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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3595th Council meeting

Education, Youth, Culture and Sport

Education issues

Brussels, 15 February 2018

President **Krasimir Valchev**
Minister for Education and Science of Bulgaria

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¹ • 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

Erasmus+ programme

The Council held a constructive debate on the mid-term evaluation of the Erasmus+ programme and future orientations for post-2020, on the basis of a presidency steering note ([5388/18](#)).

During the debate, ministers underlined that Erasmus+ is one of the most successful Union programmes and an added value for Europe. Over the last 30 years more than 9 million young Europeans have had the chance to study, train, teach or volunteer in another country.

Erasmus+ should be made more inclusive and accessible, bringing in secondary school pupils, students in vocational education and training, and young people from vulnerable social groups or remote regions. For this to happen, the programme will require adequate funding.

Erasmus+ should promote mobility and innovation. It should create synergies and be complementary with other Union instruments such the European Social Fund. Administrative procedures should be simplified and harmonised.

At the European Council meeting last December, European leaders called on member states, the Council and the Commission "to step up mobility and exchanges, including through a substantially strengthened, inclusive and extended Erasmus+ programme".

- First findings from the mid-term evaluation

Following first indications, the programme is well on track to meet its target of supporting 4 million people over the 2014-2020 period in Europe and beyond.

Compared to its predecessors, Erasmus+ also appears to be more coherent because of its wide lifelong learning scope and its complementarity for instance with the European Social Fund and Horizon 2020.

The evaluation confirms that the Erasmus+ budget is consistently absorbed in full, and that the available funds are insufficient to cover the strong demand.

More efforts could be made to strengthen the role of Erasmus+ as an instrument for stimulating innovation in the fields of education, training and youth. Although local innovation is achieved by the programme, this innovation does not always have an all-round impact.

As for the international dimension, the general finding is that the projects funded by previous programmes have contributed to policy and institutional reforms and internationalisation in partner countries, through improved quality assurance, standardisation of higher education and the rapid spread of EU-supported Bologna principles.

Education aspects of December 2017 European Council conclusions

The Council held a policy debate on how to take forward the Education aspects of the December European Council conclusions and step up efforts in education and culture, guided by a presidency note ([5391/18](#)).

Ministers pointed out that the importance of education and culture was recognised at the highest political level last year, when chosen as the first theme on the so-called 'Leaders' agenda'.

They agreed that student mobility and participation in educational and cultural activities should be promoted; language-learning and partnerships between universities should be enhanced.

Ministers noted that although education is the responsibility of member states, cooperation at EU level such as exchanging best practices has proven very valuable.

They pointed out that skills challenges linked to digitalisation should be addressed, as should the need for an approach to education and training that is inclusive, lifelong learning-based and innovation-driven.

In December 2017, European leaders expressed their determination and political will to move the education agenda in Europe forward. They called on member states, the Council and the Commission to take work forward on a number of fronts, including: stepping up mobility and exchanges; encouraging the emergence by 2024 of some twenty 'European universities'; encouraging more language-learning; and promoting student mobility and involvement in educational and cultural activities.

There is a broad agreement that education is crucial for Europe and Europeans: it develops a European knowledge economy and builds inclusive, skilled and cohesive societies based on common values and resilience and equipped with the skills for successful personal and professional development.

Europe's rich cultural diversity is reflected in its education and training systems – a strength that needs to be nurtured in a holistic manner. Education and training is also a key driver for innovation, competitiveness and resilience in the global economy in times of rapid technological progress.

Any other business

– *Education summit*

The Commission informed the Council about the education summit held in Brussels on 25 January 2018.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

AGRICULTURE

Negotiations between the EU and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations between the European Union and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on renewing the protocol to their fisheries partnership agreement. The Council also adopted negotiating directives for the Commission.

The renewal of the protocol will be in line with regulation (EU) No 1380/2013 on the Common Fisheries Policy and with the Council conclusions of 19 March 2012 on the Commission communication of 13 July 2011 on the external dimension of the Common Fisheries Policy.

In opening negotiations with the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire, the EU aims to promote sustainable and responsible fishing and secure benefits for the EU and Côte d'Ivoire alike.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Decision on EUSR for Human Rights

In February 2017 the Council adopted a decision to extend the mandate of the EU Special Representative (EUSR) for Human Rights, Stavros Lambrinidis, until 28 February 2019.

The Council also included a new financial framework for the period from 1 March 2018 to 28 February 2019, which has been added to the Council decision.

[EU Special Representatives](#)

EU-New Zealand relations

The Council adopted the position to be taken by the EU within the joint committee established under the partnership agreement on relations and cooperation between the EU and New Zealand on adopting decisions on the committee's rules of procedure and adopting the terms of reference for subcommittees and working groups.

The partnership agreement was signed in Brussels on 5 October 2016 and has been applied provisionally since 12 January 2017.

[EU Delegation to New Zealand](#)

EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council

The Council approved the 16th meeting of the EU-Kazakhstan Cooperation Council, which will take place in Brussels on 26 February 2018.

[EU-Kazakhstan relations \(EEAS webpage\)](#)

EU Capacity Building Mission in Somalia

The Council adopted a decision amending decision 2012/389/CFSP on the European Union Capacity Building Mission in Somalia (EUCAP Somalia) and providing for a financial reference amount for the period from 1 March 2018 to 31 December 2018.

