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Energy issues

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President

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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**Regulation on tyre labelling**

The Council adopted a general approach on the regulation on tyre labelling.

Text of the general approach ([6695/19](#))

[Cleaner, safer, quieter tyres: labels to become more visible for consumers \(press release\)](#)

The proposal for a regulation on the labelling of tyres with respect to fuel efficiency and other essential parameters was published by the Commission on 17 May 2018. It aims to give consumers more information on the fuel efficiency, safety and noise of tyres, so that consumers are fully informed on those aspects when making purchasing decisions. Having a more effective tyre labelling scheme will lead to cleaner, safer and quieter vehicles and thereby contribute to the decarbonisation of the transport sector. Negotiations with the European Parliament are expected to begin in autumn.

The Commission presented the proposal on the regulation on the labelling of tyres within the broader package of measures on [low carbon mobility](#). It repeals and replaces Regulation (EC) No 1222/2009 (the tyre labelling regulation) and incorporates previously agreed amendments on wet grip and measurement of rolling resistance.

Among the main new elements of the proposed regulation are the following:

- updating the tyre label and allowing for its revision
- improving the visibility of the label for consumers and setting requirements for internet and distance selling
- including information on snow and ice performance of tyres on the label
- considering the possibility of the future inclusion of mileage and abrasion, once suitable testing methods become available, through a legislative act
- allowing for the future inclusion of re-treaded tyres, once suitable testing methods have been developed

- extending the requirement for the label to be shown to C3 tyres (heavy duty vehicles)
- improving enforcement by creating an obligation to register tyres in the product database established under Regulation (EU) 2017/1369.

[Commission proposal](#) + [ADD1](#), [ADD2](#), [ADD3](#), [ADD4](#), [ADD5](#)

[Commission press release](#)

[Commission information page on tyres](#)

Strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy

Ministers held a policy debate in public session on the Commission's communication entitled "A Clean Planet for all: A European strategic long-term vision for a prosperous, modern, competitive and climate-neutral economy". The communication was published on 28 November and the Commission presented it to the Council on 19 December 2018 (Energy) and on 20 December 2018 (Environment). The presentation was followed by an initial exchange of views. Since then, the strategic vision has been the subject of extensive discussions and analysis in working groups covering several Council formations. The Presidency aims to hold policy debates in all relevant Council formations. The European Council announced in its conclusions on 13-14 December 2018 that it will provide guidance on the overall direction and political priorities in the first semester of 2019.

The debate among energy ministers was structured around three questions prepared by the Presidency, which focus on energy issues. The questions concern structural changes needed in the energy system, new technology solutions, and the need for a "fair transition". During the discussion, ministers welcomed the communication from the Commission. They placed the EU approach to a climate neutral economy in the international context of joint efforts and fulfilment of the Paris Agreement. Several delegations underlined the crucial role of new technology solutions in the clean energy transition, and the need to step up research and development efforts to ensure their successful deployment. Most delegations agreed on energy efficiency and renewable energy as no-regret scenarios, with some member states advocating for the inclusion of a 100% renewable scenario in the Commission analysis. The importance to ensure a fair energy transition with a high social acceptance where citizens play an active role was emphasised by several delegations.

Presidency background paper ([6115/19](#))

Following the invitation by the European Council in March 2018, the Commission's vision for a climate neutral future covers nearly all EU policies and is in line with the Paris Agreement objective to keep temperature increase to well below 2°C, and pursue efforts to keep it to 1.5°C. It aims to achieve this goal by investing into realistic technological solutions, empowering citizens, and aligning action in key areas such as industrial policy, finance, or research. Two of the eight scenarios proposed by the Commission spell out how the EU could reach net zero emissions by 2050.

Energy is today responsible for more than 75% of the EU's greenhouse gas emissions. The Commission therefore foresees a central role for the energy sector when moving towards net-zero greenhouse gas emissions. The road to a climate neutral economy would require joint action in seven strategic areas:

- energy efficiency
- deployment of renewables
- clean, safe and connected mobility
- competitive industry and circular economy
- infrastructure and interconnections
- bio-economy and natural carbon sinks
- carbon capture and storage to address remaining emissions

[Communication from the Commission "A Clean Planet for all"](#)

[In-depth analysis accompanying the Communication from the Commission](#)

[Commission press release](#)

[European Council conclusions of 22 March 2018](#)

[European Council conclusions of 13-14 December 2018](#)

Other business**Revision of the gas directive**

The presidency informed ministers on the current state of play. The aim of the proposed legislation is to ensure that the core principles of EU energy legislation (third-party access, tariff regulation, ownership unbundling and transparency) will apply to gas pipelines to and from third countries.

