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## **PRESS RELEASE**

3331st Council meeting

### **General Affairs**

Brussels, 23 July 2014

President

**Sandro Gozi**

State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy

# **P R E S S**

## ***Main results of the Council***

*The Council adopted the necessary legislative acts to allow **Lithuania** on 1 January 2015 to become the **19th member of the euro area**.*

"The entry of Lithuania into the euro family is not only a crucial event for this country, but it is of great importance for the whole eurozone. It's a demonstration of the continuing attractiveness of the single currency project and its relevance for the future of our community", *said Sandro Gozi, State Secretary for European Affairs of Italy and President of the Council*. "Lithuania's consistent efforts have paid off: today the eurozone has opened the door for us", *said Algirdas Butkevičius, Prime Minister of Lithuania*. "The adoption of the euro has been Lithuania's strategic step, well thought-out economically and politically, to foster national economic growth. Lithuania's accession to the single European currency will strengthen the EU's Economic and Monetary Union. Deeper euro integration means greater security as well."

*The Council took note of the **work programme** proposed by the Italian presidency for the duration of its term of office.*

### ***Other items***

*Without discussion, the Council formally adopted the following legislative acts and decisions:*

- *a regulation for managing financial responsibility linked to **investor-to-state dispute settlement proceedings**;*
- *a directive aimed at guaranteeing access to basic **payment services** and improving information on fees related to payment accounts;*
- *a directive on **undertakings for collective investment** in transferable securities (UCITS), introducing specific provisions on the depositary's safekeeping and oversight duties;*
- *a regulation aimed at improving safety in the securities settlement system and opening the market for **central securities depositories (CSD)** services;*
- *the Council's position on a draft directive granting member states more flexibility to decide whether or not they wish to cultivate **genetically modified organisms (GMOs)**;*
- *a regulation on the mutual recognition of **electronic identification**;*
- *a regulation on the financing of actions by the **European Maritime Safety Agency** to fight pollution at sea;*
- *a directive containing updated rules on **marine equipment** on board of EU ships.*

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<sup>1</sup>

- 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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Mr David LIDINGTON

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**Commission:**

Mr Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Vice President

Mr Jyrki KATAINEN

Vice President

**ITEMS DEBATED**

**Presidency programme**

The Italian presidency presented, in public session, its work programme for the duration of its term of office (July to December 2014)<sup>1</sup>. The Council held an exchange of views.

**Implementation of European Council conclusions**

The Council exchanged views on how to ensure the follow-up of the implementation of European Council conclusions. It discussed the experience of the current method, which is to present comprehensive implementation reports to the Council, and reflected on ways to further improve the process in the future. The objective is to make this process more political and bring it in coherence with the five priorities of the strategic agenda agreed at the June European Council without turning it into a bureaucratic exercise.

**Europe 2020 mid-term review**

The Council discussed a roadmap for the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 growth strategy ([11645/14](#)).

The roadmap sets out how work will be taken forward under the Italian presidency in the second semester of 2014 to prepare the grounds for the review of the strategy in 2015. The objective of the roadmap is to ensure that all relevant Council formations work in a coordinated manner and to enable the General Affairs Council and COREPER to oversee the process.

The presidency will draw together the contributions of all ministerial debates into a summary to be endorsed at the General Affairs Council in December and thereafter presented to the December European Council. This summary will provide input to subsequent Commission work on the review of the strategy.

The European Council had a first discussion on the implementation of the strategy in March 2014. Its conclusions called for stepping up efforts to reach the Europe 2020 targets.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://italia2014.eu/en/presidency-and-eu/programme-and-priorities/programme-of-the-italian-presidency-of-the-council-of-the-european-union/>

**Enlargement of the euro area - Lithuania**

The Council adopted a decision allowing Lithuania to adopt the euro as its currency as from 1 January 2015.

It also adopted regulations setting a permanent conversion rate for the Lithuanian litas against the euro, and adapting technical provisions on the euro.

The decision enlarged the euro area to a 19th member state, giving it nearly six months to prepare for the changeover. Euro notes and coins will be issued in Lithuania on 1 January 2015.

For details, see [11952/14](#).



**OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**

**GENERAL AFFAIRS**

**Maritime spatial planning**

The Council approved a directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning, which is aimed at contributing to sustainable growth of maritime economies and the sustainable development of marine areas ([PE-CONS 72/14](#))<sup>1</sup>.

This means that the directive is now adopted. It will enter into force 20 days following its publication in the Official Journal of the European Union. Member states will then have two years to transpose the directive into their national laws, and will have to apply the new rules from the end of this period.

The text of the directive reflects an agreement reached between the Greek presidency and representatives of the European Parliament, endorsed by the Permanent Representatives Committee<sup>2</sup> on 12 March ([7500/14](#)).

