



**COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**  
**MAIN TOPICS FOR THE COMING FORTNIGHT\***  
30 November - 13 December 2009

*NOTE: 1 December: entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty*

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\* This document has been prepared under the sole responsibility of the Press Office.  
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- <http://video.consilium.europa.eu> (live webcast of public deliberations, public debates and press conferences)

and

- <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu> (audiovisual material available for download in broadcast quality)

Monday 30 November 2009

## Extraordinary meeting in the margins of the 7th WTO ministerial conference

*The General Affairs and External Relations Council will hold an extraordinary meeting in the margins of the 7th ministerial conference of the World Trade Organisation which will take place in Geneva from 30 November to 2 December.*

*The GAERC will prepare the WTO meeting during which ministers will have the opportunity to review the operation and functioning of the multilateral trading system.*

### Further information

- Council website: <http://consilium.europa.eu/newsroom>

### Event

Meeting of the General Affairs and External Relations Council - Council Secretariat Liaison Office, Geneva (13.00 - 14.30).

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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## Parental leave

*The Council in charge of employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs is expected to reach political agreement on a draft directive giving legal effect to a revised framework agreement on parental leave concluded by the social partners at European level.*

*The agreement lays down minimum requirements designed to contribute to better reconciliation of professional and family life and to promoting gender equality on the labour market. The revised text extends the workers' right to parental leave from three to four months for each parent. Other new elements compared to the previous agreement of 1995 include the clarification that fixed-term, part-time and temporary agency workers are also covered.*

### Background

In accordance with the EU treaty, social partners may request jointly that agreements concluded by them at EU level in a number of matters be implemented by a Council decision.

The revised agreement on parental leave was concluded in June 2009 between four European cross-industry social partners: BUSINESSEUROPE (Confederation of European Business), UEAPME (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises), CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services) and ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation). It replaces their previous agreement of December 1995 implemented by Council directive 96/34/EC, which will be repealed by the new directive.

### Further information

- Proposal for a Council directive implementing the revised framework agreement on parental leave concluded by BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC ([12761/09](#))

### Event

Meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (Monday session on employment and social policy items, Tuesday session on health and consumer affairs items, starting both days at 10.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For more information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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## Patients' rights in cross-border healthcare

*In public deliberation, the Council in charge of employment, social policy, health and consumer affairs will try to reach a political agreement on a draft directive on patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.*

*The draft directive aims to facilitate the access to high quality health services for patients who decide to seek healthcare in another EU member state and to promote cooperation on healthcare between member states.*

### Background

When the directive on services in the internal market was adopted in December 2006, healthcare was excluded from its scope because of the specificities of health services, in particular their technical complexities and the important support they receive from public funds. However, the European Court of Justice repeatedly applied in its rulings the free movement principles guaranteed by the EU Treaty to health services and addressed the issue of reimbursement for healthcare provided in a member state other than that in which the recipient of the care is resident. The proposed directive, besides ensuring safe and good healthcare for all patients and promoting cooperation, intends to codify in a legal text of general application the principles developed by the Court on a case by case basis. Nevertheless, each member state will remain responsible for the definition of social security benefits related to health as well as for the organisation and delivery of healthcare.

### Further information

- Commission proposal for a directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare ([11307/08](#))
- Press release on the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council meeting of June 2009 ([9721/2/09](#), p. 14-16)

### Event

Meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (Monday session on employment and social policy items, Tuesday session on health and consumer affairs items, starting both days at 10.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For more information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, which will enter into force on 1 December, all Council deliberations on legislative acts will be taken in public session.
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Overview of the agenda of the Justice and Home Affairs Council

*The Council is expected to adopt amendments to regulation No 539/2001 granting visa free travel to and throughout the EU for citizens of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (see next page).*

*The Council will then adopt, after a public deliberation, an action oriented paper on strengthening the EU external dimension regarding action against trafficking in human beings. At the same time, it will have an orientation debate concerning a framework decision on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting victims.*