EUCAP Somalia seeks to help that country boost its maritime security capacity, so that it can enforce maritime law more effectively.

This decision will enter into force on the date of its adoption.

[EUCAP Somalia \(EEAS\)](#)

EU-Zimbabwe relations

The Council extended the EU restrictive measures against Zimbabwe until 20 February 2019. This decision follows the annual review of those measures. The Council considered that, in light of the number and significance of the uncertainties around the current transition following the change in leadership in December 2017, the restrictive measures should remain in place until the situation becomes clearer.

Restrictive measures include a ban on arms exports and exports of goods that might be used for internal repression; an asset freeze and a travel ban on the presidential couple Robert and Grace Mugabe; and an asset freeze on one entity, the "Zimbabwe defence industry". The suspension of restrictive measures on five individuals, agreed in 2016, remains in place.

[Council conclusions on Zimbabwe \(22 January 2018\)](#)

[EU delegation to the Republic of Zimbabwe](#)

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Schengen evaluation - France

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2016 evaluation of France on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of return ([6231/18](#)).

Schengen evaluation - Denmark

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2017 evaluation of Denmark on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of return ([6232/18](#)).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Central Bank of Cyprus**

The Council approved PricewaterhouseCoopers Limited as external auditors of the Central Bank of Cyprus for the period 2018 to 2022 ([5222/18](#) + [5223/18](#)).

BUDGETS**Recommendations on decentralised agencies' resources**

The Council endorsed the recommendations of the inter-institutional working group on decentralised agencies' resources ([13795/17](#)).

The working group was set up in the framework of the negotiations on the 2014 budget. Its mandate was to define a clear development path for 'decentralised' agencies to progressively reduce their staffing levels by 5% over five years.

The recommendations of the working group cover six topics:

1. lessons learned from the approach to achieving the 5% staff reduction target
2. treatment of new tasks (financial statement)
3. regular evaluation of agencies
4. sharing of services
5. evaluation of agencies with multiple locations
6. model for fee-financed agencies

The recommendations are addressed to the European Parliament, the Council, the Commission and the agencies.

ENERGY

Ecolabel for indoor cleaning services

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission decision establishing ecolabel criteria for indoor cleaning services ([15507/17](#) + [15507/17 ADD1](#)).

Cleaning services may be awarded the EU ecolabel if, for example, they use cleaning products with a low environmental impact or energy-efficient vacuum cleaners, or if they sort solid waste.

This Commission decision is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Marrakesh Treaty on access to published works for blind and visually impaired people

The Council adopted a [decision authorising the conclusion of the Marrakesh Treaty](#) to facilitate access to published works for people who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled.

The decision enables the EU to ratify the treaty as from next summer.

The Marrakesh Treaty establishes a set of international rules to ensure that there are limitations on or exceptions to copyright rules for the benefit of people who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled.

It also enables cross-border exchanges of copies of published works that have been produced in an accessible format.

People who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled continue to face many barriers in accessing books and other print material. The need for more works and other protected subject matter to be available in accessible formats such as braille, audiobooks and large print has been recognised at international level.

On 13 September 2017 the Council adopted implementing legislation to introduce into EU law the new mandatory exception to copyright rules, in line with the Marrakesh Treaty. This will allow those people and organisations benefiting from the exception to make copies of works in accessible formats, and to disseminate them across the EU and in third countries which are party to the Treaty.

[The Marrakesh Treaty](#), which forms part of the body of copyright treaties administered by World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO), entered into force on 30 September 2016. It has a cultural, humanitarian and social development dimension.

ENVIRONMENT

Environmental risk assessment of genetically modified organisms

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission directive amending directive 2001/18/EC as regards the environmental risk assessment of genetically modified organisms ([15478/17](#) and [Annex](#)).

This directive incorporates new guidance issued by the European Food Safety Authority and further specifies the information required in notifications concerning releases of genetically modified organisms.

It is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

Ecolabel for indoor and outdoor paints and varnishes

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission decision on the period of validity of the ecological criteria for the award of the EU ecolabel for indoor and outdoor paints and varnishes ([15550/17](#)).

The current ecological criteria expire on 28 May 2018. As they remain relevant and appropriate, their validity will be extended until 31 December 2022.

This Commission decision is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

SPACE POLICY**UNISPACE +50**

The Council endorsed EU recommendations on space exploration and innovation ahead of the United Nations UNISPACE +50 conference, scheduled for 20-21 June 2018.

It also endorsed preparations on the future roles of the committee on the peaceful uses of outer space (COPUOS) and the UN office for outer space affairs (UNOOSA), and on a proposal for the EU to become a permanent observer to COPUOS.

[UNISPACE +50](#) will mark the 50th anniversary of the first UN space conference: It is expected to provide recommendations on a range of issues on the international space agenda and to renew the mandates of COPUOS and UNOOSA.

As a part of preparations, [COPUOS has agreed on seven thematic priorities](#).

COMPANY LAW**International accounting standards**

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 1126/2008 adopting international accounting standards, in accordance with regulation 1606/2002, as regards International Financial Reporting Standard (IFRS) 9 ([15707/17](#) and [15707/17 ADD1](#)).

The amendment aims to bring the EU regulation into line with recent changes to IFRS 9. These changes are intended to clarify the classification of particular prepayable financial assets when applying IFRS 9.

The Commission regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.