Maritime spatial planning is a process by which the relevant member state authorities analyse and organise human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives. The directive requires member states to establish maritime spatial plans that map existing human activities in member states' marine waters and identify their most effective future spatial development. In doing so, member states must take into account land-sea interactions, as well as environmental, economic, social and safety aspects. Member states bordering marine waters will also have to cooperate with the aim to ensure that maritime spatial plans are coherent and coordinated across the marine region concerned.

The EU has adopted ambitious policy initiatives relevant to the oceans, seas and coasts, to be implemented in the next 10 to 20 years. The directive is an essential part of the ambition to develop "Europe's Blue Economy".

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<sup>1</sup> The Slovenian delegation abstained.

<sup>2</sup> The Permanent Representatives Committee is composed of the ambassadors of the 28 EU member states. Its role is to prepare decisions of the Council.

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Partnership and cooperation agreement - Accession of Croatia to the EU**

The Council authorised the signing, provisional application and conclusions of a protocol to the EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement in order to take account of the accession of Croatia to the EU on 1 July 2013.

**ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**

**Central securities depositories**

The Council adopted a regulation aimed at improving safety in the securities settlement system and opening the market for central securities depositories (CSD) services ([PE-CONS 49/14](#) + [11727/14](#) + [ADD 1 REV 1](#)).

The regulation introduces an obligation to represent all transferable securities in book entry form, i.e. recorded electronically, and to record them in CSDs before trading them on regulated venues. It harmonises settlement periods and settlement discipline regimes across the EU and introduces a common set of rules, inspired by international standards, addressing the risks of CSD operations and services.

For details, see press release [18088/14](#).

**Undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities**

The Council adopted a directive amending EU rules on investment funds as concerns depository functions, remuneration policies and sanctions ([PE-CONS 75/14](#) + [11728/14](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The text amends directive 2009/65/EC on undertakings for collective investment in transferable securities (UCITS), introducing specific provisions on the depository's safekeeping and oversight duties, and defining the conditions in which safekeeping duties can be delegated to a sub-custodian.

For details, see press release [12090/14](#).

### **Directive on basic payment services**

The Council adopted a directive aimed at guaranteeing access to basic payment services and improving information on fees related to payment accounts ([PE-CONS 89/14](#) + [11729/14](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

The directive will enable consumers to make informed choices when opening a payment account by improving the transparency and comparability of information on account fees, whilst eliminating discrimination based on residency. It will also enable consumers to switch accounts more easily.

For details, see press release [12061/14](#).

### **TRADE POLICY**

#### **Framework for investor-to-state dispute settlement**

The Council approved a framework for managing financial responsibility linked to investor-to-state dispute settlement proceedings ([PE-CONS 92/14](#) + [11731/14](#) + [ADD 1](#) + [ADD 2](#)).

The regulation, part of a broader EU framework for investment protection policy, establishes rules for managing the financial consequences of investor-to-state disputes, specifying how cooperation between the Commission and the member states should be structured in specific cases.

For details, see press release [12089/14](#).

### **JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**

#### **Eurojust activity report 2013**

The Council took note of the Activity Report of the Joint Supervisory Body of Eurojust for the year 2013 ([11546/14](#)) and forwarded it to the European Parliament for information.

**ENVIRONMENT**

**Cultivation of genetically modified organisms\***

The Council adopted its first-reading position on a draft directive granting to member states more flexibility to decide whether or not they wish to cultivate genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on their territory ([10972/14](#) + [11435/1/14 REV 1 ADD 1](#) + [11435/1/14 REV 1 ADD 1 COR 1](#)).

The adoption follows the political agreement reached in the Environment Council on 12 June. The Italian presidency is expected to start negotiations with the newly elected European Parliament in early autumn 2014.

The aim of the draft directive is to provide a sound legal basis in the related EU legal framework in order to allow member states to restrict or prohibit the cultivation, in all or part of their territory, of GMOs that have been authorised or are under authorisation at EU level.

For details, see [11316/14](#).

**FOOD LAW**

**Food additives - Calcium propionate, Calcium ascorbate and Sodium alginate**

The Council decided not to oppose adoption of the two following Commission regulations:

- a regulation amending the specifications for the food additive Calcium propionate (E 282) by increasing its maximum allowed fluoride level from 10 to 20 mg/kg ([11526/14](#));
- a regulation authorising the use of Calcium ascorbate (E 302) and Sodium alginate (E 401) as glazing agents in certain prepacked refrigerated unprocessed fruit and vegetables ready for consumption ([11528/14](#)).

The Commission regulations are subject to the so called regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt them, unless the European Parliament objects.

**ENERGY**

**Euratom report - Convention on Safety of Spent Fuel and Radioactive Waste**

The Council took note of an Euratom report on the implementation of the obligations under the Joint Convention on the Safety of Spent Fuel Management and on the Safety of Radioactive Waste Management ([11773/14 ADD 1](#)).

