on entrepreneurship;
- Culture in the EU external relations, with a focus on intercultural and inter-religious dialogue;
- European cinema heritage in the digital era

SPORT

Health-enhancing physical activity

The Council adopted a recommendation on **promoting health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA)** ([15575/13](#)), aiming to develop a cross-sectoral approach involving policy areas such as sport, health, education, environment and transport. It sets out a monitoring framework with a minimal set of reporting requirements on general aspects of HEPA promotion that can be addressed by all member states. It will be implemented in close synergy and cooperation with the World Health Organization (WHO), thereby avoiding duplication of data collection.

Physical activity, as recommended by the WHO, is a prerequisite for a healthy lifestyle and a healthy workforce, thus contributing also to the achievement of key objectives defined in the Europe 2020 Strategy, notably with regard to growth, productivity and health.

However, EU-wide surveys, including the 2010 Eurobarometer on sport and physical activity, indicate that 60 % of EU citizens claim to seldom or never engage in physical exercise. Data available at national levels confirms the general trends, as well as revealing significant differences between member states.

Two member states considered that there was no sufficient cross-border component in this initiative, therefore they saw no need for EU action. Competence on these matters should remain with member states.

Contribution of sport to the EU economy

The Council adopted conclusions on **the contribution of sport to the EU economy** and in particular to addressing youth unemployment and social inclusion ([15757/13](#)). The conclusions underline that sport can play an important role in giving impetus to economic recovery and tackling the urgent problem of youth unemployment. They call therefore for a strategic investment in sport, making more efficient use of the possibilities provided by EU funding instruments, including EU structural funds, as well as the ERASMUS+ Programme.

The Presidency pointed out is growing evidence that sport is an important driver of growth and employment, while also ensuring social cohesion and well-being, thus making a distinct contribution to achieving the goals of the Europe 2020 strategy. Sport has the potential to create jobs and support local economic development, for instance through the construction and maintenance of sporting facilities, the organisation of sporting events, the market activities of the sporting goods and services industries and related activities in other sectors.

The Commission stressed that long-term unemployment may intensify marginalisation for young people, leading to poverty and a greater risk of social exclusion. Through participation in grassroots sport and voluntary activities in sport¹, young people can acquire specific personal and professional skills and competences which will improve their employability and contribute positively to their self-confidence and to the communities in which they live.

Several member states underlined that relatively small-scale investment of public money in local sports facilities, and/or support for community-based sports clubs can generate enormous benefits in terms of stronger, safer and more cohesive communities, and lower levels of vandalism and criminality.

Good governance in sport

Before opening the debate, Minister Barkauskas briefly informed the Council on the main conclusions of the lunch discussion with representatives of the sports movement:

- good governance in sport is a precondition for the autonomy and self-regulation of sports organisations;
- education and awareness raising of sport values for all age groups;
- good governance principles should be implemented and monitored not only by member states and the EU, but also by media and non-governmental organizations;
- importance of transparency in particular concerning wages, accounts, transfers and ownership.

¹ According to a 2011 Eurobarometer survey, almost a quarter of those engaged in volunteering (24%) are active in the field of sport.

Sport representatives were also of the view that the problems sport is being faced with (match fixing, doping, illegal betting), need joint and coordinated efforts by member states, the EU, sports organizations, professional and players associations at local and regional level.

The Commission recalled the main good governance principles: democracy, transparency, accountability, implementation of effective, sustainable and proportionate sports regulation fully representation of stakeholders. Promotion of good governance is also one of the priorities of the Sport part of Erasmus+ programme.

The debate was launched by the guest speaker, Ms Sylvia SCHENK, senior advisor for sport at Transparency International and currently arbitrator at the Court of Arbitration for Sports (CAS) in Lausanne.

Ms Schenk argued that there was gap between the image and the reality of sport: on the one hand it does promotes fair-play, discipline, solidarity but, on the other hand, is also battling with match fixing – which takes place at all levels and in different modalities-, doping, tax evasion, political (ab)use

According to the speaker, the main obstacles to good governance in sport are in particular, lack of resources, structural deficiencies, dependence on volunteers, dangerously close links with business and media, "in-breeding" culture.

However, Ms Schenk underlined that sport also inspires and motivates a lot of people, is a factor for integration and has a lot of impact on youth values, showing the importance of rules.

Ms Schenk concluded proposing a few recommendations that could contribute to better governance in sport, in particular:

- Implementing good governance is a long term project;
- Find the right balance between support and pressure, avoid overregulation;
- Participation of people from the outside in sport management to prevent some bad habits;
- Set the example from "above";
- Professional leagues should have compliance programmes as companies do.

In general, member states considered that the autonomy of sports organisations must be respected. However, a number of them declared that they should intervene if those organisations received public funding and didn't respect good governance principles.

Many member states also underlined that public authorities must be strict with anti-doping issues and match-fixing and insisted on the importance of education and prevention, in particular concerning minors.

