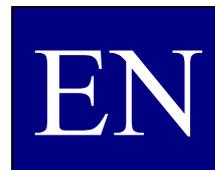




**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6069/09 (Presse 32)

PRESS RELEASE

2922nd meeting of the Council

Economic and Financial Affairs

Brussels, 10 February 2009

President **Miroslav KALOUSEK**
Minister for Finance of the Czech Republic

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 9548 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

6069/09 (Presse 32)

1
EN

Main results of the Council

*The Council reviewed implementation of the **European economic recovery plan** approved in December, with a view to an overall assessment by the European Council at its spring meeting (19 and 20 March).*

*It adopted a recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge to be given to the Commission for implementation of the EU general **budget for 2007**.*

*It adopted conclusions calling on the Commission to resume negotiation on an **anti-fraud agreement with Liechtenstein**, so as to obtain changes that ensure effective administrative assistance and access to information with regard to all forms of investment, in particular foundations and trusts.*

*The Council adopted conclusions on the **single euro payments area (SEPA)**. Whilst reiterating its support for the initiative, the Council noted the current slow uptake of SEPA products, which seems to focus mainly on cross-border payments. It considered that the launch of the SEPA direct debit scheme scheduled for 1 November 2009 will provide new impetus for SEPA migration; whilst underlining the need for clarity on long-term pricing issues, it invited the industry to accelerate the necessary preparatory work for its successful launch.*

*It also approved the establishment of a "**European 112 Day**" to promote awareness raising, the sharing of experience and networking activities as regards the use of 112 as a common telephone number to contact emergency services.*

CONTENTS¹

PARTICIPANTS.....	5
--------------------------	----------

ITEMS DEBATED

PREPARATION OF THE SPRING MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL.....	7
--	---

European economic recovery plan.....	7
--------------------------------------	---

Key issues paper on economic and financial affairs.....	9
---	---

Reduced VAT rates.....	10
------------------------	----

BUDGETARY ISSUES.....	11
-----------------------	----

EU general budget for 2007.....	11
---------------------------------	----

OTHER BUSINESS.....	12
---------------------	----

Short selling of securities and executive pay.....	12
--	----

MEETINGS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL.....	13
---	----

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED*ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS*

– Single market review - <i>Council conclusions</i>	15
---	----

– Single euro payments area - <i>Council conclusions</i>	17
--	----

– Common guidelines for the national sides and the issuance of euro coins – <i>Council conclusions</i>	18
--	----

– VAT - border bridges between Germany and Czech Republic.....	20
--	----

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.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

- Anti-fraud agreement with Liechtenstein - *Council conclusions*.....20
- Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Restrictive measures against extremists.....21

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

- EU/Cariforum - Economic partnership agreement21
- European Development Funds - Discharge for 2007.....21

GENERAL AFFAIRS

- Proceedings in the Council's different configurations22

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

- Exempting holders of Indonesian diplomatic passports from visa requirements.....22
- Schengen Information System - 2007 budget.....22

ENERGY

- Ecodesign requirements - Regulatory procedure with scrutiny23

TRANSPORT

- Inland waterway vessels - Regulatory procedure with scrutiny23

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Establishment of a "European 112 Day"23

APPOINTMENTS

- Committee of the Regions25
- CDE - Centre for the Development of Enterprise.....25

PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:



Belgium:

Mr Didier REYNERS

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance

Bulgaria:

Mr Plamen Vassilev ORESHARSKI

Minister for Finance

Czech Republic:

Mr Miroslav KALOUSEK

Minister for Finance

Mr Tomáš ZÍDEK

Deputy Minister for Finance, International Relations and Financial Policy Section

Denmark:

Mr Lars Løkke RASMUSSEN

Minister for Finance

Germany:

Mr Peer STEINBRÜCK

Federal Minister for Finance

Estonia:

Mr Raul MÄLK

Permanent Representative

Ireland:

Mr Brian LENIHAN

Minister for Finance

Greece:

Mr Ioannis PAPATHANASIOU

Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance

Spain:

Mr Pedro SOLBES MIRA

Second Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance

France:

Ms Christine LAGARDE

Minister for Economic Affairs, Finance and Employment

Italy:

Mr Giulio TREMONTI

Minister for Economic Affairs and Finance

Cyprus:

Mr Charilaos STAVRAKIS

Minister for Finance

Latvia:

Mr Atis SLAKTERIS

Minister for Finance

Lithuania:

Mr Algirdas Gediminas ŠEMETA

Minister for Finance

Luxembourg:

Mr Jean-Claude JUNCKER

Prime Minister, Ministre d'Etat, Minister for Finance

Hungary:

Mr János VERES

Minister for Finance

Malta:

Mr Tonio FENECH

Minister of Finance, Economy and Investment

Netherlands:

Mr Wouter BOS

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Finance

Austria:

Mr Reinhold LOPATKA

State Secretary, Federal Chancellery

Poland:

Mr Ludwik KOTECKI

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Finance

Portugal:

Mr Fernando TEIXEIRA DOS SANTOS

Ministro de Estado, Minister for Finance

Romania:

Mr Gheorghe POGEA

Minister for Finance

Slovenia:

Mr Franc KRIŽANIČ

Minister for Finance

Slovakia:

Mr Ján POČIATEK

Minister for Finance

Finland:

Mr Jyrki KATAINEN

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Finance

Sweden:

Mr Anders BORG

Minister for Finance

United Kingdom:

Mr Alistair DARLING

Chancellor of the Exchequer

Commission:

M. Siim KALLAS

Vice-President

Mr Joaquín ALMUNIA

Member

Ms Dalia GRYBAUSKAITĖ

Member

Mr László KOVÁCS

Member

Mrs Neelie KROES

Member

Mr Charlie McCREEVY

Member

Other participants:

Mr Frank MOSS

Director General of the European Central Bank

Mr Philippe MAYSTADT

President of the European Investment Bank

Mr Xavier MUSCA

Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee

ITEMS DEBATED**PREPARATION OF THE SPRING MEETING OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL****European economic recovery plan**

The Council:

- reviewed implementation of the European economic recovery plan approved by the European Council in December in response to the global financial crisis and economic slowdown;
- held an exchange of views on the financial aspects of proposals aimed at providing additional support, under the European economic recovery plan, to investments in the field of energy and infrastructure, including broadband internet and rural development.

At its spring meeting, on 19 and 20 March , the European Council will assess how well the recovery plan has been implemented.

As regards additional investment in the field of energy, a number of delegations raised concerns relating to the financing of projects and asked the Commission to review its proposal. The president of the Council indicated that views expressed will be taken into account when the General Affairs and External Relations Council discusses the issue on 23 February, with a view to reaching an agreement with the European Parliament and the Commission before the European Council meeting.

Additional EU investment in energy and infrastructure

The European economic recovery plan provides a framework for measures taken by each member state and identifies a number of actions to be undertaken at EU level. In adopting the plan in December, the European Council invited the Parliament, the Council and the Commission to take decisions necessary for its implementation as speedily as possible and in full compliance with the EU's financial perspective for the 2007-13 period and the procedures of the inter-institutional agreement¹.

¹ Agreement between the Parliament, the Council and the Commission on budgetary discipline and sound financial management (OJ C 139 of 14 June 2006, p. 1).

In relation to energy and infrastructure, the Commission subsequently submitted proposals on the provision of an additional EUR 5 billion investment from the EU's budget, namely:

- a regulation dealing with the energy sector, with a list of projects totalling EUR 3.5 billion, including EUR 1.75 billion for gas and electricity interconnection projects, EUR 1.25 billion for carbon capture and storage and EUR 500 million for offshore wind projects;
- a regulation and a decision on rural development, involving a total of EUR 1,5 billion, including EUR 1 billion for broadband internet infrastructure and EUR 500 million for tackling challenges such as climate change, renewable energies, water management, biodiversity and measures to accompany the restructuring of the dairy sector.

To finance this investment, the Commission proposes:

- for the energy projects, to use transfers from the margin for 2008 of heading 2 of the 2007 - 2013 financial perspective (preservation and management of natural resources) to heading 1A (competitiveness for growth and employment), amounting to EUR 1.5 billion in 2009 and EUR 2 billion in 2010. This would require a revision of the financial perspective;
- for the rural development measures, to use the margin under the ceiling of heading 2 for 2009 of the financial perspective.

Key issues paper on economic and financial affairs

The Council held an exchange of views on the main messages to be conveyed to the spring meeting of the European Council (19 and 20 March) as regards economic and financial affairs, on the basis of an outline key issues paper produced by the presidency.

It requested the Economic and Financial Committee to prepare the key issues paper for adoption at the Council's meeting on 10 March.

