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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

EDUCATION

Lifelong learning

The Council adopted a revised recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning ([8299/18](#)).

The current recommendation on key competences was adopted in 2006. The revised one aims to take account of the significant changes, like digitalisation, that have occurred since then, and better prepare citizens for changing labour markets and a diverse and digital society.

The revised recommendation focuses on how the education system can manage the challenges highlighted by the latest PISA survey and on the ever-growing need for learners of all ages to develop their key competences throughout their lives, including soft skills and creativity.

Particular emphasis is placed on areas such as basic competences, motivating young people, especially girls, to study science, technology, engineering and maths, and nurturing entrepreneurial skills.

Promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching

The Council adopted a recommendation on promoting common values, inclusive education, and the European dimension of teaching ([8015/18](#))

The recommendation recognises the need to promote a European dimension of teaching in order to increase understanding of the common European heritage and awareness of the cultural and social diversity of the EU and its member states. The recommendation also highlights the importance of inclusive education in all learning environments, including all levels and types of education and training in a lifelong perspective.

The initiative is a follow-up to the 'Paris Declaration' of March 2015 on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education. In the declaration member states were invited to reinforce cooperation at EU level in four areas:

1. ensuring that children and young people acquire social, civic and intercultural competences, by promoting democratic values and fundamental rights, social inclusion and non-discrimination, as well as active citizenship,
2. enhancing critical thinking and media literacy, particularly in the use of the internet and social media, so as to develop resistance to all forms of discrimination and indoctrination,
3. fostering the education of disadvantaged children and young people, by ensuring that our education and training systems address their needs,
4. promoting intercultural dialogue through all forms of learning in cooperation with other relevant policies and stakeholders.

Moving towards a vision of a European Education Area

The Council adopted conclusions on moving towards a vision of a European Education Area (EEA) (8504/18 + COR1).

The conclusions highlight the crucial role of education and culture in bringing Europeans together and for the future of the EU. The conclusions invite member states to cooperate and to continue reflecting on a shared vision of an EEA, including its possible goals, objectives and scope, and its links with the post-2020 strategic framework for cooperation in education and training. Special emphasis is placed on: Erasmus +, digital skills and education, higher education, high quality and inclusive education, involvement of new stakeholders including disadvantaged groups, language learning and the recognition of qualifications.

The Council adopted its conclusions on the same day that the European Commission adopted a new package of measures aiming to bolster the implementation of the EEA by 2025.

Education was chosen as the first topic of the new Leaders' agenda, when EU leaders met in Gothenburg in November 2017. Following that meeting, the European Council in December 2017 adopted conclusions calling for work to be taken forward on specific initiatives in the field of education. Education ministers held a policy debate on the follow-up of these EC conclusions in February.

The potential of universities for regional growth and for promoting entrepreneurial and innovative skills

Higher education institutions play a key role in building knowledge-based and inclusive societies, by providing students with knowledge, skills and competences that respond to the demands for highly-qualified human capital in the labour market. Enhancing cooperation between higher education institutions, research, businesses, the public sector and civil society can therefore be a strong driver for strengthening the economic, social and cultural potential of the local communities and regions concerned. Such cooperation can also contribute to building strong inclusive and innovative societies, fostering regional growth and tackling regional disparities.

Against this background the Council held a policy debate with a particular focus on the type of measures and incentives that can be put in place by governments and regional authorities to foster the potential of higher education institutions, and the role of smart specialisation strategies and synergies among relevant instruments.

Ministers agreed that cooperation between universities, business and local authorities is key to ensuring better development and cohesion. Such synergy can give students access to better education and better prepare them for the labour market and digitisation. Mobility schemes, including for teachers and professors, should be supported at regional and national level.