*Ministers will also examine, in a public deliberation, the multi-annual strategic work programme in the area of freedom, security and justice. The so-called "Stockholm Programme" will establish the EU's framework in this area for the period 2010-2014.*

*Furthermore, ministers will examine, in a public deliberation, the state-of-play of the Common European Asylum System. In this context, they will have a first exchange of views on two proposals presented by the Commission:*

*-a directive on minimum standards on procedures in member states for granting and withdrawing international protection ([14959/09](#));*

*-a directive on minimum standards for the qualification and status of third country nationals or stateless persons as beneficiaries of international protection and the content of the protection granted ([14863/1/09](#)).*

*Among the other items on the agenda, ministers will hear a presentation by the EU's Counter-terrorism Coordinator of his 6-monthly report and may discuss certain issues. They are also expected to approve a proposal for an information management strategy for EU internal security.*

*In the margins of the Council, the Mixed Committee will discuss the state of play concerning the development of the Visa Information System (VIS) and the Schengen Information System II (SIS II). The Committee will also have an orientation debate concerning the proposal for a regulation establishing an agency for the operational management of large-scale IT systems in the area of freedom, security and justice.*

## **Event**

Meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).

On both Council days, two press conferences will take place around midday and at the end of the proceedings (tbc).

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

<p>In accordance with the provisions of the Treaty of Lisbon, which will enter into force on 1 December, all Council deliberations on legislative acts will be taken in public session.</p>
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## Visa liberalisation for Western Balkans

*The Justice and Home Affairs Council is expected to adopt an amendment to Regulation 539/2001 listing the third countries whose nationals must be in possession of a visa when crossing the external borders of the European Union and whose nationals are exempt from that requirement. This concerns in particular the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM), Montenegro and Serbia which will join the visa free regime by 19 December 2009, since they fulfilled the benchmarks set out in the Commission roadmaps for visa liberalisation with these countries. This visa waiver will apply to holders of biometric passports only. The measure is due to be extended to Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina at a later stage once they have met the benchmarks. They will soon qualify for visa liberalization.*

### Background

The EU-Western Balkans Summit held in Thessaloniki on 21 June 2003 confirmed that visa liberalisation for the Western Balkan countries is closely associated to the progress of the countries concerned in implementing major reforms in areas such as the strengthening of the rule of law, combating organised crime, corruption and illegal migration and the strengthening of their administrative capacity in border control and security of documents.

On 1 January 2008 Visa Facilitation Agreements entered into force with five Western Balkan countries – Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia –, as a first concrete step towards a visa free travel regime for their citizens. With each of these countries, a visa liberalisation dialogue was opened in 2008 and roadmaps for visa liberalisation were established.

### Further information

- Visa requirements: Council Regulation 539/2001 (OJ L 81, 21.3.2001);
- Commission proposal: 12167/09.

### Event

Meeting of the Justice and Home Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).  
A press conference will take place on 30 November at 12.30 h (tbc).

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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## Overview of the agenda of the ECOFIN Council

In accordance with the provisions of the Lisbon Treaty, which will enter into force on 1 December, the Council's deliberations on legislative acts will be taken in public session. During this public deliberation, the Council will be called on to agree on a general approach on regulations establishing a European banking authority, a European insurance and occupational pensions authority and a European securities and markets authority. On taxation matters, the Council will examine directives regarding reverse charge on emission allowances and certain goods (VAT), on recovery and on administrative cooperation, on which it will try to agree on a general approach, and a political agreement on the savings tax directive.

Under the "non public session" part of its agenda, the Council will be called on to agree on a general approach for an anti-fraud agreement with Liechtenstein and to adopt a negotiating mandate for anti-fraud agreements with other third countries as well as a report on a Code of conduct for business taxation. It is also expected to adopt conclusions on future policy action concerning derivatives markets and on financial stability arrangements. It will prepare the meeting of the European Council (10-11 December) as regards progress on financial supervision, Ecofin's contribution to the discussion on the post-2010 Lisbon agenda and exit strategies. Finally, it will discuss the implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact.

