Eurogroup

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Work programme for the Eurogroup for the first half of 2018

I. Policy priorities

As stipulated in the Eurogroup working methods, a work programme for the Eurogroup for the following six months has been drawn up. The work programme should facilitate a longer working horizon and help to ensure an optimal preparation of issues for discussion. In developing the work programme of the Eurogroup, the Council Recommendations on the economic policies of the euro area have been duly taken into account.

The euro area is enjoying broad-based economic growth, although crisis legacies persist in some areas. Growth in employment and labour income are feeding through to consumption. Investment in both equipment and construction are on an upward trajectory, underpinned by business confidence and financing conditions. Nonetheless, challenges persist. More efforts are needed to fully address macroeconomic imbalances in the euro area and boost potential growth. The still high levels of public debt in some euro area Member States remain a source of concern. Core inflation remains subdued amidst sluggish wage growth and unemployment, although on a declining path across the euro area, is still particularly high in some Member States. Moreover, some euro area Member States still face high levels of non-performing loans (NPLs) in their banking sectors.

In this context, the Eurogroup will maintain its attention on structural policies to foster longer-term growth and employment. In this time of recovery, one of the main objectives of the economic policies in the euro area should be the improvement of the resilience of the economy. In this regard, the Eurogroup will continue its regular exchange of best practices, including a focus on the three dimensions of resilience (vulnerability to shocks, shock absorption capacity, speed of recovery).

The euro area's public finances continue to improve but still face a variety of fiscal policy challenges. A number of Member States needs to continue their structural efforts in order to ensure the sustainability of public finances and to reduce high debt ratios, while some others have outperformed their Medium-Term Objective (MTO). The Eurogroup will continue to closely monitor Member States’ efforts to ensure sound fiscal policies, as well as an appropriate aggregate fiscal stance of the euro area. Moreover, the implementation of excessive deficit procedure (EDP) recommendations to euro area Member States will continue to be closely monitored.

In both the structural and fiscal policies fields the Eurogroup’s work will give strong prominence to the implementation aspects, which are crucial to move ahead with EMU deepening.

The Eurogroup will continue to follow closely the progress of the adjustment programme in Greece and will be involved in post-programme surveillance in Cyprus, Ireland, Portugal and Spain.

In the Banking Union context, the Eurogroup remains fully committed to monitoring issues relevant for financial stability and preparing international meetings, as appropriate. The regular hearing of the Chair of the Single Supervisory Board and the reporting by the Chair of the Single Resolution Board provide an excellent basis for discussion.

Finally, the deepening of the Economic and Monetary Union remains an important topic for euro area finance ministers. Following up on the Eurogroup's discussions in autumn 2017, Ministers are expected to continue working on this topic, in the appropriate format, including on the role of the ESM, on completing the Banking Union and on the EMU's fiscal framework.

The Eurogroup work programme should be seen as indicative. Sufficient flexibility will be needed to react to future developments.

I. Detailed work programme

22 January 2018

- 2018 euro area recommendations (EA CSRs)
- (poss.) EMU – follow-up to the December Euro Summit
- IMF Article IV consultation with the euro area
- (poss.) Greece – state of play
- (poss.) Portugal – Post Programme Surveillance – 7th review

19 February 2018

- (poss.) EMU – follow-up to the December Euro Summit
- (poss.) Thematic discussion on growth and jobs – Investment in human capital – follow-up
- (poss.) Ireland – Post Programme Surveillance – 8th review

12 March 2018

- (poss.) Greece – state of play
- Annual ex-ante reporting on debt issuance plans
- (poss.) Preparation of international meetings: inflation and exchange rate developments

27 April 2018

- Thematic discussion on growth and jobs – wage dynamics

- (poss.) Follow-up to the March European Council – Deepening EMU
- Banking Union – euro area aspects
  - Seventh hearing of the Chair of the ECB Supervisory Board, including on the Annual Report
  - Reporting on the activities of the Single Resolution Board

24 May 2018

- Economic situation in the euro area – Commission spring forecast
- Thematic discussions on growth and jobs – Spending reviews – follow-up
- (poss.) Greece – state of play
- (poss.) Cyprus – Post Programme Surveillance – 4th review
- (poss.) preparation June European Council - Deepening EMU

21 June 2018

- (poss.) Implications of the spring forecast for EDPs/EIPs for euro area countries
- (poss.) Stability and Growth Pact implementation for euro area countries
- Thematic discussions on growth and jobs:
  - Allocative efficiency in labour markets
  - Pension sustainability – stocktaking
- (poss.) IMF Article IV review of the euro area

- (poss.) IMF FSAP – euro area aspects
- (poss.) Greece – state of play
- (poss.) Spain - Post Programme Surveillance – 9th review
- (poss.) G7 debrief from Ministerial meeting
- Eurogroup work programme for II/2018