The Commission published a proposal to amend the gas directive (2009/73/EC) on 8 November 2017. The European Parliament adopted its position on the file on 18 April 2018. On 8 February 2019 the Council gave a mandate to the presidency to start trilogue negotiations. A provisional political agreement with the European Parliament on the amendment of the gas directive was found on 12 February 2019. The agreement reached with the European Parliament was endorsed by EU ambassadors in the Committee of Permanent Representatives (Coreper) on 20 February 2019. The final adoption of the text is expected to take place later in spring.

Several delegations congratulated the Romanian presidency for concluding this file.

[Gas directive: Provisional agreement on new rules for gas pipelines to and from third countries \(press release, 13 February 2019\)](#)

[Text of the agreement](#) + [COR1](#)

[Commission proposal](#)

Connecting Europe Facility (CEF)

The presidency informed ministers about the state of play on the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF). Negotiations with the European Parliament are currently ongoing. A partial general approach on this file was adopted by the Transport Council on 3 December ([press release](#)). The general approach is 'partial' as it excludes any financial and horizontal issues as well as issues related to the involvement of third countries in the CEF programme. All these are currently being discussed as part of the negotiations on the next multiannual financial framework (MFF) covering the period 2021 to 2027.

The CEF proposal aims to develop, modernise and complete the trans-European networks in the fields of transport, energy and digital. It seeks to speed up investment in these networks and leverage funding from both the public and private sectors. The proposal lays down the objectives of the programme, its budget for the period 2021-2027, the forms of EU funding and the rules for providing such funding.

[Connecting Europe Facility – Commission press release](#)

[Multiannual financial framework: shaping EU expenditure](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ENERGY

Adaptation of Directive on energy efficiency and Regulation on governance to Brexit

The Council approved the European Parliament's position at first-reading on draft directive 2012/27/EU on energy efficiency and regulation (EU) 2018/1999 on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action, by reason of the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the Union ([6549/19](#), [PE-CONS 19/19](#)).

The directive updates the energy consumption figures in the newly revised energy efficiency directive to take account of the withdrawal of the UK from the EU. This technical adjustment concerns projected EU energy consumption in 2030.

The amendment will enable the EU to measure its progress towards its energy efficiency and climate objectives, and it will provide legal certainty for the remaining 27 states and for businesses.

For more information see the [press release issued on the occasion of the endorsement by EU ambassadors in Coreper \(30 January 2019\)](#).

TRANSPORT

Electronic road tolls

The Council adopted a directive on the interoperability of electronic road toll systems and facilitating cross-border exchange of information on the failure to pay road fees in the Union ([PE-CONS 69/18](#), [6543/19](#) + [ADD 1](#)).

For more information, see [press release](#).

Western Balkans Transport Community Treaty*

The Council decided to conclude the Transport Community Treaty with the Republic of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Kosovo*, Montenegro and the Republic of Serbia and took note of the statements by the Commission and by Germany, France, Italy, and Austria entered in its minutes.

The aim of the Transport Community Treaty is to promote cooperation in the field of rail, road and seaborne transport within the region, to develop a common legislative framework based on the Union acquis, to improve infrastructure and connectivity and to facilitate investments.

([6364/19](#) + [ADD 1](#), [13111/18](#))

Conclusions on passengers rights

The Council adopted conclusions on Special Report No 30/2018 by the European Court of Auditors.

[Full text of Council conclusions on passengers rights \(CoA SR No 30/2018\)](#)

INTERNAL MARKET AND INDUSTRY**Type-approval of agricultural vehicles**

The Council adopted a regulation amending and correcting regulation no 167/2013 on the type-approval of agricultural vehicles ([PE-CONS 5/19](#), [6544/19](#)).

Conclusions on the delays in customs IT systems

The Council adopted conclusions concerning the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 26/2018: "A Series of Delays in Customs IT Systems: What Went Wrong?".

[Full text of Council conclusions concerning CoA SR No 26/2018](#)

FISHERIES

Conclusion of the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the Agreement to prevent unregulated high seas fisheries in the Central Arctic Ocean ([10788/18](#)).

The objective of the agreement is to prevent unregulated fishing in the high seas portion of the central Arctic Ocean through the application of precautionary conservation and management measures, as part of a long-term strategy to safeguard healthy marine ecosystems, and to ensure the conservation and sustainable use of fish stocks. It was signed on 3 October 2018 by the five Arctic Ocean coastal states - Canada, Denmark (acting on behalf of Greenland and the Faroe Islands), Norway, Russia, and the United States - together with China, the EU, Iceland, Japan, and South Korea.

For more information, [see press release](#).

Conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Kingdom of Morocco

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the Sustainable Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the EU and the Kingdom of Morocco, the related implementation protocol and the exchange of letters accompanying the agreement ([14367/18](#)).

For more information, [see press release](#).

Implementation of the fisheries partnership agreement between the EU and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the Protocol on the implementation of the Partnership Agreement in the fisheries sector between the European Union and the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire ([10858/18](#)). The decision will also be transmitted to the European Parliament.

The Fisheries Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire and the EU was concluded on 17 March 2008 and since then it was tacitly renewed.