Other business

– *Addressing anti-Semitism through education: guidelines for policymakers*

The presidency informed the Council about the role that governments can play in addressing anti-Semitism and presented the publication 'Addressing Anti-Semitism Through Education - Guidelines for Policymakers', which was prepared by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

On the one hand, governments can proactively address anti-Semitism through education, ensuring that education systems build students' resilience to anti-Semitism and other forms of prejudice. On the other hand, governments need to respond effectively to anti-Semitism in educational settings and structures.

The ODIHR guidelines offer concrete recommendations to turn political commitments into action, and set out practical steps that governments are recommended to undertake to improve understanding, prevention, education about and responses to anti-Semitism, alongside examples of good practice from around the OSCE area.

– *The European School Sport Day*

The Commission informed the Council about its initiative for a European School Sport Day. The event will take place on 29 September 2018 during the European Week of Sport, and will be dedicated to 'getting schools on the move' by providing opportunities for children to be active at school. The Commission took the opportunity to encourage member states to promote the initiative.

– *Work programme of the incoming Austrian presidency*

The incoming Austrian presidency presented its priorities and work programme in the field of education. Among other things, the presidency will focus on the regulation on Erasmus +, a recommendation on mutual recognition of higher education and school-leaving diplomas, and a recommendation on enhancing the learning of languages.

YOUTH

The role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society

The Council adopted conclusions on the role of young people in building a secure, cohesive and harmonious society in Europe ([7834/18](#)).

Among the objectives of the conclusions is to raise young people's awareness of their role in combating radicalisation, violent extremism, populism and marginalisation. The aim is also to create an enabling environment for future cooperation and the exchange of good practices on the role of young people in promoting peace, security and cohesive societies.

The role of youth in addressing demographic challenges

The Council adopted conclusions on the role of youth in addressing the demographic challenges within the European Union ([8301/18](#)).

The EU is currently in demographic transition from high birth and death rates to lower birth and death rates, as the region moves towards a post-industrialised economic system.

Against this background, the objective of the conclusions is to raise awareness of the demographic changes in Europe and their wide-ranging impact on societies in general, and young people in particular. The conclusions also highlight the role of mobility and the importance of equipping young people with relevant skills to face these challenges.

'The future of Europe and young people - economic growth and social cohesion' is one of the four overall priorities of the Bulgarian Presidency.

Future priorities for EU youth policy

The Council held a policy debate on the key priorities for future cooperation in the youth sector, including on how the inputs from the Structured Dialogue (the 11 Youth Goals) and from other stakeholders can contribute to these priorities.

The Council discussion was introduced by a keynote speech by Mr Hassan Al Hilou, Community Leader of the YouthTalks Foundation.

The discussions were intended to inform the debate on the renewed European Youth Strategy for 2019-2027 that was presented on the same day by the European Commission via a communication entitled 'Engaging, Connecting and Empowering young people: a new EU Youth Strategy'. In its communication the Commission focuses on three areas of action:

- fostering young people's participation in civic and democratic life
- connecting young people across the European Union and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding
- supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work

The EU Youth Strategy, adopted in November 2009 by the Council in its resolution on a 'renewed framework' for cooperation in the youth field, is coming to an end this year.

Lunchtime 'Informal Forum' meeting on 'restructuring the structured dialogue'

Youth ministers from the current, past and future presidencies and the Commission held an informal lunch discussion with representatives from the EU youth organisations of the above-mentioned presidency member states. The discussion was held in the context of the current structured dialogue process between young people and policymakers. The structured dialogue is a well established tool for consulting with young people.

During the discussion four ways of improving the current process of structured dialogue were highlighted: involving a more diverse public, including young people with disabilities or limited opportunities; monitoring the results achieved; increasing transparency at all stages; and improving communication.

Other business**– *Work programme of the incoming Austrian presidency***

The incoming Austrian presidency presented its priorities and work programme in the field of youth. Among other things, the presidency will focus on the European solidarity corps, Erasmus +, and the new EU youth strategy.

CULTURE

Bringing cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU

The Council adopted conclusions on the need to bring cultural heritage to the fore across policies in the EU ([8544/18](#)).

