



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



Brussels, 6 May 2014  
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PRESSE 267

## **Negotiating mandate for an EU-Switzerland institutional framework agreement**

The Council adopted today<sup>1</sup> a decision authorising the opening of negotiations on an agreement between the EU and Switzerland on an institutional framework governing bilateral relations.

Currently, relations between the EU and Switzerland are based on a highly complex system of more than 120 sector-specific agreements, covering a wide range of EU policies, including Swiss participation in many areas of the EU's internal market.

With the aim of in particular protecting the homogeneity of the internal market and ensuring legal certainty for authorities, citizens and economic operators, the Council voiced, as early as in 2008, the need for an overarching institutional framework for EU-Switzerland relations.

The Council reiterated and specified this position in its conclusions on EU relations with EFTA countries of December 2010 and 2012. In these conclusions, the Council considered in particular that horizontal institutional solutions were needed for the dynamic adaptation of agreements to the evolving EU *acquis*, the homogenous interpretation of the agreements, an independent surveillance and judicial enforcement mechanism and a dispute settlement mechanism.

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<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council

**P R E S S**

Preliminary talks with Switzerland on institutional issues were held between summer 2011 and summer 2013. Switzerland adopted a negotiating mandate regarding an institutional framework in December 2013 and the Council followed suit today, after considering the appropriateness of such a mandate in the light of the Swiss popular initiative on an "Initiative against mass immigration" of 9 February 2014.

Upon adoption of the mandate, the Council declared that while negotiations on an institutional framework should be launched, the conclusion of these negotiations and of negotiations on any further agreements on Swiss participation in the EU's internal market was subject to a comprehensive assessment of relations between the EU and Switzerland.

Furthermore, the Council indicated that it expected Switzerland to honour its obligations arising from the agreement on the free movement of persons and its other agreements concluded with the EU, and to ensure the respect of rights of EU citizens acquired under the agreement on the free movement of persons.

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