



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**"I/A" ITEM NOTE**

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from :            Presidency

to :                Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

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*Subject :        Report on proceedings in the Council's other configurations*

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Delegations will find below a list of the most important decisions taken and issues currently under discussion in the Council's other configurations. This document should enable delegations to draw the Presidency's attention to any point which they believe has implications for the proper organisation of proceedings in the areas covered.

## AGRICULTURE AND FISHERIES

At its **meeting on 23 and 24 April 2009** the Council discussed i.a.:

### Sharks

*As a follow-up to a Commission communication of February 2009, the Council adopted conclusions on a European Community Action Plan for the conservation and management of sharks. The Action Plan aims to contribute to the rebuilding of depleted stocks inside and outside Community waters by improving knowledge on shark species and their role in the ecosystem and on shark fisheries, by making shark fisheries sustainable and by adopting a coherent approach between the internal and external Community policies on sharks.*

### Reform of the Common Fisheries Policy

*The Council had an initial exchange of views on a Green paper on the future reform of the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) adopted by the Commission on 22 April. Since its establishment in 1983, the CFP has been reviewed every ten years. The next review is scheduled for 2012 at the latest. The Commission will publish the outcome of a broad consultation of all interested parties in 2010, in the light of which it will submit a legislative proposal.*

### Simplification of the Common Agricultural Policy

*The Council held a policy debate based on the Commission Communication "A simplified CAP for Europe - a success for all" of 18 March 2009 and related Presidency document "A simplified CAP for Europe – What next?" with a view to reaching an agreement over Council Conclusions at the Council meeting of 25 May 2009. This discussion reflected the activities that have been carried out since 2005, gave indications of the resulting reduction in administrative burdens for farmers and administrations and highlighted a need to explore paths to further CAP simplification actions in the future.*

### Communication from the Commission on the review of the Less Favoured Areas Scheme

*The Council held an initial exchange of views on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Towards a better targeting of the aid to farmers in areas with natural handicaps" which had been adopted by the Commission on 21 April 2009. The Communication calls for a unified approach to delimitation of areas with natural handicaps after 2014. The new delimitation should be primarily based on a single set of biophysical criteria. Member States are invited by the Communication to test the proposed criteria on their territory and provide the Commission with a resulting map.*

### **EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL POLICY, HEALTH AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS**

*On 30 April 2009, an extraordinary Council meeting was convened in response to the international outbreak of human cases of influenza A/H1N1 infection. Following an exchange of views on the current situation, Health ministers adopted conclusions. In these conclusions, the Council, recognizing that human outbreaks like the one caused by the influenza virus A/H1N1 are a potential global threat, confirmed that the EU has prepared for health emergencies by adopting and implementing preparedness and response plans since 2005. It urged Member States to act together, under the guidance of the WHO and in cooperation and in liaison with the Commission, in the fields of monitoring and surveillance, diagnosis, treatment and communication and called on the Commission to continue to facilitate information sharing and cooperation between the Member States, in particular on risk evaluation, risk management and medical countermeasures and to promote the funding of measures for cooperation between the Member States on preparing for and responding to a health threat under the existing Community programmes and activities.*

## ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

At its **meeting on 5 May 2009** the Council discussed i.a.:

### Economic and financial situation

*The Council held an exchange of views on the economic situation and the latest developments on financial markets. It took note of the Commission's Spring economic forecasts, published on 4 May, broadly sharing the Commission's analysis of the situation. The president of the Council also reported on the meeting of G-20 finance ministers and central bank governors held in the margins of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund Spring meetings in Washington on 25 and 26 April.*

### Lending to Member States in financial difficulty

*The Council reached political agreement, in accordance with the conclusions of the European Council's meeting on 20 March, on a draft regulation aimed at raising the ceiling for lending under the EU's support facility for non euro-area member states in financial difficulty. The increase is intended to cater for potential demand from such Member States for medium-term support to their balances of payments. In this context, the Council also agreed to provide medium-term assistance to Romania.*

### Quality and sustainability of public finances

*The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of a communication on the impact in times of economic crisis of ageing populations, and of the "2009 Ageing Report", a joint report from the Commission and the Economic Policy Committee providing an update of age-related expenditure projections for the 27 Member States over the 2008-60 period. It adopted conclusions i.a. supporting a number of core measures reaffirming the commitment to the existing three-pronged strategy for meeting the economic and budgetary consequences of ageing, stressing the importance of the quality of public finances in the context of the renewed Lisbon Strategy and underlining the importance of consistent reporting on quality of public finance-related measures in the Stability and Convergence Programmes in accordance with the code of conduct and, when appropriate, also in the National Reform Programmes.*

### Excise duties on tobacco products

*The Council examined a draft directive aimed at updating EU rules on the structure and rates of excise duties on tobacco products. The Council requested the Permanent Representatives Committee to examine the draft directive further, on the basis of the progress realised by ministers, so as to enable it to reach an agreement at one of its forthcoming sessions.*

### Good governance in tax matters

*The Council took note of the presentation by the Commission of a communication on the promotion of good governance in tax matters. It was briefed by the Commission on progress in the negotiation of an agreement with Liechtenstein on measures to combat tax fraud. Finally, it agreed to return to the issue at its meeting on 9 June in the light of further developments.*

