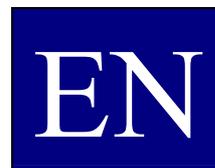




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6071/09 (Presse 33)

PRESS RELEASE

2923rd Council meeting

Education, Youth and Culture

Brussels, 16 February 2009

President **Mr Ondřej Liška**
Minister for Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech
Republic

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Main results of the Council

In its **key messages** to the European Council, the Council stressed the vulnerability of young people to the current economic crisis and the potential of education to contribute to a speedy economic recovery.

Without discussion, the Council adopted its common position concerning the **telecoms package**, which will be forwarded to the European Parliament for second reading under the codecision procedure.

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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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PARTICIPANTS

The Governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Didier SEEUWS

Deputy Permanent Representative

Bulgaria:

Mr Kircho ATANASSOV

Deputy Minister for Education and Science

Czech Republic:

Mr Ondřej LIŠKA

Mr Jakub DŮRR

Minister for Education, Youth and Sports

Deputy Minister for Education

Denmark:

Mr Bertel HAARDER

Minister for Education and Minister for Nordic Cooperation

Germany:

Mr Andreas STORM

Parliamentary State Secretary to the Federal Minister for Education and Research

Estonia:

Mr Gert ANTSU

Deputy Permanent Representative

Ireland:

Mr Batt O'KEEFFE

Minister for Education and Science

Greece:

Mr Spyridon TALIADOUROS

State Secretary for Education and Religious Affairs

Spain:

Ms Mercedes CABRERA CALVO-SOTELO

Ms Bibiana AÍDO ALMAGRO

Ms María Ángeles GARCÍA MORENO

Mr César ANTÓN

Minister for Education, Social Policy and Sport

Minister for Equality

Minister for Education and Science of the Autonomous Community of Castilla-La Mancha

Minister for Family and Equal Opportunities of the Autonomous Community of Castilla y León

France:

Mr Martin HIRSCH

High Commissioner for active solidarity against poverty

Italy:

Mr Vincenzo GRASSI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Cyprus:

Mr Andreas DEMETRIOU

Minister for Education and Culture

Latvia:

Ms Tatjana KOKE

Minister for Education and Science

Lithuania:

Mr Gintaras STEPONAVIČIUS

Minister for Education and Science

Luxembourg:

Ms Mady DELVAUX-STEHRÉS

Ms Marie-Josée JACOBS

Minister for Education and Vocational Training

Minister for the Family and Integration, Minister for Equal Opportunities

Hungary:

Ms Ágnes VARGHA

Deputy Permanent Representative

Malta:

Mr Clyde PULI

Parliamentary Secretary for Youth and Sport in the Ministry of Education and Culture

Netherlands:

Mr Ronald PLASTERK

Minister for Education, Culture and Science

Austria:

Ms Claudia SCHMIED
 Mr Johannes HAHN
 Ms Christine MAREK

Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture
 Federal Minister for Science and Research
 State Secretary, Ministry of Economy, Family and Youth

Poland:

Mr Krzysztof Piotr STANOWSKI

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of National Education

Portugal:

Ms Maria de Lurdes RODRIGUES
 Mr Pedro SILVA PEREIRA

Minister for Education
 Minister for the Prime Minister's Office

Romania:

Ms Monica IACOB RIDZI
 Mr Mihnea COSTOIU

Minister for Youth and Sports
 State Secretary for Education, Research and Innovation

Slovenia:

Ms Mary Veronica TOVŠAK PLETERSKI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Slovakia:

Mr Jozef HABÁNIK

State Secretary at the Ministry of Education

Finland:

Ms Henna VIRKKUNEN

Minister for Education

Sweden:

Ms Nyamko SABUNI
 Mr Jan BJÖRKLUND

Minister for Integration and Equal Opportunities
 Minister for Education

United Kingdom:

Ms Sarah McCARTHY-FRY

Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Children, Schools and Learners

Mr Siôn SIMON

Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Further Education

Commission:

Mr Ján FIGEĽ Member

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

Key messages to the Spring European Council - Youth Policy

The Council adopted key messages addressed to the Spring European Council on the European youth pact and on European cooperation in the youth field, see [6669/09](#).

European Youth Pact

The Council exchanged views on how to ensure better implementation and greater visibility of the European Youth Pact.

The Youth Pact was referred to as a source of inspiration for national administrations and a central element of European cooperation in the area of youth policy. Ministers exchanged best practices on the implementation of youth policies in Member States. The debate showed that coordination and coherence between national, local and European measures as well as coordination cutting across various policy fields are key for an effective youth policy. Moreover, the involvement of young people in the formulation of the policies that concern them was underlined.

The need for greater visibility of the European Youth Pact was stressed in the discussion. In this context, a more effective implementation of the Youth Pact was seen as a prerequisite for increased visibility.

The discussion at ministerial level will serve as an input for a Commission communication on a revised framework of cooperation in the area of youth policy that is expected in April 2009.

