

9565/19

(OR. en)

PRESSE 26
PR CO 26

OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3692nd Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 21 May 2019

President **George Ciamba**
Minister Delegate for European Affairs of Romania

P R E S S

CONTENTS¹

ITEMS DEBATED

Multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027	3
June European Council	3
Any other business	3

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

– Composition of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee	4
– Appointments to the Court of Auditors	4

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

– EU macro-regional strategies	5
--------------------------------------	---

FISHERIES

– Council adopts regulation amending certain provisions for fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area	10
---	----

ENVIRONMENT

– Ban on single-use plastics	10
– Reporting obligations in environmental legislation	11

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

– Regulation on fertilisers	11
-----------------------------------	----

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

– Revision of directive on carcinogens or mutagens at work (third batch)	12
--	----

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.

ITEMS DEBATED**Multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027**

The Council discussed the external action aspects of the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027. Ministers focused on the proposals from the European Commission on the integration of the European Development Fund into the EU budget and the ring-fencing of funds for the European Neighbourhood in the next MFF.

The discussions will feed into preparations by the presidency for a revised draft negotiating box ahead of the June European Council.

June European Council

The Council examined the annotated draft agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 20-21 June. The annotated draft agenda will serve as the basis for draft conclusions, to be prepared in the run-up to the meeting.

At their meeting in June, EU leaders will take the relevant decisions on appointments for the next institutional cycle and adopt the 2019-2024 Strategic Agenda for the Union. They will also come back to the issue of the 2021-2027 Multiannual Financial Framework.

The European Council will also discuss climate change ahead of the United Nations Secretary General's Climate Action Summit on 23 September 2019. In the context of the European Semester, the European Council will also discuss the country-specific recommendations.

In addition, the leaders will take note of a report on disinformation and elections prepared by the presidency in cooperation with the Commission and the High Representative.

Any other business

Under any other business, the presidency informed delegations about the conference on the European Semester that took place in Bucharest on 4 April 2019.

The Commission presented its communication on further strengthening of the rule of law within the Union. With this communication, the Commission launched a reflection process on the rule of law in the EU and set out possible avenues for future action.

The presidency also informed the Council about the ministerial meeting on European cultural heritage that took place in Paris on 3 May 2019.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**GENERAL AFFAIRS****Composition of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee**

The Council adopted two decisions concerning the composition of the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee. The decisions adapt the composition of these EU advisory bodies after the UK's withdrawal, which will result in 24 vacant seats in each committee.

The new rules allocate one additional seat to Estonia, Cyprus and Luxembourg in both committees, as these member states lost a seat after the last decisions on the composition of the Committees due to the accession of Croatia. The rest of the vacated seats will be kept in reserve for possible future enlargements.

Overall, the size of both committees will be reduced from 350 to 329 members after the UK's departure.

Read the [press release](#)

Appointments to the Court of Auditors

The Council appointed two new members to the European Court of Auditors:

- Mr Viorel Ștefan for the period from 1 July 2019 to 30 June 2025
- Ms Ivana Maletić for the period from 15 July 2019 to 14 July 2025

Mr Ștefan, proposed by the government of Romania, will replace Mr George Pufan whose term of office expires on 30 June 2019. Ms Maletić, proposed by the government of the Republic of Croatia, will replace Mr Neven Mates whose term of office expires on 14 July 2019.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

EU macro-regional strategies

The Council adopted the following conclusions on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies:

“THE COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

(1) RECALLS

- a) its conclusions for setting up the four current macro-regional strategies of the Union, namely the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) of 2009, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) of 2011, the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (EUSAIR) of 2014 and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) of 2015¹, as well as its conclusions of 22 October 2013 on the added value of macro-regional strategies², and of 21 October 2014 on the governance of the macro-regional strategies³;
- b) the Commission’s intention to draft a single report every two years, starting end 2016, describing the progress made towards the implementation of all macro-regional strategies;
- c) the Council conclusions of 25 April 2017 on the first Commission report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies of 16 December 2016⁴;

- (2) WELCOMES the submission by the Commission of the second report on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies from 29 January 2019;

¹ Council conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (doc. 13744/09), Council conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (doc. 8388/11 + ADD 1 REV 1), Council conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region (doc. 13503/14) and Council conclusions on the European Union Strategy for the Alpine Region (doc. 14613/15).