This Convention, which entered into force in 2001, is the first legal instrument to directly address these issues on a global scale. Under the Convention, each contracting party must submit a report on the measures taken to implement its obligations. The reports will be examined at the next 5<sup>th</sup> review meeting that will take place in Vienna in May 2015.

See also: <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Conventions/jointconv.html>

**TRANSPORT**

**European Maritime Safety Agency**

The Council adopted a regulation to finance the actions of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) in the field of response to marine pollution caused by ships and oil and gas installations in the years 2014 to 2020 ([PE-CONS 66/14](#)).

For details see press release [11905/14](#).

**Marine equipment\***

The Council adopted a directive to regulate marine equipment to be placed on board EU ships ([PE-CONS 42/14](#); statements: [11735/14 ADD 1](#)).

The new directive enhances the implementation and enforcement of EU marine equipment rules. It aligns them with the new legislative framework for the marketing of goods within the EU. In addition, it clarifies and speeds up the enactment of changing international standards in European and national law. It also reinforces market surveillance, conformity checking and the periodic updating of EU rules.

For details see press release [11904/14](#).

**TELECOMS**

**Electronic identification\***

The Council adopted a regulation which lays down conditions for mutual recognition of electronic identification; sets rules for trust services, in particular for electronic transactions; and creates a legal framework for electronic signatures, seals and time stamps, electronic documents as well as electronic registered delivery services and certificate services for website authentication ([PE-CONS 60/14](#); statement: [11733/14 ADD 1](#)).

For details, see press release [11907/14](#).

**FISHERIES**

**Atlanto-Scandian herring - Legal proceedings with the Faroe Islands**

The Council adopted a decision on the termination of the legal proceedings with the Faroe Islands concerning Atlanto-Scandian herring.

This decision aims to discontinue the relevant WTO and United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) proceedings if the trade measures currently applicable to the Faroes Islands cease to apply. The EU has decided trade measures in August last year (implementing act of regulation 1026/2012 on trade measures<sup>1</sup>) with regard to the management of the Atlanto-Scandian herring stock by the Faroes Islands. This country had decided at the time to take the issue before the arbitral tribunal of the UNCLOS.

**Agreement between the EU and Norway - Access to fishing in the Skagerrak**

The Council adopted a decision on the signing, on behalf of the EU, and provisional application of an agreement between the EU and the Kingdom of Norway on reciprocal access to fishing in the Skagerrak ([11643/14](#)).

The 1966 neighbourhood agreement allowed for reciprocal access between Denmark, Norway and Sweden to fish in the area up to four nautical miles from their respective baselines in the Skagerrak and Kattegat expired the 7 August 2012. With the accession of Denmark and Sweden to the EU, the EU became responsible for the management of the 1966 agreement. A new agreement, within a modernised framework, between the EU and Norway on reciprocal access to fishing in the Skagerrak was initialled on 24 October 2013. In order to guarantee the continuation of access by EU vessels for fishing activities, the agreement should be applied on a provisional basis up to two years from the date of its signature, pending its entry into force.

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<sup>1</sup> [OJ L 316, 14.11.2012, p.34](#)

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Committee of the Regions**

The Council appointed Mr Mihkel JUHKAMI and Mr Urmas SUKLES (Estonia), as members of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([11596/14](#)).

**Committee of the Regions**

The Council appointed Mr Mark WEINMEISTER (Germany) as a member of the Committee of the Regions for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2015 ([11801/14](#)).

**TRANSPARENCY**

**Public access to documents**

On 23 July 2014, the Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application No 18/c/01/14 ([11060/14](#))

**DECISION TAKEN BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE**

**Fishing opportunities 2014/2015 - Anchovy in the Bay of Biscay**

The Council adopted on 17 July 2014 by written procedure a regulation establishing the fishing opportunities for anchovy in the Bay of Biscay for the 2014/2015 fishing season ([11586/14](#)).

Council regulations on fishing opportunities adopted during the second half of each year do not include a total allowable catch (TAC) for anchovy in the Bay of Biscay because of the different annual cycle followed by the biology of this stock and the scientific advice estimating the spawning stock biomass. For this reason, a specific anchovy TAC is set around July each year.

From 1 January 2015, the fishery for anchovy in the Bay of Biscay will be subject to the landing obligation provided for in regulation 1380/2013<sup>1</sup> within the framework of the new Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The Bay of Biscay anchovy TAC is established on the basis of scientific advice taking into account biological and socioeconomic aspects. The proposal takes also into account data provided for in the proposal from 2009 establishing a long-term plan for the anchovy stock in the Bay of Biscay. On this basis, it is appropriate to fix a TAC of 20 100 tonnes for the 2014/2015 fishing season corresponding to an approximate increase of 18 % compared to the previous TAC.

The TAC applies from 1 July 2014.

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<sup>1</sup> [OJ L 354, 28.12.2013, p. 22](#)