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3341st Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 21 October 2014

President **Sandro Gozi**
State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy

P R E S S

Main results of the Council

European Council preparations

The Council prepared the European Council meeting of 23-24 October and held an exchange of views via video link with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy. The European Council will focus in particular on climate and energy, with the objective of reaching agreement on a new climate and energy policy framework for 2030. "The tone of the discussions was very encouraging. There is a real political will to find a solution and an agreement is possible", said Sandro Gozi, State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy and President of the Council.

Follow-up to the June European Council

As a follow-up to the June European Council the Council took stock of the strategic agenda, focusing on the chapter on freedom, security and justice. Ministers discussed what could be done to improve or accelerate implementation. Particular attention was given to the issues of foreign fighters and EU passenger name records.

Strengthening interinstitutional annual and multiannual programming

The Council mandated the Presidency to contact the Commission regarding the 2015 Annual Work Programme and also to initiate contacts with both the Commission and the European Parliament with a view to establishing a consultation process for a new and efficient multiannual interinstitutional programming. "This is another priority of the Italian Presidency, which will have a very concrete effect. It will make it easier and quicker for the EU to act and react", State Secretary Sandro Gozi said at the press conference after the meeting.

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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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ITEMS DEBATED

Preparation for the October European Council

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 23-24 October, and held an exchange of views with European Council President Herman Van Rompuy, via video link.

The June European Council will focus on:

- Climate and energy; the objective is to reach an agreement on a new climate and energy policy framework for 2030;
- Economic issues; the European Council will discuss the economic situation in the EU on the basis of a presentation by the Commission and work undertaken in the Council;
- Other items; specific external relations issues, such as the Ebola crisis, may be addressed in the light of developments.

The European Council is also expected to adopt a European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region. Furthermore, and subject to a vote of consent by the European Parliament on the President, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and the other members of the Commission as a body, the European Council will adopt a decision appointing the European Commission.

An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council on 29 September ([12780/14](#)).

Follow-up to the June European Council

By way of a follow-up to the June European Council, the Council took stock of the strategic agenda focusing on the chapter on freedom, security and justice. Ministers discussed how better to implement European Council conclusions concerning this pillar of the strategic agenda, and gave their assessment of where we stand and what can be done to improve or accelerate implementation. Particular attention was given to the issues of foreign fighters and EU passenger name records.

The discussion was based on a Presidency note ([14208/14](#)) which sets out the state of play on the main orientations in the area of freedom, security and justice. The note aims to provide the Council with an overview of progress achieved on relevant policies, such as migration, asylum, smart borders, the European Public Prosecutor's Office, data protection, EU passenger name record data and terrorism, including foreign fighters.

The implementation discussion is a new exercise launched by the Presidency, which at the July General Affairs Council proposed to improve the follow-up to European Council orientations, and to focus it on the priorities set out in the strategic agenda adopted in June. The idea is to complement the comprehensive implementation reports that are published every six months, and which cover all sectors, by issuing monthly reports that focus on a specific pillar of the strategic agenda.

Application of Article 10 of Protocol 36 to the Treaties

The Council was briefed on the state of play as regards preparations for the end of the post-Lisbon transition period for ex-third pillar measures on 30 November this year.

The Presidency noted that some good progress has been made and concluded that work on these issues would continue in the run-up to the deadline of 1 December 2014. The United Kingdom also presented a declaration for the minutes of the meeting on its intentions regarding the Prüm Decisions and the Probation Framework Decision.

Protocol 36 of the Treaty of Lisbon enables the United Kingdom to decide whether it should continue to be bound by approximately 130 police and criminal justice measures, or if it should exercise its right to opt out of them all.

However, the same protocol also stipulates that the UK may request to re-join such acts. The United Kingdom has already informally indicated its intention to seek to opt back into a number of instruments. Final discussions on this issue are currently being held between the Commission and the United Kingdom, as well as within the Council.

The Committee of the Regions

The Council held a discussion on the composition of the Committee of the Regions and decided to return to that issue at one of its subsequent meetings.

Noting the concerns expressed, the Presidency indicated that consultations would continue in order to find a solution to ensure the proper functioning of the EU institutions.

According to the EU treaties, the number of members of the Committee of Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee cannot exceed 350. Nevertheless, the accession of Croatia to the EU increased the number of members to 353. This was a temporary measure for the period running from the date of accession until the end of the term of office. The current term of office of the Committee of the Regions comes to an end on 25 January 2015.

Strengthening interinstitutional annual and multiannual planning

The Council mandated the Presidency to contact the Commission on the 2015 Annual Work Programme and also to initiate contacts with both the Commission and the European Parliament with a view to establishing a consultation process for a new and efficient multiannual interinstitutional programming.