The objective of the conclusions is to raise the awareness of all interested parties of the mutual benefits of mainstreaming cultural heritage into other EU policies. Member states and the Commission are invited to bring cultural heritage to the fore in relevant EU policies, for instance by including heritage as their strategic objective when preparing and implementing other EU policies.

The Council adopted first conclusions dealing specifically with cultural heritage in 2014, and the European Council, at its December 2017 meeting, explicitly recognised the key role that culture and cultural heritage plays in building inclusive and cohesive societies, and in sustaining Europe's competitiveness.

2018 was designated as the European Year of Cultural Heritage.

The way ahead: long-term vision for the contribution of culture to the EU after 2020

The Council held a policy debate on the role that culture can play in the future of Europe after 2020. During the debate ministers focused in particular on what actions can be undertaken at EU level, notably in the context of the next multiannual financial framework (MFF), to raise the level of ambition of the current actions in the cultural field. They welcomed the Commission's intention to propose a targeted programme in the field of culture and media, with an increased budget compared to the current Creative Europe programme.

Ministers agreed that culture is a cohesive force that can strengthen ties within societies and play a key role in countering negative trends such as the rise of populism and nationalism, fear of terrorist attacks, and the questioning of democratic institutions. They also agreed that culture has the potential to be a driving force in the EU in the post-2020 period and should therefore be more prominent in EU policies.

Other elements identified as important in the course of the debate were: the creation of new content in different cultural sectors, distribution via new digital tools, improved access of young people to culture, the mobility of creative professionals and artists through an Erasmus +-style programme for culture, diversity and multilingualism.

The crucial role of culture in addressing the key social and economic challenges was recognised by the European Council conclusions in December 2017.

Other business

- ***Directive amending the VAT directive as regards rates of value added tax: actively engaging in negotiations from a cultural policy perspective***

The German delegation informed the Council about the proposed changes to the current rules setting out VAT rates, in particular as regards works of arts.

On 18 January, the European Commission presented a proposal for a Council directive amending Directive 2006/112/EC with the aim of updating the rules on applying reduced VAT rates. The proposal expands the scope of reduced tax rates to include all kinds of goods and services but also sets up a 'blacklist' of products and services for which a reduced VAT rate is prohibited. This list includes works of art and musical instruments.

Germany, supported by several member states, called for provisions enabling reduced tax rates to be applied to revenue from works of art and musical instruments as well.

Regulation on the import of cultural goods

The French delegation drew the Council's attention to the draft regulation on the import of cultural goods, which is currently being discussed in the Council by Customs Union experts. The proposed regulation aims to enhance the fight against illicit trafficking in cultural goods.

France, supported by some member states, advocated striking a balance between, on the one hand, the need for traceability and monitoring of international flows in cultural goods which are most at risk, and, on the other hand, the smooth flow of legitimate trade in such goods to ensure that the European art market retains its status and continues to function properly.

– European Capitals of Culture 2022

The Lithuanian and Luxembourg delegations presented to the Council the initiatives undertaken by the cities of Kaunas in Lithuania and Esch-sur-Alzette in Luxembourg, that had been designated as European Capitals of Culture for the year 2022.

– Work programme of the incoming Austrian presidency

The incoming Austrian presidency presented its priorities and work programme in the field of culture and audiovisual affairs. Among other things, the presidency will focus on the work plan for culture 2018+, the successor programme to the Creative Europe programme, international cultural relations, and Europe's cultural, media and creative content in a digital world.

SPORT

The role of sport in fostering EU common values

The Council adopted conclusions of the Council and of the representatives of the governments of the member states meeting within the Council on promoting the common values of the EU through sport ([8032/18](#)).

The conclusions underline the role of sport and volunteering as a tool for combating phenomena such as xenophobia, racism and intolerance.

Commercialisation of elite sports

The Council held a policy debate on the commercialisation of elite sports and the sustainability of the European model of sport.