Key messages to the Spring European Council - Education and Training

The Council adopted key messages addressed to the Spring European Council on European cooperation in the field of education and training, see [6666/09](#).

European cooperation in education and training beyond 2010

During a public debate, the Council exchanged views on a new strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training that is to cover the period until 2020. The exchange was based on a Presidency discussion paper ([5956/09](#)) and the Commission proposal for the new framework ([17535/08](#)).

Ministers were invited to address two questions:

Firstly, given the considerable investment already made, and the efforts still required in at least four of the areas, can the Council agree that the areas covered by the existing benchmarks be maintained and/or updated to support the identification of good practices and the measurement of progress?

There was broad agreement on the four strategic objectives to be addressed by European cooperation in education and training. Of the five existing benchmarks, only one has so far been achieved, namely the number of tertiary graduates in mathematics, science and technology. Many delegations therefore considered that the remaining four benchmarks (*concerning the participation of adults in lifelong learning, the number of early school leavers, the number of low achievers in reading and completion of upper secondary education*) should broadly be retained in order to build on the progress already made.

Secondly, which are the most urgent new priorities with potential added value for European cooperation in education and training, including through the development of benchmarks and/or indicators?

Diverging opinions were expressed in relation to the six additional benchmarks proposed by the European Commission (*mobility, employability, creativity and innovation, languages, pre-primary education and investment in higher education*). Many Member States queried whether they were realistic and achievable, and stressed that benchmarks must be pertinent and carefully defined in order to properly reflect measures taken and progress made by governments. A number of Member States pointed out that "less is sometimes more", while others stressed the principle of subsidiarity and the voluntary nature of benchmarks.

All agreed that more detailed work on the number, content and scope of the benchmarks would be required in order to prepare the ground for adoption of the updated strategic framework at the next Education Council in May 2009.

OTHER BUSINESS

Labour market and skills needs

The Commission presented its Communication "New Skills for new jobs: anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs" ([17537/08](#)), which forms part of the European Economic Recovery Plan it proposed in December 2008. The Communication aims to promote employment and reintegration into the labour market of workers made redundant through retraining and skills upgrading measures. The Council took note of this information.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**EXTERNAL RELATIONS****EU special representatives - Extension of mandates**

The Council adopted joint actions extending the mandates of ten EU special representatives (EUSRs).

The joint actions extend the mandates of:

- Mr Torben Brylle, EUSR for Sudan, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Erwan Fouéré, EUSR in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, until 30 September 2009;
- Mr Pierre Morel, EUSR for the crisis in Georgia, until 31 August 2009;
- Mr Pierre Morel as the EUSR for Central Asia, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Peter Semneby, EUSR for the South Caucasus, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Kálmán Mizsei, EUSR in the Republic of Moldova, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Roeland Van De Geer, EUSR for the African Great Lakes Region, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Marc Otte, EUSR for the Middle East peace process, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Ettore Francesco Sequi, EUSR for Afghanistan, until 28 February 2010;
- Mr Pieter Feith, EUSR in Kosovo, until 28 February 2010.

Somalia - Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a common position concerning restrictive measures against Somalia and repealing common position 2002/960/CFSP, implementing UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1844 (2008) adopted in November 2008 (5184/09).

UNSCR 1844 (2008) introduces restrictive measures against those who seek to prevent or block a peaceful political process in Somalia, or those who threaten the Transitional Federal Institutions or the African Union Mission in Somalia by force, or take action that undermines stability in Somalia or the region.

For the sake of clarity, the measures imposed by common position 2002/960/CFSP and those to be imposed pursuant to the above mentioned resolution will be integrated into a single legal act. Common position 2002/960/CFSP is therefore repealed.

Transnistria (Republic of Moldova) - Visa ban

The Council adopted a common position renewing for another 12 months, until 27 February 2010, restrictive measures against the leadership of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova and amending Annexes I and II to Common Position 2008/160/CFSP, following a change in the function of certain persons covered by the restrictive measures ([5834/09](#)).

In 2004, the Council adopted restrictive measures against persons deemed responsible for the design and implementation of the intimidation and closure campaign against latin-script Moldovan schools in Transnistria. The list currently contains 19 names.

Economic Partnership Agreement with Côte d'Ivoire

The Council decided to forward a draft decision on the conclusion of a stepping stone Economic Partnership Agreement with Côte d'Ivoire to the European Parliament for assent ([5535/09](#)).

Agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Euro-Mediterranean Agreement with the Kingdom of Morocco, to take into account the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU ([13104/2/07 REV 2](#)).

Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Croatia

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of a Protocol to the Stabilisation and Association Agreement with Croatia, to take into account the accession of the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU ([15019/08](#), [15019/08 COR1](#)).

CUSTOMS UNION

Andorra and San Marino - Customs security measures

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Andorra and San Marino with a view to including customs security measures in the cooperation and customs union agreements concluded by the EU with these countries.