Several member states recalled that national sport organizations are also part of international federations, so the EU can be an added value dealing with international issues.

Most member states agreed that close cooperation at all levels between governments, sporting organizations and the EU are an essential element for implementing good governance principles.

Any other business

– *World Conference on Anti-Doping*

The Presidency briefed ministers on the outcome of the recent meetings of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), which took place from 12 to 15 November, in Johannesburg, in the context of the ongoing World Anti-Doping Code review. The EU was a very important contributor to the new code, which was approved and will enter into force in 2015.

The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), set up in 1999, is a private law body whose mission is to promote, coordinate and monitor the fight against doping in sport in all its forms. Its key tasks include scientific research, education, the development of anti-doping capacities and monitoring of the World Anti-Doping Code.

– *100th anniversary of the Christmas truce of 1914*

The Council took note of the information from the French delegation ([15813/13](#)) on the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the football matches that took place in the trenches during the Christmas of 1914.

The UEFA is planning to hold a commemoration match involving national youth teams, to be held in Ypres stadium in December 2014. It hopes that several Heads of State or Government would be able to attend and the French delegation invited the Council of the European Union to lend its support to this initiative.

Several member states warmly welcomed the French initiative and expressed their willingness in participating in the commemorations.

– ***Work programme of the incoming Presidency***

The Council took note of information from the Greek delegation on the work programme of the future Presidency for next semester, which will include the following priorities:

- Adopt the new EU Work Plan for Sport (2014-2017);
- Promote health and gender equality in sport;
- Pursue the fight against doping;
- Encourage dual careers;
- Promote a better use of sport infrastructure at national and international level

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

EU action against the proliferation of small arms and light weapons

The Council agreed to support a global reporting mechanism on illicit small arms, light and other illicit conventional weapons and ammunition to reduce the risk of their illicit trade. The project is intended to create user-friendly global information management system on diverted or trafficked weapons ("iTrace") and to conduct in-field research into weapons and ammunition circulating in conflict-affected areas. € 2.32 million have been allocated from the EU budget.

Association of overseas countries and territories with the European Union

The Council revised the decision that is the basis for the association between the EU and overseas countries and territories (OCTs), which constitutes a partnership to support the OCTs' sustainable development as well as to promote the values and standards of the Union in the wider world.

COMMON SECURITY AND DEFENCE POLICY

Common Security and Defence Policy

The Council adopted conclusions on the Common Security and Defence Policy, with a view to the December European Council. The text is set out [here](#).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

EU-Azerbaijan visa facilitation agreement

The Council adopted a decision ([15553/13](#)) approving the signing of an agreement with Azerbaijan on the facilitation of the issuance of visas, subject to its formal conclusion at a later stage ([15554/13](#)).

The agreement will allow the issuance of visas for an intended stay in the EU territory of no more than 90 days per period of 180 days to the citizens of Azerbaijan.

In accordance with the EU provisions, Denmark, Ireland and the United Kingdom do not take part in the adoption of the decision and therefore are not bound to the application of the agreement.

TRADE POLICY

EU-Guatemala trade provisions - Provisional application

The Council decided to notify Guatemala of provisional application, as of 1 December, of part IV concerning trade matters of the EU-Central America¹ association agreement, following notification by Guatemala in June of the completion of its own internal procedures.

The Council authorised in June 2012, on behalf of the EU, the signature of the agreement and, pending its ratification, provisional application of part IV on trade matters. The agreement was signed in Tegucigalpa on 29 June 2012.

DEVELOPMENT

Contributions to the European Development Fund

The Council set out financial contributions to be paid by member states to finance the European Development Fund (EDF), including the annual amount of the contributions for 2014, the first instalment for 2014 and the ceiling for the annual amount of member states contributions for 2015.

TRANSPORT

Galileo - cooperation with Ukraine

The Council approved the conclusion of an agreement between the EU and Ukraine, signed in December 2005, aimed at encouraging cooperation on a civil global navigation satellite system (GNSS) (decision on conclusion: [6373/13](#); text of agreement: [13242/05](#)).

The sectors of cooperation are: radio spectrum, scientific research and training, industrial cooperation, trade and market development, standards, certification and regulatory measures, development of a global and regional GNSS ground augmentation systems, security, liability and cost recovery.

¹ Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama.

ENVIRONMENT

18th Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken on behalf of the EU at the Eighteenth Ordinary Meeting of the Contracting Parties of the Barcelona Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment and the Coastal Region of the Mediterranean, as regards the proposal for amending Annexes II and III to the Protocol concerning Special Protected Areas and Biological Diversity in the Mediterranean and as regards the proposal for adoption of a Regional Action Plan on Marine Litter.

The meeting will take place from 3 to 6 December 2013 in Istanbul (Turkey). For more information see the following [website](#).

APPOINTMENTS

Committee of the Regions

The Council appointed Mr Jānis VĪTOLIŅŠ (Latvia) as a member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([16227/13](#)).