The European model of sport is traditionally based on a 'pyramid structure', with elite and professional sport being on top and grassroots sport underpinning the whole structure. Sports clubs have an important role in bringing people together, contributing to social stability and promoting sporting activity at a local level.

This positive model is nevertheless coming under pressure, as sport is changing from a purely leisure activity into a growing economic sector. Private funding is increasingly allocated to elite and professional sports and is mostly allocated to the disciplines which attract wide media coverage. This has consequences for the funding of grassroots sport.

During their discussion ministers focused in particular on the risks for smaller sports and clubs as a result of revenues being assigned mainly to a few elite clubs and top sports, the potentially negative effects on sports clubs and local/regional communities, and what governments could do to address these issues.

Ministers agreed that the European sport model had proved to be successful over time but currently needed support in the context of ever-growing globalisation and commercialisation. They stressed that a balance was needed between sport as a carrier of human values and sport as a business enterprise that has profit as its main goal. Concentration of financial resources within a few top clubs in the most popular sports could have a negative impact not only on small clubs but on the sport system in general. Ministers felt that governments could take an active stance without infringing on the sovereignty of sport organisations, for instance, by allowing funding and implementation of projects and strengthening cooperation and dialogue with sport organisations.

Lunchtime discussion

During an informal lunch sports ministers addressed the topic of 'The future of club and national team competitions', in the presence of UEFA president Aleksander Čevertin.

Other business

– *World Anti-Doping Agency meetings (WADA- Montreal, 16-17 May 2018)*

The presidency reported to the Council on the latest meetings of WADA, in which Bulgaria had taken part along with Poland, Belgium and Romania.

Around 120 representatives of international organisations related to anti-doping, 24 anti-doping organisations, 14 member states and representatives of sport federations in Bulgaria had taken part in the meeting.

The main workshops had focused on: investigation and protection of personal data in fighting the use of doping, and training as an element of prevention. The meeting had also provided an opportunity to coordinate the position of EU member states as regards the upcoming changes to the WADA code.

- ***Informal meeting of the EU ministers for sport (Paris, 31 May 2018) and the signing of a declaration for a 'Europe of Sport' in the run-up to the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games***

The French delegation drew the Council's attention to the upcoming informal meeting of the EU ministers for sport in Paris, where ministers will visit the venues that will host Olympic and Paralympic Games in 2024.

The meeting will also provide an opportunity to exchange views on the lessons to be learned from this major sporting event, and to sign a declaration on creating a 'Europe of Sport'.

- ***Work programme of the incoming Austrian presidency***

The incoming Austrian presidency presented its priorities and work programme in the field of sport. Among other things, the presidency will focus on the economic dimension of sports, the relation between sport and health, the fight against doping and the Erasmus + follow-up programme.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

GENERAL AFFAIRS

European Parliament election dates

The Council adopted a [decision](#) setting 23-26 May 2019 as the dates for the next European Parliament elections. The dates were agreed unanimously by the Council after consulting the European Parliament.

According to the 1976 Electoral Act, European parliamentary elections take place in the period from Thursday to Sunday in the first full week of June. However, if it proves impossible to hold elections that week, the Act enables the Council, after consulting the European Parliament, to decide unanimously on other dates, provided these are no more than two months before, or one month after, the period provided for by the Electoral Act.

The Council has decided on other dates for three previous elections (1984, 1989 and 2014).

AGRICULTURE

Organic farming

The Council adopted a regulation on organic production and the labelling of organic products.

The new regulation encourages the sustainable development of organic production in the EU and is aimed at guaranteeing fair competition for farmers and operators, preventing fraud and unfair practices and improving consumer confidence in organic products.

See press release: [Organic farming: new EU rules adopted](#)

TRANSPORT**Convention concerning international carriage by rail - EU position**

The Council adopted a decision establishing the position to be taken by the EU at the 55th session of the Organisation for International Carriage by Rail (OTIF) Committee of Experts for the Carriage of Dangerous Goods as regards certain amendments to Appendix C to the Convention concerning International Carriage by Rail (COTIF) as applicable from 1 January 2019 ([7209/18](#) + [7209/18 ADD 1](#)). The experts will meet in Berne, Switzerland, on 30 May 2018.

