



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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3143rd Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 27 January 2012

President

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P R E S S

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Main results of the Council

*The Council debated the Commission's proposals for the EU's **multiannual financial framework** (MFF) for the 2014-2020 period, focusing on the main priorities and the budgetary framework, including the overall expenditure amounts.*

The debate provided guidance to the presidency for negotiation of the MFF, enabling a clearer picture to be obtained of delegations' positions on the main issues.

The intention of the Danish presidency is to produce the basis for a substantial discussion at the European Council in June, with a view to adoption of the MFF by the end of this year. This would allow a smooth transition to the next MFF from the one currently in force.

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- 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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State Secretary for Foreign Policy

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State Secretary to the Minister for EU Affairs

United Kingdom:

Mr David LIDINGTON

Minister of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Commission:

Maroš ŠEFČOVIČ

Mr Janusz LEWANDOWSKI

Vice President

Member

The Government of the Acceding State was represented as follows:**Croatia:**

Ms Vesna PUSIĆ

Minister for Foreign and European Affairs

ITEMS DEBATED

MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

The Council discussed, in public session, the main priorities and the budgetary framework including the overall amounts presented in the Commission's proposals for the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) for the 2014-2020 period ([12475/11](#) + [12474/11](#) + [16846/11](#) + [16847/11](#) + [16844/11](#) + [16848/11](#) + [16845/11](#)).

The debate enabled a clearer picture to be obtained of the member states' positions on the main issues and of the state of negotiations. It also provided guidance to the presidency and notably indicated the areas where it could face difficulties in finding common ground.

Several member states underlined the need for the MFF to reflect the current economic crisis and the efforts made at national level as regards fiscal consolidation. These delegations called for significant reductions in the overall expenditure level compared to the Commission's proposals. Some delegations also asked for the issue of unused commitments (RAL, "reste à liquider") to be addressed in this context. Several delegations asked for all financial instruments to be included in the multiannual financial framework, for the sake of transparency and veracity of the EU budget.

Several member states stressed the importance of ensuring an appropriate financing of EU policies so that the MFF can contribute adequately to addressing common challenges. Some delegations said that they support the overall expenditure level proposed by the Commission and a number of them considered the Commission's proposals to be balanced.

Several ministers identified cohesion policy or the common agriculture policy (CAP) as their main priorities. A number of member states considered both policies as priorities. They highlighted the contribution that cohesion policy makes for enhancing jobs and growth and stressed the added value the CAP makes in the form of safe food, security of supply and rural development.

Another group of member states emphasised the need for strong support of research, innovation and the "green" agenda. A considerable number underlined the need to direct EU spending towards jobs and growth, in line with the EU 2020 strategy.

Several delegations highlighted a need for reforming the EU's own resources system.

The Danish presidency announced that the MFF would be on the agenda of each General Affairs Council meeting until the end of June, with the exception of February. It said that individual MFF headings would be discussed at the coming meetings. The presidency also expressed its intention to organise a conference on the MFF, probably on 22 and 23 March in Brussels.

It is expected that as from May, work on the MFF proposals will have reached sufficient maturity for negotiations to be conducted through a "negotiating box", a draft structure of the conclusions of the European Council, setting out the main issues and options and reflecting the outcome of the orientation debates held in the General Affairs Council.

In line with a mandate of the European Council from 9 December, the intention of the Danish presidency is to produce a solid basis for a substantial discussion on the MFF at the European Council meeting in June 2012. The European Council has called for the MFF to be adopted by the end of this year. This would allow a smooth transition to the next MFF from the one currently in force.

At the technical level, the "Friends of the Presidency" working party will continue its work on the future MFF. During January and February, it will focus on clarifying technical financial issues raised by those Commission's proposals which were not yet available at the moment of discussions in the second semester of 2011. In February, it will discuss specific outstanding questions on the next MFF, on the basis of questionnaires provided by the presidency. From March, the working party will address all aspects of the future MFF, in particular those on which there are persisting gaps between delegations' positions, with a view to providing input to the presidency for the elaboration of the "negotiation box".

