



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



10862/13

PRESSE 250

PR CO 31

PRESS RELEASE

3245th Council meeting

Foreign Affairs Trade

Luxembourg, 14 June 2013

President

Mr Richard Bruton

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation of Ireland

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 9442 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

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Main results of the Council

*The Council approved a mandate for the negotiation of a comprehensive trade and investment agreement with the **United States**.*

*It decided to bring forward the dates of next year's **European Parliament elections** from the beginning of June to 22-25 May. The Parliament had asked for the change so that it could better organise itself in electing a new President of the Commission and avoid the beginning of the summer vacation in several member states.*

*The Council also took note of an agreement reached with the European Parliament on the so-called **Omnibus I and II** dossiers, involving regulatory changes to EU decision-making procedures for trade policy.*

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS	4
ITEMS DEBATED	
EU-US TRADE RELATIONS	6
EU-CANADA TRADE NEGOTIATIONS	8
OTHER BUSINESS	9
– Decision-making procedures for trade policy.....	9
– Labour conditions in Bangladesh	9
– Trade relations with China	9
OTHER ITEMS APPROVED	
<i>GENERAL AFFAIRS</i>	
– Election period for the European Parliament.....	10
<i>DECISION TAKEN BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE</i>	
– WTO - Intellectual property	10

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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>).
- 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.

PARTICIPANTS

Belgium:

Mr Didier REYNDERS

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign , External Trade and European Affairs

Bulgaria:

Mr Dimiter TZANTCHEV

Permanent Representative

Czech Republic:

Mr Milan HOVORKA

Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade

Denmark:

Ms Pia Olsen DYHR

Minister for Trade and Investments

Germany:

Ms Anne Ruth HERKES

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology

Estonia:

Mr Matti MAASIKAS

Permanent Representative

Ireland:

Mr Richard BRUTON

Minister for Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation

Greece:

Mr Panagiotis MITARACHI

Deputy Minister, Ministry for Development, Competitiveness, Maritime Affairs and Technology

Spain:

Mr Jaime GARCÍA-LEGAZ PONCE

State Secretary for Trade

France:

Ms Nicole BRICQ

Minister for Foreign Trade

Italy:

Mr Carlo CALEDA

Deputy Minister of Economic Development

Cyprus:

Mr Kornelios KORNELIOU

Permanent Representative

Latvia:

Mr Juris PŪCE

State Secretary, Ministry of the Economy

Lithuania:

Mr Linas LINKEVIČIUS

Minister for Foreign Affairs

Luxembourg:

Mr Christian BRAUN

Permanent Representative

Hungary:

Mr Szabolcs TAKÁCS

Deputy State Secretary for Global Affairs, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

Malta:

Ms Marlene BONNICI

Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Ms Lilianne PLOUMEN

Minister For Foreign Trade and development Cooperation

Austria:

Mr Hubert HEISS

Ambassador, Acting Permanent Representative

Poland:

Mr Andrzej DYCHA

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of the Economy

Portugal:

Mr Miguel MORAIS LEITÃO

State Secretary attached to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for European Affairs

Romania:

Mr Manuel Marian DONESCU

State Secretary, Ministry of the Economy (responsible for foreign trade)

Slovenia:

Mr Rado GENORIO

Permanent Representative

Slovakia:

Mr Dušan PETRÍK

State Secretary at the Ministry of the Economy

Finland:

Mr Alexander STUBB

Minister for European Affairs and Foreign Trade

Sweden:

Ms Ewa BJÖRLING

Minister for Trade

United Kingdom:

Mr Vince CABLE

Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills

.....

Commission:

Mr Karel DE GUCHT

Member

.....

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:

Croatia:

Mr Joško KLISOVIĆ

Deputy Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

EU-US TRADE RELATIONS

The Council approved a mandate for the Commission to negotiate a comprehensive trade and investment agreement with the United States, the "transatlantic trade and investment partnership" (TTIP).

The mandate is composed of a decision of the Council and a decision of the representatives of the member states authorising the opening of negotiations, as well as directives for the negotiation of the agreement. The directives foresee an agreement made up of three key components: market access; regulatory issues and non-tariff barriers; and rules.

The Council agreed that audiovisual services will not be covered in the mandate, but that the Commission will have the opportunity to make recommendations on additional negotiating mandates.