TRADE POLICY

EU/South Korea agreement on anti-competitive practices

The Council adopted a decision authorising the conclusion of an agreement with the Republic of Korea with a view to strengthening cooperation in the field of international competition rules ([16244/08](#)).

The purpose of the agreement is to contribute to the effective enforcement of competition laws by promoting coordination between the competition authorities of both sides and to avoid the possibility of commercial conflicts.

AGRICULTURE

TSE Regulation - Regulatory procedure with scrutiny

The Council adopted a regulation bringing the whole regulation on transmissible spongiform encephalopathies (TSE) into line with the new comitology rules ([3693/08](#)), following a first-reading agreement with the Parliament.

The new legislative act confers scrutiny rights on the Council and the Parliament with regard to the articles concerning the approval of rapid tests, the extension of certain provisions to other products of origin, the adoption of implementing rules including the method of confirming bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) in ovine and caprine animals, modification of the Annex and the adoption of transitional measures.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Review of the EU regulatory framework for electronic communications*

The Council adopted¹ the common positions and the statements of the Council's reasons on the review of the EU regulatory framework for electronic communications networks and services.

The Council's common positions were prepared on the basis of the political agreement reached at the Council meeting on 27 November 2008 and will be forwarded to the European Parliament for second reading under the codecision procedure.

The set of measures to reform the telecommunications sector² was proposed by the Commission on 13 November 2007. It aims to enable citizens, wherever they live or travel in the EU, to enjoy better quality communications services at lower cost.

The texts of common positions and statements of the Council's reasons can be found in the following documents:

- Framework Directive [16496/08](#), [16496/08 ADD1](#), [5905/09 ADD1 REV2](#);
- Citizens' Rights Directive [16497/08](#), [16497/08 ADD1](#), [5909/09 ADD1 REV1](#)
- Regulation establishing the Group of European Regulators in Telecoms (GERT) [16498/08](#), [16498/08 ADD1](#), [16498/08 ADD1 COR 1](#), [5913/09 ADD1 REV1](#).

For more information, please see press release [16326/1/08](#) p.6 on the TTE Council held on 27 November 2008.

¹ The Netherlands delegation abstained. The Swedish and United Kingdom delegations abstained from voting on the framework directive.

² It contains the following legislative proposals:

- a proposal for a Better Regulation Directive amending Directives 2002/21/EC (Framework Directive), 2002/19/EC (Access Directive), and 2002/20/EC (Authorisation Directive) ([15379/07](#));
- a proposal for a Citizens' Rights Directive amending Directive 2002/22/EC (Universal Service Directive), Directive 2002/58/EC (Privacy Directive) and Regulation (EC) No 2006/2004 on consumer protection cooperation ([15387/07](#));
- a proposal for a Regulation establishing the European Electronic Communications Market Authority ([15408/07](#)).

INSTITUTIONAL AFFAIRS

Court of First Instance - Amendment to Rules of Procedure

The Council adopted a decision amending the rules of procedure of the Court of First Instance of the European Communities as regards the language arrangements applicable to appeals against decisions of the European Union Civil Service Tribunal ([5739/09](#)).

Under the Treaty, the Court of First Instance establishes its rules of procedure in agreement with the Court of Justice. The rules require the approval of the Council.

Regulatory procedure with scrutiny

The Council adopted a regulation bringing a number of instruments into line with the new comitology rules, following a first reading agreement with the European Parliament ([3692/08](#)).

The new legislative act confers scrutiny rights on the Council and the Parliament with regard to rules on humanitarian aid, enterprise, environment, Eurostat, internal market, health and consumer protection and energy and transport.

STATISTICS

External trade*

The Council adopted a common position with a view to adopting a regulation on Community statistics relating to external trade ([15248/08](#) + [ADD1](#)). The common position will be forwarded to the European Parliament for a second reading according to the codecision procedure.

The regulation is aimed at establishing a common framework for the systematic production of Community statistics relating to trade in goods with non-member countries.

The regulation is intended to adjust the system of extra-Community trade statistics to the changes incorporated in customs legislation and in the light of the practical implications of the implementation of the modernised customs code. It is also intended to facilitate decision-making in this field.

The new regulation will repeal regulation 1172/95.

SOCIAL AFFAIRS

Maritime Labour Convention*

The Council adopted a directive implementing the agreement concluded by the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) and the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) on the Maritime Labour Convention (5010/09, [5516/09 ADD1](#)).

This Directive will improve the working conditions of seafarers on board ships registered in a Member State and/or flying flag of a Member State and enhance the attractiveness of work in the maritime sector for European seafarers, helping to create more and better jobs.

This legislative act will enter into force at the same time as the Maritime Labour Convention, which has to be ratified by at least 30 members of the International Labour organisation (ILO) with a total share in the world gross tonnage of ships of at least 33%.

ENVIRONMENT

Placing of biocidal products on the market

The Council decided not to oppose a Commission decision not to include certain active substances of biocidal products in Annex I, IA or IB to directive 98/8 (5526/09).
