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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3578th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 20 November 2017

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P R E S S

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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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ITEMS DEBATED

December European Council

The Council prepared for the forthcoming European Council meeting on 14 December 2017 by discussing an [annotated draft agenda](#) drawn up by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the Estonian presidency and the Commission.

The December European Council is expected to focus on the following topics:

- **Defence:** it will welcome the expected launch of permanent structured cooperation and review progress in other fields, in particular on EU-NATO cooperation.
- **Social issues, education and culture:** it will adopt conclusions on social issues and on education and culture as a follow-up to the Gothenburg Social Summit of 17 November.

In the light of events, the European Council may address specific foreign policy issues. Under the Leaders' Agenda, it will hold a thematic debate on the way forward on the external and internal dimension of migration policy, but it is not expected to adopt conclusions on this.

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

[14-15 December European Council](#)

[Leaders' Agenda](#)

[Gothenburg social summit](#)

European Council follow-up

The Council took stock of the implementation of earlier European Council conclusions, with a particular focus on developments since October.

Commission work programme for 2018

In the context of the annual legislative programming exercise, ministers exchanged views on the [Commission's work programme for 2018](#), which was first presented by the Commission. The discussion took place in public session.

As the last step in the process, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission will agree on a joint declaration on legislative priorities for 2018 and the first months of 2019 until the end of the legislative term. After the discussion on the Commission work programme, the presidency briefed ministers on the way forward on the joint declaration. The joint declaration is expected to be approved by the General Affairs Council on 12 December and signed by the presidents of the three institutions on the sidelines of the December European Council.

[Annual legislative programming process - timeline and steps](#)

Interinstitutional agreement – implementation

The Council noted the state of play on the implementation of the [interinstitutional agreement on better law-making](#).

The agreement was signed by the presidents of the Council, the Parliament and the Commission in April 2016. It provides for closer co-operation between the institutions, in particular on legislative programming. It also covers areas such as impact assessments and public consultations, delegated and implementing acts, transparency, and simplification and implementation of EU law.

European Semester 2018 – roadmap

In preparation for the European Semester 2018, the Estonian presidency, together with the incoming Bulgarian presidency, presented the [2018 European Semester roadmap](#).

The roadmap sets out how work will be taken forward in the remainder of 2017 and the first half of 2018. The objective of the roadmap is to ensure that all relevant Council configurations work in a coordinated manner, with the General Affairs Council overseeing the process.

The European Semester is a cycle of economic and fiscal policy coordination within the EU. It helps the member states to coordinate their economic, employment and fiscal policies better and to align them with the objectives and rules agreed at EU level.

[European Semester](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

Building strong cybersecurity for the EU

The Council adopted [conclusions on the joint communication to the European Parliament and the Council: Resilience, deterrence and defence: building strong cybersecurity for the EU](#). The conclusions call for the strengthening of European cybersecurity and the enhancement of cyber resilience across the EU, in line with the instructions from the European Council in October 2017.

[EU to beef up cybersecurity \(press release\)](#)

[Reform of cyber security in Europe](#)

FOREIGN AFFAIRS - DEVELOPMENT

Digital for development

The Council adopted conclusions reaffirming the commitment of the EU and Member States to support digital technologies and services in developing countries as powerful enablers of inclusive growth and sustainable development. These tools can contribute to achieving progress in areas such as gender equality, good governance and the rule of law, migration, health, education, agriculture, energy and climate change, and sustainable job creation.

In May 2017, the Commission presented its "Digital4Development" (D4D) initiative which provides a framework for mainstreaming digitisation in EU development policy, in particular the policy with its African partners. The Council called on the Commission to launch a series of concrete actions during the 2017-2020 period and to build on successful pilot projects in the fields of digital infrastructure, e-governance, promotion of digital economy and opportunities for start-ups and micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

Financial contributions to the EDF for 2018

The Council adopted a decision establishing the financial contributions to be paid by member states to finance the European development fund (EDF):

- the ceiling of the contribution for 2019 is set at EUR 4,6 billion for the Commission and EUR 300 million for the European investment bank (EIB)
- the annual amount of contributions for 2018 is set at EUR 4,55 billion for the Commission and EUR 250 million for the EIB
- the amount of the first instalment of the contribution for 2018, to be paid by member states by 21 January 2017, is set at EUR 2,05 billion for the Commission and EUR 150 million for the EIB.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Securitisation

The Council adopted rules aimed at facilitating the **development of a securitisation market** in Europe.