The EU is now ready to launch negotiations with the US. The Commission will negotiate on behalf of the EU and its member states, keeping the Trade Policy Committee and the European Parliament regularly informed and updated. The final agreement will be concluded by the Council and the member states after having obtained the 'consent' of the European Parliament.

The EU is the US's largest trading partner, while the United States is the EU's second-largest trading partner, with 17.6 % and 13.9 % respectively of each other's trade in goods in 2011. Together the EU and the United States account for almost half of global GDP and one-third of total world trade.

According to an impact assessment by the Commission, a comprehensive trade and investment agreement could increase EU GDP by between 0.27 % and 0.48 %, and EU gross national income by up to € 86 billion.

The decision to negotiate stems from the recommendations of a high-level working group on jobs and growth, established following an EU-US summit in Washington DC in November 2011. The working group set out to identify options for increasing trade and investment. Co-chaired by US trade representative Ron Kirk and EU trade commissioner Karel de Gucht, it published its final report in February 2013.

The European Council in February called on the Commission and the Council to follow up without delay on the recommendations of the high-level working group, during the current (Irish) presidency.

The negotiations will strive for a comprehensive and ambitious agreement that addresses a broad range of bilateral trade and investment issues, including regulatory issues, with the aim of attaining market access that goes beyond what the US and the EU have achieved in previous trade agreements. The removal of unnecessary regulatory and non-tariff barriers will be a key objective.

EU-CANADA TRADE NEGOTIATIONS

Ministers over lunch were briefed by the Commission on developments in the negotiations on a comprehensive economic and trade agreement with Canada.

They confirmed full support for the Commission's approach in providing the impetus needed for finalising the talks, and encouraged it to continue providing full and timely information on progress made, looking forward to a rapid conclusion.

The European Council in February said it expected the negotiations with Canada "to be concluded very shortly." The latest round of discussions between chief negotiators took place in Brussels in the week of 27 May.

In 2011 Canada was the EU's 11th most important trading partner while the EU was Canada's second-largest trading partner, with 1.8 % and 12 % respectively of each other's external trade.

The talks have been ongoing for more than three years. In April 2009, the Council provided a mandate for the Commission to negotiate a comprehensive economic and trade agreement (CETA) with Canada. Negotiations were launched at the EU-Canada summit in Prague the following month. In September 2011, the Council authorised the Commission to start talks on investment within the framework of those negotiations.

OTHER BUSINESS

– Decision-making procedures for trade policy

The Council welcomed the successful conclusion of negotiations with the European Parliament on "Omnibus I & II" proposals on the procedures used for decision-making under the EU's common commercial policy

The two draft regulations are aimed at modifying a number of regulations adopted between 1972 and 2009, adapting them to decision-making procedures provided for by the Treaty of Lisbon, which entered into force in December 2009.

Based on article 207(2) of the TFEU, the two regulations require a qualified majority for adoption by the Council, in agreement with the Parliament. The presidency reached an agreement with the Parliament on 5 June.

– Labour conditions in Bangladesh

The Council discussed labour conditions in Bangladesh following recent accidents involving workers in garment factories. It regretted the tragic loss of life.

– Trade relations with China

Over lunch, ministers discussed the EU's trade relations with China, in particular the proposed launch of negotiations on an investment agreement, as well as trade defence issues, including antidumping.

The European Council in February noted that the EU-China trade agenda in the short term should focus on investment, market access, procurement and intellectual property rights. On 24 May, the Commission presented a recommendation for a Council decision authorising it to negotiate an investment agreement with China.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**GENERAL AFFAIRS****Election period for the European Parliament**

The Council adopted a decision bringing forward the period of the next European Parliament's elections from 5-8 June to 22-25 May 2014 ([10101/13](#) + [10396/13](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

This follows the positive opinion of the European Parliament given on 21 May. The main objective of advancing the electoral period is to ensure optimal conditions for the elections and hereby to strengthen the European Parliament's legitimacy. It responds to a request by the Parliament from 2005. At this time, the Parliament asked to bring forward the date of the election to May so that it can better organise itself to expedite the election of a new President of the Commission and avoid the beginning of the summer vacation in several member states.

For background, see [10917/13](#).

DECISION TAKEN BY WRITTEN PROCEDURE**WTO - Intellectual property**

The Council adopted, on 10 June 2013, a decision establishing the position to be taken by the EU, within the WTO's TRIPS¹ Council, on a request for the extension of a transition period for least developed countries, exempting them from most TRIPS obligations.

¹ Trade-related aspects of intellectual property rights.