ENVIRONMENT**Waste package sets higher recycling and reuse targets**

The Council adopted the [waste package which sets out new rules for waste management and establishes legally binding targets for recycling](#).

By 2035, 65% of municipal waste will have to be recycled. Member states will set up, by 1 January 2025, separate collections of textiles and hazardous waste from households. In addition, they will ensure that by 31 December 2023, bio-waste is either collected separately or recycled at source (e.g. home composting). This is in addition to the separate collection which already exists for paper and cardboard, glass, metals and plastic.

The legislation defines specific recycling targets for specific types of packaging. By 2030, member states will recycle 55% of plastic packaging, 30% of wood packaging, 80% of packaging made of ferrous metals, 60% of aluminium packaging, 75% of glass packaging and 85% of paper and cardboard packaging.

See also press release: [Waste management and recycling: Council adopts new rules](#)

Statements

Fuel range type-approval and emissions measurement

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation concerning the provisions on testing by means of portable emission measurement systems (PEMS) and the requirements for universal fuel range type-approval ([8395/18](#) and [7472/18](#)).

This regulation brings regulation No 582/2011 up to date by referring to new standards for diesel blends and paraffinic diesel, emissions measurement and related emissions testing of fuels. The regulatory requirements are strengthened in order to resolve issues with void tests, and to bring more clarity especially regarding NO_x emissions testing. The procedure now also specifies calculation methods for alternative fuels.

The Commission regulation is subject to the 'regulatory procedure with scrutiny'. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the regulation unless the European Parliament objects.

Ecolabel - longer transition period

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission decision concerning the duration of the transitional period for products which have been awarded the EU Ecolabel ([8396/18](#) and [7490/18](#)).

This decision gives producers of dishwasher detergents, industrial and institutional dishwasher detergents, hand dishwashing detergents, laundry detergents, and industrial and institutional laundry detergents an additional 12 months to adapt their products to comply with the updated EU Ecolabel rules.

The Commission decision is subject to the 'regulatory procedure with scrutiny'. This means that now that the Council has given its consent, the Commission may adopt the decision unless the European Parliament objects.

INTERNAL MARKET

Motor vehicles - New type-approval and market surveillance system

The Council adopted a [regulation to reform the type-approval and market surveillance system for motor vehicles in the EU](#).

Latvia, the Czech Republic, Slovakia and Germany abstained from voting.

This major reform modernises the current system and improves control tests on car emissions.

Its aim is to achieve a high level of safety and environmental performance of vehicles and to address the main shortcomings identified in the existing type-approval system.

Important changes are introduced in three areas by strengthening:

- the quality of testing that allows a vehicle to be placed on the market, through improved technical services
- market surveillance to control the conformity of vehicles already available on the market, with the possibility for member states and the Commission to carry out spot-checks on vehicles in order to detect failures at an early stage
- the oversight of the type-approval process, in particular by empowering the Commission to carry out periodic assessments of national type-approval authorities and establishing a Forum for the exchange of information on enforcement, made up of representatives of national approval and market surveillance authorities

The harmonised implementation of the new rules across the EU will reduce differences in interpretation and application by national type-approval authorities and technical services.

In addition, the new system will make it possible for non-compliance cases to be detected at an early stage.

The regulation will be applicable from 1 September 2020.

See also press release: [New type-approval and market surveillance system for motor vehicles: Council concludes reform of the sector](#)

[Declarations by the Commission - Statement by the Czech Republic and Latvia - Statement by Germany](#)

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

On 22 May 2018, the Council approved the reply to confirmatory applications No 31/c/01/17 ([5532/18](#)) and No 02/c/01/18 ([5170/18](#)).