In the margins of the Council, the following events will take place:

### Tuesday 1 December

- Troika meeting with the European Parliament (13.00)
- Eurogroup meeting (starting at 17.00)

### **Event**

Meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (breakfast at 09.00).

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Friday 22 November at 17.00. A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For full information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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*The Competitiveness Council will hold a debate on the transition to a new European strategy for growth and jobs which is to succeed the Lisbon Strategy after 2010. The issue will be discussed on Thursday from the angle of research and innovation by research ministers, guided by a presidency questionnaire, and on Friday by the ministers in charge of the internal market and industry. The Council is due to adopt conclusions which highlight the priorities for the post 2010 Lisbon agenda, such as building an eco-efficient economy, improving competitiveness, stimulating growth and jobs, enhancing research and innovation efforts and acknowledging the role of small and medium-sized enterprises.*

## Background

In 2000, the European Council, meeting in Lisbon, launched a ten-year programme of measures and reforms aimed at creating a dynamic and competitive European economy in a context of increased globalisation. This programme, called the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs, is to be followed after 2010 by a revised strategy.

The conclusions to be adopted by the Competitiveness Council will contribute to the definition of the new post 2010 Lisbon agenda. They reflect the position taken by the European Council in June 2009 which agreed that priority should be given to "creating a friendly environment for entrepreneurship and job creation, investing in a skilled, adaptable and motivated labour force and transforming Europe into a competitive, knowledge-based, inclusive, innovative and eco-efficient economy".

## Further information

- Presidency questionnaire: Guidance on future priorities for European Research and research based innovation in post-2010 Lisbon strategy ([15873/09](#))

## Event

Meeting of the Competitiveness Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (Thursday session on research and consumer items starting at 10.00, Friday session on internal market and industry items starting at 9.30).

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Wednesday 2 December at 15.00. A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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## European private company (SPE)

*The Competitiveness Council will seek, in public deliberation, a political agreement on a draft regulation creating the new legal form of a European private company with limited liability (Societas Privata Europaea - SPE), designed especially for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).*

*The draft regulation aims at facilitating the establishment and operation of SMEs in the Single Market by providing for a flexible corporate law regime with uniform principles across the EU and reducing compliance costs related to the creation and functioning of such businesses.*

### Background

The legal framework in which business is carried out in the EU remains largely national. This exposes companies to a wide diversity of national laws, company forms and company law regimes. Existing Community forms of company, notably the European company (SE), are designed for large companies and are unsuitable for many businesses, in particular of a smaller size. The proposed new legal form of a European private company seeks to remedy this situation in order to enhance the competitiveness of smaller businesses throughout the European Union.

The proposal is a key element of the "Small Business Act for Europe", a package of measures designed to assist small and medium-sized enterprises.

### Further information

- Commission proposal for a regulation on a European private company (11252/08)
- Progress report, May 2009 ([9658/09](#))

### Event

Meeting of the Competitiveness Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (Thursday session on research and consumer items starting at 10.00, Friday session on internal market and industry items starting at 9.30).

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Wednesday 2 December at 15.00. A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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*In public deliberation, the Council will be invited to take note of progress achieved so far on the "energy efficiency package", which includes the following three proposals that strengthen and extend the scope of existing legislation on these issues :*

- a directive on the **energy performance of buildings** ([16082/09](#)), which aims at reducing energy consumption of buildings and requires that all new buildings must be low energy buildings by 2020 and for buildings occupied by public authorities by 2018; furthermore, their energy consumption should to a very significant extent be covered by energy from renewable sources, including renewable energy produced on-site or nearby;
- a directive on **energy labelling** ([16406/09](#)) aimed at improving information to consumers by means of harmonized clear labelling on how much energy is consumed by certain products (including in the household, commercial and industrial sectors);
- a regulation on **labelling of tyres** with respect to fuel efficiency ([14639/09](#)), whose purpose is to increase the safety and the economic and environmental efficiency of road transport by promoting fuel efficient and safe tyres with low noise levels.