The presidency paper presents an outline of the main issues for consideration, setting out the following themes:

- 2009: a year of economic recession and uncertainties;
- financial markets: resuming stability and modernizing rules;
- real economy: facilitating swift and steady recovery;
- economic and monetary union: fostering success in turbulent times.

Reduced VAT rates

The Council discussed the issue of reduced rates of value-added tax (VAT), in the context of the economic recovery plan approved by the European Council in December.

The presidency indicated that it will reflect on how to take the dossier forward in response to the European Council's request to settle the issue by March. A further discussion is expected at the Council's meeting on 10 March, in the run-up to the next European Council, on 19 and 20 March.

Allowing member states that so wish to apply reduced VAT rates in certain sectors is one of the actions identified by the economic recovery plan.

Current EU rules on VAT rates are set by directive 2006/112/EC. They are the outcome of a variety of initiatives over the years, including the 1992 decision on the harmonisation of VAT rates in the context of the EU single market, the 2000 decision to allow reduced VAT rates temporarily on labour-intensive local services with a view to stimulating employment, and 2004 derogations allowed for newly acceding member states. In addition, the Commission has announced for April a proposal on the specific application of reduced rates to environmental goods and services, focusing principally on energy efficiency in buildings.

The Commission has also proposed a directive aimed at allowing all member states to apply reduced rates – on a permanent basis – to labour-intensive local services, including restaurant services.

BUDGETARY ISSUES

EU general budget for 2007

The Council adopted, by qualified majority, a recommendation to the European Parliament on the discharge to be given to the Commission for implementation of the EU general budget for 2007 ([5587/09 ADD 1](#)).

The recommendation was prepared on the basis of an annual report from the Court of Auditors¹. The Netherlands delegation voted against.

The Council also adopted recommendations on the discharge to be given to the directors of 21 EU agencies and three EU executive agencies as regards implementation of their budgets for 2007 ([5588/09 ADD 1](#) + [5589/09 ADD 1](#)), as well as conclusions on a series of Court of Auditors special reports ([5587/09 ADD2](#)).

The recommendations and conclusions will be submitted to the Parliament, in accordance with the budgetary discharge procedure.

¹ OJ C 286 of 10.11.2008, p. 1.

OTHER BUSINESS**Short selling of securities and executive pay**

The Council took note of an intervention by the Netherlands minister, calling for action to enhance greater convergence, both between member states and at international level, in temporary measures taken with regard to the short selling of securities.

The Swedish minister also raised the issue of bonuses and executive pay in the financial sector.

The president of the Council called on the Commission to look further into these issues, and signalled the Council's support to ongoing work by the Committee of European Securities Regulators with regard to short selling.

MEETINGS IN THE MARGINS OF THE COUNCIL

The following meetings were held in the margins of the Council:

– ***Meeting with the European Parliament***

The Council troika (current and two following presidencies) met a delegation from the European Parliament on 9 February to discuss preparations for the G20 summit on global financial governance in London on 2 April, as well as progress on the EU's economic recovery plan.

– ***Macroeconomic policy dialogue with the social partners***

The Council troika on 9 February held its twice-yearly macroeconomic policy dialogue with the social partners (representatives of European business organisations, trade unions, public enterprises and SMEs). Representatives of the Commission, the eurogroup, the European Central Bank and non-euro area central banks also attended the meeting.

– ***Eurogroup***

Ministers of the euro area member states attended a meeting of the eurogroup on 9 February.

– ***Breakfast meeting on the economic situation***

Over breakfast, ministers were debriefed on the eurogroup deliberations on 9 February, the macroeconomic policy dialogue with the social partners on 9 February, and a meeting of G20 deputies held in London on 31 January and 1 February.

They also discussed the economic situation and developments on financial markets, as well as the treatment of impaired assets in rescue packages for the financial sector. In this regard, ministers agreed on the following elements:

"Ministers discussed the implementation of financial rescue packages. They agreed that the priority is to fully restore the functioning of credit channels and that to this extent the strategy agreed in October 2008 remains fully valid. In this context, it is important that sound banks can strengthen their capital structure in appropriate conditions so as to avoid further contraction of credit to the economy.

