



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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General Affairs

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Main results of the Council

*The Council prepared the March meeting of the European Council, which is due to focus on **economic policy** issues, including the future **European Stability Mechanism** and legislative proposals on **economic governance**, and on developments in the **EU's southern neighbourhood**.*

*The Council for the first time adopted conclusions on the future of **EU cohesion policy**. The conclusions examine a Commission report and advocate a common strategic framework, which focuses on a limited number of priorities, in line with Europe 2020 goals, while providing for sufficient flexibility to allow for local needs.*

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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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Mr Johannes HAHN

Member

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Mr Pierre de BOISSIEU

General Secretary

ITEMS DEBATED**EUROPEAN COUNCIL****Follow-up to the February European Council**

The Council took stock of the follow-up to be given to the European Council's meeting on 4 February, which focused on energy and innovation.

Preparation of the March European Council

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 24 and 25 March (*doc. [6231/11](#)*).

The March European Council is due to focus on:

- Economic policy: Conclusion of the first phase of the European Semester (annual monitoring of budgetary policies and structural reforms), adoption of a decision amending the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union with regard to the future European Stability Mechanism (ESM), finalisation of work on the ESM and on the strengthening of the European Financial Stability Facility, finalisation of work by the Council on legislative proposals on economic governance, and a decision on economic policy coordination in the euro area.
- Developments in the EU's southern neighbourhood and follow-up to the 4 February European Council declaration on Egypt.

COHESION POLICY

The Council held a policy debate and adopted conclusions (*doc.* [6738/11](#)) on a Commission report (*doc.* [16336/10](#)), presented last November, on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU.

The Council conclusions stress the need for continued pursuit of the objective of reduced disparities between the development levels of the various regions of the EU and underline the contribution cohesion policy has made towards the EU's competitiveness and growth objectives. They also emphasize that cohesion policy should focus on a limited number of priorities, in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, while maintaining sufficient flexibility to allow for regional needs.

The conclusions call for further discussions on the following Commission suggestions:

- the creation of a "development and investment partnership contract", which outlines an investment and development strategy addressing the priorities established under the Europe 2020 strategy for jobs and growth,
- a list of priorities on which EU and national resources should focus,
- conditionalities and incentive mechanisms linked to cohesion policy.

The Commission has to submit to the Council every three years a report examining progress made towards achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion. Its fifth cohesion report sets out its ideas for the reform of cohesion policy, following a debate which started with the fourth report in 2007.

Comments made during the Council debate will provide input to the Commission in its preparation of a legislative package for structural funds after 2013, which is due to be published before the summer.

The Council also adopted without discussion conclusions on a special report by the European Court of Auditors concerning the effectiveness of structural measures spending on the supply of water for domestic consumption, set out in document [6490/11](#).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

TRADE POLICY

Anti-dumping - Polyethylene terephthalate - South Korea

The Council adopted a regulation terminating a review of the anti-dumping measures applicable to imports of certain polyethylene terephthalate originating, inter alia, in the Republic of Korea, without amending the measures currently in force ([5867/11](#)).

TRANSPORT

Air services agreements with partner states in West Africa and Saudi Arabia

The Council authorised the conclusion of an air services agreement, signed in November 2009, between the EU and the West African Economic and Monetary Union¹ ([6190/09](#), [6646/10](#) + [COR 1](#) and [6353/11](#)), and the signing of such an agreement with Saudi Arabia ([5733/11](#) + COR 2 and [6050/11](#)).

The two agreements supersede or complement the existing bilateral agreements between individual member states and the partner countries concerned, bringing their provisions in line with EU law, in particular as regards non-discriminatory access of all EU air carriers to routes between the EU and the partner countries, aviation fuel taxation and competition rules.

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

The Council adopted:

- the reply to confirmatory application made by Ms Sigita URDZE (01/c/01/11), with the Danish, Finnish and Swedish delegations voting against ([5275/11](#)); and
- the reply to confirmatory application No 02/c/01/11 ([5704/11](#)).

¹ Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Senegal and Togo.