² Doc. 14926/13 + ADD 1

³ Doc. 16207/14

⁴ Doc. 8461/17

- (3) RECOGNIZES the role of macro-regions in fostering socio-economic and territorial cohesion and regional cooperation including through people-to-people contacts;
- (4) ACKNOWLEDGES that the report is based on examples which illustrate what has been achieved and focuses on concrete results, challenges and the way forward;
- (5) ACKNOWLEDGES the achievements and progress made in the last two years, highlighted by the report, taking into account the different stages of maturity of each strategy and different availability of deliverables and data, in terms of:
 - a) contributing to a better awareness of participating countries and regions on the interest of focusing on functional areas when addressing common challenges;
 - b) implementing concrete projects aiming at improving the quality of life;
 - c) endeavouring to strengthen relations between the participating countries and between the EU and non-EU countries, in a time when there is a growing need for deepening trust between countries and people;
 - d) setting up tools for monitoring the macro-regional strategies as requested by the Council;
- (6) OBSERVES the need for:
 - a) rekindling the political momentum in support of macro-regional strategies including through high-level meetings and multi-level and multi-stakeholders governance and involvement;
 - b) increasing involvement, commitment and ownership of stakeholders and partners at local and regional level, as part of a bottom-up approach which brings an increased awareness of and a feeling of inclusion in the EU;
 - c) making progress in the communication activities such as the development of communication strategies and organization of events and activities;

- (7) CONSIDERS that macro-regional strategies should maintain a targeted and result-driven implementation with clear European added value, defined results, and that regular monitoring and review exercises should be ensured with support of various tools and the Commission; RECALLS the need for reliable and comparable data regarding the implementation of macro-regional strategies; RECOGNISES the progress done by the participating countries and the Commission and ENCOURAGES the continuation of such work on monitoring and evaluation for a stronger evidence-based assessment of macro-regional strategies results;
- (8) CALLS for the optimal use of existing financial resources, better use of existing institutions and better implementation of existing legislation based on the principle of no new EU legislation, no new EU institutions and no new EU funds and TAKES NOTE of the challenges encountered by the participating countries as regards the coordinated governance of the macro-regional strategies;
- (9) TAKES NOTE of the Commission's report and recommendations and, in this context:
 - a) CALLS on the participating countries to strengthen ownership, to ensure appropriate political support at national level, while fostering the involvement of local and regional stakeholders;
 - b) CALLS on the participating countries and regions to empower key implementers, such as national coordinators, priority and policy area coordinators, horizontal action leaders, group leaders, members of steering and actions groups and focal points in the line ministries, and by providing adequate staff and enhancing political support to ensure the fulfilment of their task and their active participation in their groups;
 - c) INVITES the actors involved in the management of strategies to cooperate, learn from each other and to exchange best practices, and CALLS on the Commission to support and organise the sharing and transfer of such practices in cooperation where appropriate with networks and programmes;
 - d) UNDERLINES the need for an improved cooperation between policy/priority areas within the Strategies, by using for example the clusters of areas or joint steering committees;
 - e) WELCOMES the ongoing work on the revision of the action plans of the EUSBSR and EUSDR, with a view to provide clear added value and a better articulation between their policy priorities and existing funding sources, while taking into account, where relevant, the specific timelines of the various processes concerned;

- f) **UNDERLINES** the importance of continuing to use macro-regional strategies as a strategic framework promoting more coherent and synergic implementation of EU policies, programmes and funds such as: cohesion policy, rural development policy, pre-accession, neighbourhood and other EU sectoral policies, as well as of national, regional programmes and funds, including private funds, and to implement joint projects with a significant macro-regional impact and tangible results;
- (10) **CALLS** on the participating countries and regions to take into account priorities of the macro-regional strategies in the programming and implementation of post-2020 relevant programmes under shared management and relevant IPA and NDICI programmes without prejudice to the negotiations on the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and legislative packages and respecting the principle of subsidiarity and partnership. In this context:
- a) **CALLS** on the strategy's key implementers and programme authorities in the countries participating in each strategy to better cooperate and coordinate with each other in order to identify priorities and measures of common interest which could be supported from EU programmes and funds across the macro-region and to promote the alignment between relevant post-2020 programming documents and the pertinent macro-regional strategy(ies) during the Programmes' negotiating process, in dialogue between the participating countries and the Commission;
 - b) **EMPHASISES** the importance of a close coordination among the programmes supporting the priorities of macro-regional strategies in order to have a targeted implementation across the macro-region.
- (11) **ENCOURAGES** the key implementers of the macro-regional strategies to make better use of the programmes directly and indirectly managed by the Commission. In this context, **CALLS** on the Commission, where appropriate and in full respect of the objectives and integrity of these programmes:
- a) to identify, in cooperation with the participating countries, the concrete measures for strengthening the synergies and complementarities between the directly and indirectly managed EU programmes post-2020 and the macro-regional strategies;
 - b) to further improve and to actively support the alignment between post-2020 directly and indirectly managed EU programmes and the macro-regional strategies;