The Presidency, in its presentation, noted that the basic elements were already in place; the Strategic Agenda adopted by the European Council in June and Commission President-elect Juncker's ten points should be the common starting point for all three institutions.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Cohesion policy funds - support for renewable energy generation

The Council adopted conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' special report entitled "Cohesion policy funds support for renewable energy generation - has it achieved good results?", as set out in [13856/14](#).

Governance of macro-regional strategies

The Council adopted conclusions on the governance of macro-regional strategies, as set out in [13374/14](#).

A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework to address common challenges in a given geographical area in which both member states and third countries are located. Its objective is to strengthen cooperation in order to achieve economic, social and territorial cohesion.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Capital requirements directive: Technical standards

The Council decided not to object to the adoption by the Commission of two regulations supplementing the so-called capital requirements directive ("CRD4") 2013/36/EU with regard to:

- Information to be provided when exercising the right of establishment and the freedom to provide services.
- Identification of the geographical location of the relevant credit exposures for calculating institution-specific countercyclical capital buffer rates.

The regulations are delegated acts pursuant to Article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. They can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Automated data exchange (VRD) with Cyprus

The Council adopted a decision on the launch of automated data exchange with regard to Vehicle Registration Data (VRD) in Cyprus ([13438/14](#)). The evaluation procedure required by Decision 2008/616/JHA (OJ L 210, 6.8.2008) concluded that the general provisions on data protection are fully implemented by the Republic of Cyprus and this country is therefore entitled to receive and supply personal data as from the date of the entry into force of this decision.

Automated data exchange (VRD) with Estonia

The Council adopted a decision on the launch of automated data exchange with regard to Vehicle Registration Data (VRD) in Estonia ([13730/14](#)). The evaluation procedure required by Decision 2008/616/JHA (OJ L 210, 6.8.2008) concluded that the general provisions on data protection are fully implemented by Estonia and this country is therefore entitled to receive and supply personal data as from the date of the entry into force of this decision.

TRADE POLICY

WTO - Japan - Railway procurement

The Council decided to withdraw its objections to the delisting of three Japanese railway companies from Japan's commitments under the WTO agreement on government procurement.

The Council's decision establishes the EU's position within the WTO's committee on government procurement. It will allow the committee to acknowledge the withdrawal of the last outstanding reservation.

The three companies are East Japan Railway Company, Central Japan Railway Company and West Japan Railway Company.

COMPETITION

EU-Switzerland cooperation agreement on competition laws

The Council approved the conclusion of a cooperation agreement with Switzerland on competition law.

The purpose of the agreement ([12513/12](#)) is to contribute to the effective enforcement of the competition laws of each Party through cooperation and coordination, including the exchange of information, and to avoid or lessen the possibility of conflicts between the Parties in all matters concerning the application of the competition laws.

The agreement was signed in Brussels on 17 May 2013. The Council authorised the signing of the agreement on 22 April 2013 and the European Parliament consented to its conclusion on 5 February 2014.

EMPLOYMENT

Mobilisation of the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund for Belgium and France

The Council adopted two decisions mobilising a total of EUR 13.6 million under the European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF), providing support for workers made redundant in Belgium and France.

An amount of EUR 12.7 million is being deployed following the dismissal of 6 120 workers at Peugeot Citroën Automobile. The redundancies are the result of major structural changes in world trade patterns due to globalisation. A further EUR 911 934 is being mobilised following the dismissal of 939 workers by Carsid, a Belgium enterprise operating in the field of continuously-cast crude steel production, following major structural changes in world trade patterns which have led to a substantial loss of the EU market share in world markets.

The EGF helps workers to find new jobs and develop new skills when they have lost their jobs as a result of changing global trade patterns, e.g. when a large company shuts down or a factory is moved outside the EU, or as a result of the global financial and economic crisis. The EGF's help consists of co-financing measures such as job-search assistance, careers advice, tailor-made training and re-training, mentoring and the promotion of entrepreneurship. It also provides one-off, time-limited individual support, such as job-search allowances, mobility allowances and allowances for participating in lifelong learning and training activities.

CULTURE

European Capitals of Culture 2020-2033¹

The Council confirmed that Latvia, Finland and Germany can recommend one expert each to the selection and monitoring panel of the European Capital of Culture action for the period 2015-2018. Those countries were selected through a draw that took place at the meeting of the Permanent Representatives Committee (Part 1) on 10 October 2014, in accordance with the Council's implementing decision on the practical and procedural arrangements for the appointment by the Council of three experts to the selection panel².

Following due scrutiny, the Council will appoint the experts before the end of 2014. The panel will have a total of ten experts; the remaining seven will be appointed by other EU institutions and bodies.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 21 October 2014, the Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application No 28/c/01/14 ([13897/14](#))

¹ *OJ L 132, 3.5.2014.*

² *OJ L 175, 14.6.2014*