



Brussels, 10 December 2010

BACKGROUND¹
GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL
Tuesday 14 December in Brussels

*The Council, starting at 9.00, will prepare the December meeting of the **European Council**, which will focus on the establishment of a permanent crisis mechanism to safeguard the financial stability of the euro area.*

*It will also discuss the annual communication from the Commission on implementation of the EU's strategy with regard to its **enlargement**.*

*The European **citizens' initiative**, the strengthening of European **disaster response** and the Europe 2020 strategy for **jobs and growth** are amongst the other items on the agenda.*

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the Council.

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<http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>

Video coverage for preview and download in broadcast quality (MPEG4):

<http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu>

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office

European citizens' initiative

The Council is expected to endorse a draft regulation aimed at making it possible for EU citizens to call for legislative proposals to be made on a specific issue.

The so-called citizens' initiative, one of the main innovations under the Treaty of Lisbon, will enable citizens to ask the Commission to bring forward legislative proposals if the signatories to such a request number at least one million and come from a significant number of member states.

The Treaty of Lisbon has introduced a new dimension of participatory democracy, alongside that of representative democracy on which the EU is founded, with the aim of bringing the EU closer to its citizens and encouraging greater cross-border debate about EU issues.

The Permanent Representatives Committee approved the draft regulation on 8 December, following agreement in a trilogue meeting with the European Parliament on 30 November. It is thus expected that the text will be adopted by the two institutions at first reading.

EU enlargement

The Council will discuss EU enlargement. It will take note of:

- a communication from the Commission on the EU's enlargement strategy and main challenges for 2010-2011;
- the Commission's opinions on applications for EU membership by Montenegro and Albania;
- reports from the Commission on progress made by Turkey, Croatia, Iceland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, in the context of EU enlargement and the stabilisation and association process for the Western Balkans.

As regards the candidate countries (Turkey, Croatia, Iceland and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia), it is expected to confirm the EU's commitment in taking the enlargement process forward on the basis of agreed principles. The "renewed consensus on enlargement", approved by the European Council in December 2006, continues to form the basis for the enlargement process, with each country being assessed on its own merits.

For other potential candidates in the Western Balkans, the Council is expected to reaffirm its commitment to their European perspective, considering it essential for the stability, reconciliation and future of the region. By making progress in economic and political reforms and fulfilling the necessary conditions and requirements, the Council's view is that they should achieve candidate status in accordance with their own merits, with EU membership as an ultimate goal.

The Council will be called on to adopt conclusions.

It is also expected to take note of preparations for an EU-Croatia accession conference to be held on 22 December at ministerial level.

European disaster response

The Council is expected to adopt conclusions, on the basis of a communication from the Commission (*doc. [15614/10](#) + [ADD 1](#)*) on the strengthening of the EU's disaster response capacities and the role of civil protection and humanitarian assistance.

This follows an exchange of views at the Council's meeting on 22 November.

Regional development policy

The Commission will present its 5th assessment report on economic, social and territorial cohesion in the EU and the presidency will report on the outcome of an informal meeting of ministers responsible for cohesion policy, which took place in Liege on 22 and 23 November.

The Council may hold an exchange of views.

Europe 2020 strategy for growth and jobs

The Council will take note of a report from the presidency on implementation of the "Europe 2020" strategy for growth and jobs.

Europe 2020, adopted by the European Council in June, is a central element of the EU's response to the global economic crisis. Updating and replacing the Lisbon strategy, launched in 2000, the new strategy involves the enhanced coordination of economic policies with greater focus on key areas where action is needed to boost Europe's potential for sustainable and inclusive growth and competitiveness.

The report provides an overview of work undertaken since Europe 2020 was launched in June.

Preparation of the February European Council

The Council will examine a draft annotated agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 4 February, drawn up by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the incoming Hungarian presidency and the Commission (*doc. [17163/10](#)*).

The February European Council is due to focus on:

- Energy policy
- Innovation

The draft annotated agenda will serve as the basis for draft European Council conclusions to be prepared in the run-up to the February meeting.

Preparation of the December European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions, prepared by the President of the European Council in cooperation with the Belgian presidency and the Commission, for the European Council meeting to be held on 16 and 17 December.

Further to the conclusions of its October meeting, the European Council is due to decide on the outline of a permanent crisis mechanism to safeguard the financial stability of the euro area and on a limited amendment to the EU treaties required to create such a mechanism. It will moreover take stock of work in progress on legislative proposals to strengthen EU economic governance provisions.

The European Council will also discuss work on the assessment of the EU's relations with its strategic partners, further to the conclusions of its September meeting.

An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council at its meeting on 22 November (*doc. [12345/10](#)*). Draft conclusions have since been examined by the Permanent Representatives Committee.