Ministers also agreed that, to safeguard banking sector stability, measures to deal with impaired assets could in specific cases usefully complement agreed instruments. These measures should remain consistent with the principles set in October 2008, in particular (i) safeguarding financial stability and restoring the provision of credit and lending to the economy; (ii) ensuring a level playing field within the single market; and (iii) containing the impact on public finances.

Ministers agreed on the need for a common and coordinated approach and agreed to the following principles:

- A correct and consistent approach of valuation is of key importance to maintain a level playing field;
- Banks benefiting from such schemes should keep a portion of the risk and some specific conditions related to management may have to be included to limit moral hazard;
- While there should be some flexibility concerning the choice of assets selected, full transparency should be ensured;
- Close monitoring of the implementation of such measures would be essential.

This kind of intervention raises complex technical issues such as the pricing of assets and the insurance fee. The Commission will ensure compliance with state aid rules and restructuring requirements linked to asset relief as well as the rest of the rescue measures. The Commission, in cooperation with the ECB has provided elements of guidance in this respect which constitute a good basis for defining a commonly agreed EU framework, notably to ensure respect for the level playing field. The EFC is invited to continue its work in close cooperation with the Commission and the ECB."

*

* *

Over lunch, ministers discussed the follow-up to be given after 2010 to the EU's Lisbon strategy for growth and jobs. They also discussed the issue of reduced rates of value-added tax (VAT).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS****Single market review - Council conclusions**

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"Referring to the European Council Conclusions of 13 and 14 March 2008 requesting an effective annual follow-up to the Single Market Review, the Council WELCOMES the Commission's progress report called "The Single Market Review: one year on" and AGREES with its overall assessment.

Firm commitment to the single market principles and priorities

The Council (ECOFIN) EMPHASIZES that the single market is one of the most valuable achievements of the EU and remains a key driver for improving Europe's global competitiveness. A well-functioning single market without barriers would strengthen resilience of the EU economy and enhance growth potential, job creation, and prosperity of its citizens.

The Council (ECOFIN) UNDERLINES that the single market is a unique asset and should be safeguarded during the current financial crisis and economic slowdown. When deciding on measures, including those in response to the current crisis, Member States should refrain from adopting policies that impose limits on the four freedoms and distort competition, while all actors must respond to the need for fast and flexible action. The implementation of the European Economic Recovery Plan should adhere to the same single market principles (e.g. non-discrimination, proportionality) and should fully respect the state aid rules. By respecting these principles the single market will provide an appropriate platform for the economic recovery.

The Council (ECOFIN) CONSIDERS strengthening consumer confidence, simplifying the business environment and reducing the administrative burden for SMEs, strengthening the competition throughout the economy, in particular in the services market (timely implementation of the Service Directive) and network industries (e.g. energy, transport and telecommunication), increasing the effectiveness of retail financial services, strengthening financial stability, removing barriers in the labour market, creating innovation friendly market conditions, including the creation of a Community patent, investing in people's skills, and promoting external openness as the most important policy actions in the single market agenda. In this respect, the Council STRESSES the necessity of implementing without delay structural reforms which are foreseen in the Community Lisbon Programme.

Delivering through more effective means

The Council (ECOFIN) STRESSES that a coordinated approach is necessary and the need, in particular in the context of the present economic downturn, for a dynamic and responsive policy framework, respecting a level playing field. It should be based on a range of policy instruments, well-tailored to provide specific policy solutions, and be based on a partnership between the Commission and the Member States. Emphasis should be given to an evidence-based and outcome-oriented approach and better and more effective implementation to provide full benefits to citizens and businesses.

The Council (ECOFIN) TAKES NOTE of the progress made regarding the market monitoring initiative, in particular with the sector screening at the European level, and WELCOMES the fact that the Commission has already launched an in-depth monitoring of the food supply chain, retail distribution, electrical engineering and pharmaceutical industries. It ENCOURAGES Member States to support further work on these exercises and to consider similar screenings at the national level. Furthermore, the Council (ECOFIN) INVITES the Member States and the Commission to implement as appropriate the proposed roadmap for improving the functioning of the food supply chain in 2009 and ENCOURAGES the Commission to complete the in-depth market monitoring in the field of retail services, electrical engineering and pharmaceuticals by the end of 2009 and to launch further in-depth market monitoring exercises, as and when appropriate. The Council (ECOFIN) INVITES the Commission to report back on the state of play on market monitoring by the end of 2009.