PRESIDENCY WORK PROGRAMME

The Council held an exchange of views, in public session, on the Danish presidency's programme for the duration of its term of office (January to June 2012).

EUROPEAN COUNCIL

Preparation of the March meeting

The Council examined a draft annotated agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 1 and 2 March ([5354/12](#)).

The European Council is due to focus on:

- *Economic policy*:
 - assessing progress made in implementing the 2011 European Semester country-specific recommendations and commitments under the Euro Plus Pact;
 - giving guidance to member states, on the basis of the Commission's annual growth survey, to be incorporated into their national reform programmes and stability or convergence programmes;
 - highlighting labour market reforms, employment and competitiveness; and
 - providing guidance to the Commission and the Council on the implementation of flagship initiatives.
- *International summits*: preparations for a G-8 summit on 19-20 May, a G-20 summit on 18-19 June and a UN "Rio+20" conference on sustainable development on 20-22 June;
- *Other issues*, including EU enlargement (Serbia) and accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the Schengen area.

The "fiscal compact" treaty on stability, coordination and governance will be signed in the margins of the meeting.

The Council will hold a further discussion, on the basis draft European Council conclusions, at its meeting on 27 and 28 February.

Follow-up to the December meeting

The Council took stock of the follow-up to commitments undertaken by the European Council at its meeting on 9 December.

The meeting focused on economic policy, energy and EU enlargement.

OTHER BUSINESS**- *Constitutional changes in Hungary***

The Council was briefed by the Commission on its course of action with regard to constitutional changes in Hungary, following the launch of infringement proceedings on the independence of the national central bank, the judiciary and the data protection supervisory authority.

- *European citizens' initiative*

The Council was briefed by the Commission on preparations for implementation, as from 1 April, of the so-called *European citizens' initiative*, which will make it possible, with one million signatures, for EU citizens to call for legislative proposals on a specific issue.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**FOREIGN AFFAIRS****Relations with Mexico**

The Council approved the EU's position for the seventh session of the EU-Mexico Joint Council, to take place in Mexico City on 9 February.

Topics for discussion include trade, multilateral issues, such as climate change, as well as bilateral issues, such as human rights and EU-Mexico cooperation.

Restrictive measures - Tunisia

The Council extended restrictive measures against Tunisia until 31 January 2013, in view of the situation in the country.

Council decision 72/2011 was initially adopted on 31 January 2011.

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS**European Asylum Support Office - Negotiation mandate**

The Council adopted a decision authorising the Commission to open negotiations with Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein on arrangements for their participation in the European Asylum Support Office.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Statistics - Access to confidential data for scientific purposes**

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a decision amending a list set out in decision 2004/452 of bodies whose researchers may access confidential data for scientific purposes ([18335/11](#)).

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

External auditors of the central bank of the Netherlands

The Council adopted a decision approving the appointment of Deloitte Accountants B.V. as external auditors of De Nederlandsche Bank for the financial years 2012 to 2018.

TRADE POLICY**Anti-dumping - Steel ropes and cables - China and Ukraine - South Africa**

The Council adopted a regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty on imports of steel ropes and cables originating in China and Ukraine, following an expiry review pursuant to regulation 1225/2009, and terminating an expiry review concerning imports from South Africa ([5206/12](#)).

INTERNAL MARKET

Motor vehicles - Type-approval for manufacturer's statutory plate

The Council decided not to oppose adoption by the Commission of a regulation amending regulation 19/2011 as regards type-approval requirements for the manufacturer's statutory plate of motor vehicles and trailers ([18116/11](#)).

Regulation 19/2011 introduced the possibility for vehicle manufacturers to use self-adhesive labels for making statutory plates. The regulation is to be amended in order to ease the making of such labels by data processing, as well as their printing by electronic means.

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

TRANSPARENCY

Public access to documents

The Council approved:

- the reply to confirmatory application no. 26/c/01/11, the Danish, Finnish, Slovenian and Swedish delegations voting against ([18495/11](#)).