The Council decision green lights a new protocol to the agreement, as the last one expired on 30 June 2018.

The objective of the protocol is to enable the EU and Côte d'Ivoire' to work more closely on promoting a sustainable fisheries policy, sound exploitation of fisheries resources in Ivorian waters, and Côte d'Ivoire's efforts to develop a blue economy.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Conclusions on African Peace and Security Architecture

The Council adopted conclusion on the Court of Auditor's Special Report No. 20/2018 entitled "The African Peace and Security Architecture: need to refocus EU support"

In its conclusions the Council broadly welcomes the recommendations given by the Court of Auditors, underlining how they can strengthen the effectiveness of the EU's support to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), and reiterated its commitment to continue its partnership in supporting the operationalisation of the APSA.

The Council acknowledges the difficult environment in which APSA operates, as well as the continued dependency on donors, and takes note of the overall assessment of EU support.

The Council acknowledges that the operational costs of the African Union are increasingly covered by its Member States. The Council welcomes African Union's decision to finance in full the operational costs of the Union, 75% of AU programmes and 25% of peace support operations gradually by 2021, and stresses the importance of strengthening the AU ownership of the APSA.

The Council calls on the Commission to refocus support from APSA's basic operational costs to well-targeted, results-based capacity building programmes and match them with results-oriented monitoring systems.

[Council conclusions on the African Peace and Security Architecture](#)

Sanctions on Syria

The Council today added seven ministers of the government of Syria to the list of persons and entities subject to restrictive measures against the Syrian regime and its supporters. These additions follow recent governmental changes in Syria.

The decision brings to 277 the number of persons targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze for being responsible for the violent repression against the civilian population in Syria, benefiting from or supporting the regime, and/or being associated with such persons.

In addition, 72 entities are targeted by an asset freeze in view of the situation in Syria. More broadly, EU sanctions currently in place against Syria also include: an oil embargo, restrictions on trade and investment, a freeze of the assets of the Syrian central bank within the EU, export restrictions on arms, weapons, equipment that might be used for internal repression as well as on equipment and technology for the monitoring or interception of internet or telephone communications. The sanctions concerning the situation in Syria have been in place since 1 December 2011 and are reviewed on an annual basis, the next review being due by 1st June 2019. As underlined in Council conclusions of 16 April 2018, the EU will continue to consider further restrictive measures against Syria as long as the repression continues.

The EU remains committed to finding a lasting and credible political solution to the conflict in Syria as defined in the UN Security Council resolution 2254 and in the 2012 Geneva Communiqué.

The legal acts, including the names of the persons concerned, are available in the [Official Journal of the EU of 4 March 2019](#).

Sanctions on Ukraine

The Council extended until 6 March 2020 the asset freezes directed against 12 persons identified as responsible for the misappropriation of Ukrainian state funds or for the abuse of office causing a loss to Ukrainian public funds. The restrictive measures against one person were not extended. This decision is based on the annual review of the measures.

This restrictive measures regime has been in place since 5 March 2014, and has been extended on a yearly basis since then.

The legal acts will be published in the Official Journal on 5 March 2019.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Cross border payments**

The Council today adopted a regulation on aligning the costs of cross-border payments in euros between euro and non-euro countries and increasing the transparency of charges related to currency conversion services across the EU.

The reform will align the charges for cross-border payments in euros for services such as credit transfers, card payments or cash withdrawals with the charges for corresponding national payments of the same value in the national currency of the Member State where the payment service provider of the payment service user is located.

In addition, further transparency requirements will be introduced on charges for currency conversion services.

For more information, see [press release](#).

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA**EEA Agreement - Incorporation of EU legislation**

The Council adopted three decisions establishing the EU position to be taken in the Joint Committee of the European Economic Area (EEA). The decisions concern:

- the amendment of Annex II (Technical regulations, standards, testing and certification) and Annex XI (Electronic communication, audiovisual services and information society) to the EEA Agreement, to incorporate into the EEA agreement Directive (EU) 2015/1535 laying down a procedure for the provision of information in the field of technical regulations and of rules on Information Society services ([5998/19](#));
- the amendment of Annex IX (Financial services) to the EEA Agreement, to incorporate into the EEA agreement Regulation (EU) No 600/2014 on markets in financial instruments and Directive 2014/65/EU on markets in financial instruments ([6001/19](#));
- the amendment of Annex IX (Financial services) and Annex XIX (Consumer protection) to the EEA Agreement, to incorporate into the EEA agreement Directive 2014/17/EU on credit agreements for consumers relating to residential immovable property ([6004/19](#)).

JUSTICE

Decision on cooperation agreement Eurojust/Georgia

The Council adopted an implementing decision approving the conclusion by Eurojust of the agreement on cooperation with Georgia ([13483/18](#)). The agreement, the first ever to be concluded with a state of the South Caucasus region, concerns the exchange of information, including personal data.

For more information see the [Eurojust's website](#).