- c) to provide, in close cooperation with the strategies' key implementers, a stock-taking of the participation of macro-regional strategies in the directly and indirectly managed EU programmes;
- (12) INVITES the Commission and the participating countries and regions to take advantage of the links between smart specialisation strategies and clusters in order to better connect the ecosystems as well as industrial and innovation policies within the macro-regional strategies and to explore and further develop the complementarities with sea-basin strategies;
- (13) CALLS on the Commission to keep playing a leading role in the strategic coordination of the macro-regional strategies and to further enhance the involvement of its relevant services;
- (14) CALLS on the Commission to take into account the findings from evaluations and reports of relevant funds and programmes for further work, implementation and development of the macro-regional strategies;
- (15) HIGHLIGHTS the macro-regional strategies role in contributing to the implementation of Agenda 2030 and its sustainable development goals, also by reducing social, economic and territorial disparities at EU level;
- (16) RECOGNISES the importance of the involvement of neighbouring non-EU countries. In this context, the Council **STRONGLY SUPPORTS** the inclusion of the Republic of North Macedonia into EUSAIR¹;
- (17) REMAINS open to examine any commonly agreed and mature initiative of Members States facing the same challenges in a defined geographic area, aimed at setting up a new macro-regional strategy;
- (18) LOOKS FORWARD to the next report of the Commission on the implementation of EU macro-regional strategies by the end of 2020.”

¹ Doc. 7793/19

FISHERIES

Council adopts regulation amending certain provisions for fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area

The Council approved the European Parliament's position on a regulation amending certain provisions for fishing in the General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean (GFCM) Agreement area ([PE-CONS 21/19](#)). The legislative act is therefore adopted and, after being signed by the President of the European Parliament and the President of the Council, will be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

The agreement for the establishment of the GFCM, under the provisions of the FAO Constitution, was approved in 1949 and entered into force in 1952. It provides a framework for multilateral cooperation to promote the development, conservation, rational management and best utilisation of living marine resources in the Mediterranean Sea and the Black Sea at levels which are considered sustainable and at low risk of collapse.

The EU, as well as Bulgaria, Greece, Spain, France, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Malta, Romania and Slovenia, are contracting parties to this agreement.

Recommendations adopted by the GFCM are binding on its contracting parties and have to be implemented in Union law, through regulation 1343/2011 laying down certain provisions for fishing in the GFCM Agreement area.

The adopted regulation is intended to modify regulation 1343/2011 in order to implement into EU law a series of GFCM recommendations taken between 2015 and 2017.

ENVIRONMENT

Ban on single-use plastics

The EU is cracking down on plastic pollution. The Council today adopted a directive which introduces tough new restrictions on certain single-use plastic products.

The single-use plastics directive builds on the EU's existing waste legislation but goes further by setting even stricter rules for those types of products and packaging which are among the top ten most frequently found items polluting European beaches. The new rules ban the use of certain throwaway plastic products for which alternatives exist. In addition, specific measures are introduced to reduce the use of the most frequently littered plastic products.

Read the [press release](#)

Reporting obligations in environmental legislation

The Council is making environmental reporting obligations in EU legislation more coherent and more consistent by amending 10 legislative acts. The purpose of the regulation adopted today is to streamline reporting obligations, reduce administrative costs, improve the quality of available data for future evaluations and increase transparency. The amendments will apply to 10 pieces of environmental legislation.

Read the [press release](#)

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY

Regulation on fertilisers

The Council approved the European Parliament's position at first reading on a draft regulation which harmonises standards for fertilisers produced from organic or secondary raw materials in the EU and sets harmonised limits for a range of contaminants, such as cadmium, contained in mineral fertilisers. The Danish delegation voted against, while the Belgian delegation abstained.

The regulation is therefore adopted in the wording which corresponds to the position of the European Parliament.

Read the [press release](#)

EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY**Revision of directive on carcinogens or mutagens at work (third batch)**

The Council adopted a directive amending directive 2004/37/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work. The new act updates the existing rules by reducing the exposure of workers to five carcinogenic chemical agents – cadmium, beryllium, arsenic acid, formaldehyde and 4,4'-Methylene-bis(2-chloroaniline)(MOCA).

With regard to cadmium, after the directive enters into force the Commission will assess the option of a further amendment to directive 2004/37/EC which would add the combination of an airborne occupational exposure limit value with a biological limit value.

The directive allows member states to introduce more stringent binding limit values at national level and does not prevent them from applying additional measures, such as a biological limit value.

The Commission will also assess, no later than 30 June 2020, the possibility of extending the scope of directive 2004/37/EC to include a list of hazardous drugs, including cytotoxic drugs, which are carcinogenic or mutagenic.

[Directive of the European parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2004/37/EC on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to carcinogens or mutagens at work](#)
