



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

3064th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 31 January 2011

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Main results of the Council

*In preparation for the February meeting of the **European Council**, which is due to focus on **energy** and **innovation**, the Council examined draft conclusions calling for completion of the internal energy market, delivery on energy efficiency targets and increased coherence of the EU's external action in the field of energy.*

*The Council was also briefed by the presidency on its programme for its term of office, and specifically on its plans for implementation of the **European Semester** and on the issue of **Roma integration**.*

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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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ITEMS DEBATED**PRESIDENCY PROGRAMME**

The Council took note of the presentation by the Hungarian presidency of its programme for its term of office (January to June 2011). It held an exchange of views.

The Hungarian presidency intends to concentrate on the following priorities:

- Growth and employment,
- Food, energy and water resources;
- Issues of direct relevance to citizens;
- EU enlargement and neighbourhood policy.

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Follow-up to the December meeting

The Council took stock of the follow-up to the European Council's meeting on 16 and 17 December.

Preparation of the February meeting

The Council examined draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held in Brussels on 4 February.

The European Council will focus on energy and innovation. An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council on 22 November (*doc. [17163/10](#)*).

The draft European Council conclusions emphasize the need for further action at the EU level aimed at integrating the internal energy market, achieving energy efficiency targets and promoting investments in renewable energies, as well as improving the coherence of the EU's external action in the field of energy. The draft conclusions further call for implementation of a strategic and integrated approach to boosting innovation and for the completion of the European Research Area by 2014 to create a genuine single market for knowledge, research and innovation.

Revised draft conclusions will be submitted to the European Council.

EUROPEAN SEMESTER

The Council took stock of implementation of the "European Semester", which is being implemented for the first time this year as part of a reform of EU economic governance.

The European Semester involves simultaneous monitoring of the member states' budgetary policies and structural reforms, in accordance with common rules, during a six-month period every year.

Annual growth survey

The Commission presented to the Council the main conclusions of its first annual growth survey (*doc. [18066/10](#)*).

The survey outlines priority actions to be taken by member states in order to ensure better-coordinated and more effective policies for putting Europe's economy on the path to sustainable growth.

It sets out priorities in three main areas:

- enhancing macroeconomic stability: implementing budgetary consolidation, correcting macroeconomic imbalances and ensuring the stability of the financial industry;
- structural reforms for boosting employment: making work more attractive, reforming pension systems, getting the unemployed back to work and balancing security and flexibility on labour markets;
- growth-enhancing measures under the "Europe 2020" strategy for jobs and growth: tapping the potential of the EU's single market, attracting private capital to enhance growth and creating cost-effective access to energy.

Implementation

The presidency presented to the Council its plans for implementation of the European Semester.

It made proposals for the first phase of the European Semester, lasting from the publication this month of the annual growth survey until the March European Council, whilst the second phase will be elaborated in greater detail after the European Council, scheduled for 24 and 25 March.

ROMA

The Council was briefed by the presidency on its plans for work at EU level on integration of the Roma population.

The presidency will submit a report to the Council (General Affairs) in May, to be forwarded to the European Council meeting on 24 June.

The Commission is expected to propose in April an EU framework on national Roma integration strategies. Subsequently, the presidency plans to hold debates in four relevant Council configurations.

STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION

The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of a communication on the EU's strategy for the Danube region.

The Council is scheduled to adopt conclusions at its meeting on 18 April.

The strategy is aimed at developing the economic potential of the Danube region and improving environmental conditions. It contains a detailed action plan based around four pillars:

- Connecting the Danube region;
- Protecting the environment in the Danube region;
- Building prosperity in the Danube region;
- Strengthening the Danube region (e.g. stepping up institutional capacity and cooperation to promote security and tackle organised crime).

While no new funds will be made available for implementation of the strategy, the Commission proposes that about EUR 100 billion in funds available under the EU's current financial framework be used in a more coordinated and effective manner.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**TRANSPORT****Rights of bus and coach passengers***

The Council adopted by qualified majority¹ a regulation aimed at strengthening the rights of bus and coach passengers ([PE-CONS 63/10](#) + [5442/11 ADD 1 REV 1](#)). An agreement had previously been reached with the European Parliament, which is due to vote on the text on 15 February 2011.

The regulation is aimed at strengthening passengers' rights as regards compensation and assistance in the event of accidents, non-discrimination against and assistance to persons with disabilities or reduced mobility, rights and as regards in the event of cancellation or delay, information to be provided to passengers and the handling of complaints.

For details, see press release [5808/11](#).

TRADE POLICY**Anti-dumping - Okoumé plywood - China**

The Council imposed a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of okoumé plywood originating in China following a review pursuant to regulation 1225/2009 and terminating a partial interim review ([5087/11](#)).

¹ The German delegation voted against, and the Irish delegation abstained.

HEALTH

Statistics on public health and safety at work

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of regulations concerning statistics on the causes of deaths ([17002/10](#)) and accidents at work ([17524/10](#)).

The draft Commission regulations are subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny. This means that once the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation, unless the European Parliament objects.

INTERNAL MARKET

Chemicals - Classification and labelling

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption by the Commission of a regulation aimed at amending regulation 1272/2008 on the classification, labelling and packaging of substances and mixtures.

The aim is to bring regulation 1272/2008¹ into line with international standards, namely the third revised edition of the "Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals", and to require the labelling of any chemical that may elicit a response in individuals already sensitised to it, even when present at very low concentration in a mixture.

The draft regulation also amends the terminology of certain provisions and technical criteria in order to facilitate implementation by operators and enforcement authorities. (Regulation 1272/2008 provides for the Commission to adjust and adapt it to technical and scientific progress.)

The draft regulation is subject to the regulatory procedure with scrutiny, which means that once the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt it, unless the European Parliament objects.

¹ Official Journal no. L 353, 31.12.2008, p. 1.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Drugs situation in Europe in 2010 - Council conclusions

The Council approved conclusions contained in document [5179/11](#).

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

The Council adopted the reply to confirmatory application No 28/c/01/10. The Danish, Finnish, Swedish and United Kingdom delegations voted against it (*doc. 18164/10*).