The Council (ECOFIN) INVITES the Commission to review how market monitoring recommendations can best support the existing EU and national decision-making process in delivering necessary sectoral reforms at the EU and national level and CALLS on the Commission to report back to the Economic Policy Committee. The Council (ECOFIN) ENCOURAGES the Commission to gather further experience in the design and implementation of market monitoring in close cooperation with Member States, in the least burdensome way possible and ASKS the Economic Policy Committee to discuss the way forward regarding the methodology used (data, sectors selected, etc.) and to facilitate the exchange of experience. Close cooperation between the Commission and Member States can improve data quality."

Single euro payments area - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council

- REITERATES its support for the aim of the Single Euro Payments Area (SEPA), which is to achieve an integrated and competitive internal market for euro payments and welcomes the first annual progress report on SEPA migration prepared by the Commission in cooperation with the ECB;
- WELCOMES the successful operational launch of the SEPA credit transfer scheme on 28 January 2008 by the payments industry, NOTES that significant efforts are required to accelerate the current slow rate of SEPA migration, which seems to focus mainly on cross-border payments and EMPHASISES that the full benefits of SEPA can only be obtained through the full migration of domestic euro payments traffic;
- therefore ENCOURAGES industry to actively market competitive, high-quality SEPA products respecting the non-deterioration principle and INVITES users, in particular those with high payment volumes such as public authorities, corporate and other large entities, to demonstrate a high commitment to the use of SEPA products domestically. In this respect, public authorities have a key responsibility;
- RECOGNISES the good progress achieved by public authorities in some Member States as observed in the Commission survey on public authority SEPA migration, ACKNOWLEDGES the importance of proper coordination of public authority migration at the national level and supports the Commission aim of establishing a scoreboard which could provide a useful instrument for monitoring further progress;
- CONSIDERS that the launch of the SEPA direct debit scheme scheduled for 1 November 2009 will provide new impetus for SEPA migration, UNDERLINES the need for clarity on long term pricing issues, INVITES the industry to accelerate the necessary preparatory work for its successful launch and REPEATS the importance of rapidly ensuring the continued legal validity of existing direct debit mandates, where applicable and needed, as already achieved in some Member States;

- RECOGNISES that the current financial crisis and economic slow-down provides opportunities for major efficiency gains and cost savings, thus requiring reinforced commitment to the project from all parties and INVITES the Commission and the ECB and the Eurosystem to continue their role in identifying the necessary actions for its successful realisation."

Common guidelines for the national sides and the issuance of euro coins – Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council welcomes the common guidelines for the national sides and the issuance of euro coins intended for circulation, which were presented by the Commission in its Recommendation adopted on 19 December 2008 and which were prepared in close cooperation with Member States.

The new Commission Recommendation consolidates and replaces the two previous Commission Recommendations in this field, which were endorsed by the Council on 8 December 2003 and 7 June 2005 respectively.

In particular, the Council agrees on the following additional or modified elements:

- Euro coins intended for circulation should be put into circulation at face value. This does not exclude that a minor proportion of issued euro coins is sold at a higher price, if justified by reasons such as special quality or packaging. This rule should apply as from 1 January 2010 for the countries having Monetary Agreements with the European Community. The Commission is invited to review the functioning of the existing Monetary Agreements and to consider possible increases in the ceilings for coin issuance.
- The national side of the euro coins intended for circulation should bear the 12 European stars that should fully surround the national design, including the year mark and the indication of the issuing Member State's name. The European stars should be depicted as on the European flag.
- The designs used for the national sides of the regular euro coins intended for circulation denominated in euro or in cent should not be modified, except in cases where the Head of State referred to on a coin changes. Issuing Member States should, however, be allowed to update the design of euro coins depicting the Head of State every fifteen years in order to take account of a change in the appearance of the Head of State. A temporary vacancy or the provisional occupation of the function of Head of State should not give the right to change the national sides of the regular euro coins intended for circulation.