The new rules are part of the EU's plan to develop a fully functioning capital markets union **by the end of 2019**. Developing a securitisation market will help create new investment possibilities and provide an additional source of finance, particularly for SMEs and start-ups.

The two regulations were adopted at a meeting of the General Affairs Council, without discussion.

The European Parliament gave its approval on 26 October 2017. This follows an agreement reached by the presidency and the Parliament on 30 May 2017.

[2017 regulation on securitisation and on criteria for simple, transparent and standardised products](#)

[2017 regulation on capital requirements for positions in securitisation](#)

[Capital markets union: agreement reached on securitisation \(press release, 30/05/2017\)](#)

Guidelines for export credits

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation amending regulation 1233/2011 on the application of guidelines for officially supported export credits ([13816/17](#) + [12585/17](#) + [12585/17 ADD 1](#)).

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

Bank capital requirements

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation supplementing regulation 575/2013 on bank capital requirements with regard to regulatory technical standards for the materiality threshold for credit obligations past due ([13631/17](#) + [13528/17](#)).

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

TRADE POLICY

Generalised tariff preferences - Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Paraguay, Swaziland

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation amending annexes II, III and IV to regulation 978/2012 on the EU's scheme of generalised tariff preferences as concerns beneficiary countries ([12660/17](#)).

The changes concern Equatorial Guinea, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Paraguay and Swaziland.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA

Trade preferences in agricultural products for Norway

The Council adopted a decision to authorise the conclusion of an agreement in the form of an exchange of letters between the EU and Norway concerning additional trade preferences in agricultural products ([13471/17](#)).

Negotiations on bilateral trade in agricultural products between the EU and Norway were undertaken with a view to furthering the progressive liberalisation of agricultural trade on a preferential, reciprocal and mutually beneficial basis, in the framework of Article 19 of the European Economic Area. They concluded on 5 April 2017.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Entry-exit system

On 20 November 2017 the Council adopted the regulation for an entry-exit system and the regulation amending the Schengen border code in relation to the entry-exit system. This system will register entry, exit and refusal of entry information relating to third country nationals crossing the external borders of the Schengen area.

[Entry-exit system: final adoption by the Council \(press release\)](#)

[Regulation establishing an Entry/Exit System \(EES\)](#)

[Regulation amending the Schengen Borders Code as regards the Entry/Exit System \(EES\)](#)

AGRICULTURE

Pesticides - maximum residue levels

Update of list of authorised food additives

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annex II to regulation 1333/2008 on food additives ([13649/17](#) + [13649/17 ADD 1](#)).

The new regulation includes in the list of food additives approved for use in food and their conditions of use in the EU: phosphoric acid – phosphates – di – tri – and polyphosphates (E 338-452) in frozen vertical meat spits.

Pesticides - maximum residue levels

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of two Commission regulations amending annexes II and III to regulation (EC) 396/2005 as regards the maximum residue levels of pesticides ('MRLs') for:

- mercury compounds in or on certain products ([13403/17](#) + [13403/17 ADD 1](#) and [13403/17 ADD 2](#)), and

- 2-phenylphenol, bensulfuron-methyl, dimethachlor and lufenuron in or on certain products ([13637/17](#) + [13637/17 ADD 1](#) and [13637/17 ADD 2](#)).

Regulation 396/2005 establishes the MRLs permitted in products of animal or vegetable origin intended for human or animal consumption. These MRLs include, on the one hand, levels which are specific to particular foodstuffs intended for human or animal consumption and, on the other, a general limit which applies where no specific level has been set. MRL applications are communicated to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which issues a scientific opinion on each intended new MRL. Based on EFSA's opinion, the Commission proposes a regulation to establish a new MRL or to amend or remove an existing MRL and modify the annexes to regulation 396/2005 accordingly.

HEALTH

European Medicines Agency

The Council confirmed that it will not raise objections on a Commission delegated regulation (EU) .../... of 18.10.2017 amending regulation 658/2014 as regards the adjustment to the inflation rate of the fees payable to the European Medicines Agency for pharmacovigilance activities regarding medicinal products for human use ([13457/17](#)).