## Background

These three proposals were presented by the Commission in November 2008. The Council has been working intensively with the European Parliament since its first reading opinions on these proposals in April and May 2009. An agreement on this package constitutes one of the main priorities of the Swedish Presidency, namely with a view to the Copenhagen conference in December.

The buildings sector is responsible for about 40% of the EU's total final energy consumption and CO2 emissions. Improving the overall energy performance of buildings and encouraging citizens to save energy in their everyday life will significantly contribute to the EU's target of reducing 20% the energy consumption and having a 20% share of energy from renewable sources by 2020.

## Further information

- Commission communication: "Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: Realising the Potential" ([14349/06](#))
- Action Plan 2007-09 on Energy Policy for Europe ([7224/07](#), Annex I).
- Directive 2009/28/EC on the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources (OJ L 140, 5.6.2009)

## Event

Meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (energy items only) - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (09h30)

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room in Brussels on Wednesday 2 December at 14.30.

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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**General Affairs Council - overview of the agenda**

*The General Affairs Council will focus its debate on enlargement, on which it may adopt conclusions based on the Commission's Enlargement package for 2009. Furthermore, the Council will start the preparation of the European Council on 10 and 11 December 2009 focusing on draft European Council conclusions. Then, the incoming Trio Presidency (Spain, Belgium and Hungary) will present its programme for the next 18 months.*

**Further information**

- Council website: <http://consilium.europa.eu/newsroom>

**Event**

Meeting of the General Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels.

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Friday 4 December at 09.30 (tbc).

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

Note: Under the Lisbon Treaty, the "General Affairs and External Relations Council" is replaced by the "General Affairs" Council on the one hand and by the "Foreign Affairs" Council on the other. The latter will be chaired (as of January 2010) by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy.

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## Foreign Affairs Council - overview of the agenda

*The Foreign Affairs Council will discuss the Western Balkans and the Middle East peace process. It may also discuss Burma/Myanmar and Iran.*

*Ministers of Foreign Affairs will have a working dinner on Monday 7.*

In the margins of the Foreign Affairs Council, the following meetings are scheduled:

- EU-Morocco Association Council
- EU-Kyrgyzstan Cooperation Council
- Ministerial meeting with the Eastern Partnership Countries.

### Further information

- Council website: <http://consilium.europa.eu/newsroom>

### Event

Meeting of the Foreign Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (9.00).

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Friday 4 December at 09.30 (tbc).

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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## European Council

*The European Council will assess the state of negotiations at the Copenhagen conference on climate change, which will still be ongoing at the time, and take the necessary decisions to contribute to a successful outcome.*

*The European Council will also deal with the economic, financial and employment situation in the EU. In particular, it is expected to discuss the measures setting up a structure for financial supervision and the preparation of a new strategy for jobs and growth intended to replace the Lisbon Strategy after 2010.*

*Moreover, the European Council is due to adopt a multi-annual programme in the field of freedom, security and justice, called the "Stockholm Programme".*

*In addition, the European Council may have an exchange of views on a number of topics in the field of external relations.*

On 19 November, EU heads of state or government agreed to elect Herman Van Rompuy as President of the European Council. The 10-11 December European Council will still be chaired by the Swedish Prime Minister. Mr. Van Rompuy will chair the European Council as of January 2010.

### Event

European Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels.

A presidency press conference is expected to take place on Thursday evening and another at the end of the European Council proceedings on Friday.

For full information concerning the meeting, including the media programme and media accreditation, see European Council section on: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu>

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## OTHER EVENTS

### **30 November 2009** (Nanjing, China)

- UE - China summit

### **1 December 2009** (Lisbon, Portugal)

- Ceremony marking the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty, hosted by the Prime Minister of Portugal, in the presence of the President elected of the European Council, the President of the Commission and the Spanish Prime Minister.

### **4 December 2009** (Kiev, Ukraine)

- UE - Ukraine summit

### **7 - 18 December 2009** (Copenhagen, Denmark)

- United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 15
-