- Member States may issue commemorative euro coins intended for circulation showing a different national design from that of the regular euro coins intended for circulation. Such commemorative coins should only commemorate subjects of major national or European relevance. Commemorative euro coins intended for circulation collectively issued by all euro-area Member States should only commemorate subjects of the highest European relevance and their issuance should be endorsed by the Council.
- The number of issues of commemorative euro coins intended for circulation should be limited to one per issuing Member State per year, except in cases where:
 - commemorative euro coins intended for circulation are collectively issued by all euro-area Member States;
 - a possible commemorative euro coin intended for circulation is issued on the occasion of a temporary vacancy or provisional occupation of the function of Head of State.
- The edge lettering on commemorative euro coins intended for circulation should be the same as on regular euro coins intended for circulation.
- Member States should inform each other of the draft designs of new national sides of euro coins, including the edge letterings, and of the volume of issuance before they formally approve these designs. To this effect, new draft designs of euro coins should be forwarded by the issuing Member State to the Commission, as a rule, at least six months before the planned issue date. The Commission should verify compliance with the rules and inform the other Member States without delay via the Economic and Financial Committee's relevant subcommittee. If and when the Commission considers that the common guidelines are not respected, the relevant subcommittee of the Economic and Financial Committee should decide whether to approve the design. The relevant subcommittee of the Economic and Financial Committee should, furthermore, approve the designs of commemorative euro coins intended for circulation collectively issued by all euro-area Member States.
- No changes are required to the national sides and edge letterings of both regular and commemorative euro coins intended for circulation which have been first issued or approved according to the agreed information procedure prior to the adoption of these conclusions."

VAT - border bridges between Germany and Czech Republic

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Czech Republic and Germany to derogate from the territorial application of VAT as regards the construction and maintenance of border bridges between the two countries (*5199/09*).

The purpose of this decision is for supplies of goods and services and intra-Community acquisitions of goods intended for the construction and maintenance of the cross-border bridges in question to be subject to the value added tax of the member state that is responsible for their construction or maintenance. In the absence of this derogation it would be necessary, according to the principle of territoriality, for each supply of goods and services and intra-Community acquisition of goods to ascertain whether the place of taxation was the Czech Republic or Germany.

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Anti-fraud agreement with Liechtenstein - Council conclusions

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

- "1. The Council takes note of the fact that the Commission has submitted, on 11 December 2008, a proposal for a Council Decision on the signing, on behalf of the Community, of the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and its Member States, of the one part, and the Principality of Liechtenstein, of the other part, to combat fraud and any other illegal activity to the detriment of their financial interests ([17247/08](#)).
2. Following the discussion held at the meeting of the Council on 4 November 2008, the Council strongly invites the Commission to continue the negotiations with Liechtenstein, in conformity with the mandate from 2006, in order to obtain such changes in the text of the draft agreement to ensure effective administrative assistance and access to information with regard to all forms of investment, in particular foundations and trusts.
3. As regards the provision of information in tax matters to the Member States, the Council expects Liechtenstein to encompass in the agreement with the European Community and its Member States at least a similar scope of obligations as Liechtenstein recently agreed with third countries.
4. The Council calls on the Commission to report back on progress at one of its forthcoming meetings, at the latest in May."

Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia - Restrictive measures against extremists

The Council adopted a common position extending and amending common position 2004/133/CFSP on restrictive measures against extremists in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM) ([5403/09](#)).

The common position is extended for a further period of five months, until 10 July, and seven persons are removed from the list annexed to it. The common position now contains ten names affected by the visa ban.

The measures are aimed at preventing admission into the EU of individuals who actively promote or take part in violent extremist activities challenging the Ohrid framework agreement's basic principles of stability, territorial integrity and the multi-ethnic character of FYROM, and/or who deliberately undermine and obstruct implementation of the agreement by actions outside the democratic process.

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

EU/Cariforum - Economic partnership agreement

The Council decided to forward to the European Parliament for assent a draft decision on the conclusion of an economic partnership agreement with the Cariforum states. Once the Parliament has given the go-ahead, the Council will approve the conclusion of the agreement.

The Cariforum States comprise Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, the Dominican Republic, Grenada, the Republic of Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Christopher and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, the Republic of Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago.

European Development Funds - Discharge for 2007

The Council adopted recommendations regarding the discharge to be given by the European Parliament to the Commission in respect of implementation of operations under the 7th, 8th and 9th European Development Funds (EDF) for the financial year 2007 ([5042/09](#) + [5044/09](#) + [5045/09](#) + [5045/09 COR I](#)). It also adopted a statement concerning the statement of assurance of the Court of Auditors relating to the activities of the 7th, 8th and 9th EDF for 2007 ([5047/09](#)).

GENERAL AFFAIRS**Proceedings in the Council's different configurations**

The Council took note of a report on proceedings in its different configurations ([5440/09](#)).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**Exempting holders of Indonesian diplomatic passports from visa requirements**

The Council adopted a decision amending Annex 2, schedule A, to the common consular instructions on visas for the diplomatic missions and consular posts¹, in relation to visa requirements for holders of Indonesian diplomatic and service passports ([16194/08](#)).

Annex 2, schedule A, to the common consular instructions contains the list of countries whose nationals are not subject to a visa requirement in one or more Schengen states when they are holders of diplomatic, official or service passports.

Austria wishes to exempt holders of Indonesian diplomatic and service passports from visa requirements. The Common Consular Instructions should therefore be amended accordingly. The Decision will apply from 1 March 2009.

Schengen Information System - 2007 budget

The member states meeting within the Council approved a management report concerning the implementation of the C.SIS installation and operation budget for 2007.

¹ OJ C 326, 22.12.2005, p.1.

ENERGY

Ecodesign requirements - Regulatory procedure with scrutiny

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a regulation implementing Directive 2005/32/EC with regard to ecodesign requirements for no-load condition electric power consumption and average active efficiency of external power supplies.

In accordance with the EU's regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the Council can oppose the adoption of legal acts by the Commission. Consequently, unless the European Parliament objects, the Commission can adopt the regulation.

TRANSPORT

Inland waterway vessels - Regulatory procedure with scrutiny

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a directive amending Directive 2006/87/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down technical requirements for inland waterway vessels.

In accordance with the EU's regulatory procedure with scrutiny, the Council can oppose the adoption of legal acts by the Commission. Consequently, unless the European Parliament objects, the Commission can adopt the directive.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Establishment of a "European 112 Day"

The Council adopted the following joint tripartite declaration on the establishment of a "European 112 Day":

"Recalling that 112 is the telephone number to call emergency services in all the countries of the European Union (EU), from fixed and mobile phones, free of charge,

Recalling that in 1991 it was decided to introduce 112 as the single European emergency call number in order to make access to emergency services easier by telephone, especially for citizens travelling within the EU,

Recalling that 112 is operational in all the EU Member States, and that it is the sole number that can be used in all EU Member States and co-exists in the majority of them with one or several distinct national emergency numbers,

Recalling that there has been increased mobility of citizens within the EU for work, study and leisure over recent years, who may find themselves in an emergency situation abroad, and who would benefit from a reliable emergency service in the single market,

Recalling that citizens can dial 112 for all emergencies and that calls to 112 should be appropriately answered and handled in a manner best suited to the national organisation of emergency systems, and that information about the caller location should be made available to emergency services,

Recalling the importance for the EU of reinforcing its capacity to address all phases of disaster (preparedness, prevention, response and recovery), where early warning systems can benefit from the information made available by citizens calling 112,

Mindful of the importance of emergency services that assist citizens in cases of distress and of the need to further encourage Member States' on-going efforts by highlighting the benefits that can be derived from reinforcing networking and exchanging experiences on different technical, economic, legal and organisational issues at EU level,

Recalling the social importance of citizens identifying 112 as one of the significant results that the EU has delivered,

Recalling that only 24 % of EU citizens currently identify 112 as the number to be called in case of emergency anywhere in the EU and that just 30 % of EU citizens are of the view that they are adequately informed about the existence of 112,

Underlining the necessity to increase visibility and awareness of the single European emergency number 112, the benefits for citizens of which should be celebrated each year,

The European Parliament, the Council of the European Union and the European Commission

Approve the establishment of a "European 112 Day", to be celebrated on 11 February each year, in particular by the organisation of awareness-raising, experience-sharing and networking activities."

APPOINTMENTS**Committee of the Regions**

The Council adopted a decision appointing as member for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2010:

- Mr Robert BRIGHT, Councillor, Newport City;
- Ms Emilia MÜLLER, Staatsministerin für Bundes- und Europaangelegenheiten in der Bayerischen Staatskanzlei,

The Council adopted a decision appointing as an alternate member for the remainder of the current term of office, which runs until 25 January 2010:

- Mr André Jorge DIONÍSIO BRADFORD, Secretário Regional da Presidência, Ponta Delgada, Açores;
- Mr Horst SEEHOFER, Bayerischer Ministerpräsident.

CDE - Centre for the Development of Enterprise

The Council adopted a decision appointing as Director of the Centre for the Development of Enterprise, for a term of office ending on 28 February 2010:

- Mr Mabouso THIAM (Senegal).
-