



COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION
MAIN TOPICS FOR THE COMING FORTNIGHT¹

8 - 21 March 2010

Monday 8 March 2010

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(employment and social policy items only)*

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¹ This document has been prepared under the sole responsibility of the Press Office.
Information may be subject to change, depending on further developments.

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and

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Monday 8 March 2010

Overview of the agenda of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council

The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council will devote its work to employment and social policy issues. Ministers are due to agree on a directive implementing the framework agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector.

The Council will prepare EPSCO issues of the European Council on 25/26 March, debating the European strategy for growth and jobs on the basis of a presidency questionnaire and a Commission communication expected to be presented on 3 March. For the debate the Council will also have at its disposal a presidency background paper concerning the follow-up to the informal meeting of ministers of Employment and Social Security (Barcelona, 28 and 29 January 2010) as well as contributions by the Employment and Social Protection Committees. It will then adopt a joint employment report 2009/2010 and a joint report on social protection and social inclusion 2010. In this context, the Council will take note of a Commission report on equality between women and men 2010.

Other items on the Council's agenda are the preparation of the 25 March Tripartite Social Summit and the eradication of violence against women in the EU, on which the Council will have an exchange of views and adopt conclusions. The Council will also have an exchange of views on the basis of conclusions on European researchers' mobility and careers due to be adopted by the Competitiveness Council on 1 and 2 March.

The EPSCO Council meeting will be the Council's 3000th session.

Further information

- Directive implementing the Framework Agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector concluded by HOSPEEM and EPSU ([15305/09](#))

Event

Meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For more information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Monday 8 March 2010

Prevention of sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector

In a public deliberation, the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council will be called on to agree on a directive intended to give legal effect to the framework agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector. This agreement was signed on 17 July 2009 by the European social partners in the sector, i.e. HOSPEEM (European Hospital and Healthcare Employers' Association) and EPSU (European Federation of Public Services Unions).

Background

The framework agreement aims to protect workers at risk of injury caused by needles and other sharp instruments and to prevent the risk of injuries and infections caused by medical sharps. It provides for an integrated approach to risk assessment, risk prevention, training, information, awareness-raising and monitoring and for response and follow-up procedures. The agreement and the present directive will contribute to achieving the safest possible working environment in the hospital and healthcare sector.

Further information

- Directive implementing the framework agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector concluded by HOSPEEM and EPSU ([15305/09](#) + [6635/10](#) + [6635/10 ADD 1](#))

Event

Meeting of the Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For more information concerning this meeting, please see:

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Thursday 11 March 2010

Transport, Telecom and Energy Council - overview of the agenda - Transport items

Transport ministers will deal with the following land transport and aviation issues:

*In the field of **land transport**, they are due to reach a general approach on a draft directive on transportable pressure equipment. The draft directive is designed to update and streamline the provisions of a directive adopted in 1999 in order to enhance transport safety for such equipment and to ensure their free movement in the single market.*

*In the **aviation** sector, they will try to reach a general approach as regards a draft regulation on investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation. The draft regulation aims to ensure expeditious and high-quality safety investigations in order to prevent future accidents. To this end, it lays down common requirements for the conduct of such investigations, establishes a network for cooperation between national safety investigation authorities and sets out rules for the involvement of the European Air Safety Agency (EASA).*

Moreover, the Council will be briefed by the Commission on the state of play of the negotiations on a second-stage air services agreement with the US, which is to further develop the EU-US "Open Skies" agreement signed in 2007. Ministers will have a discussion on this issue.

In addition, the Council will take note of a progress report on a proposal for a directive establishing common principles for the levying of security charges at EU airports.

Further information

- Draft directive on transportable pressure equipment (6856/10)
- Commission proposal for a regulation on investigation and prevention of accidents and incidents in civil aviation ([15469/09](#))
- For second-stage negotiations with the US and aviation security charges, see press release on the TTE Council of December 2009 ([17456/09](#))

Event

Meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (transport items) - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Tuesday 9 March at 10.00.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Friday 12 March 2010

Overview of the agenda of the Transport, Telecom and Energy Council - Energy items

The Council is expected to reach political agreement on a regulation concerning the notification to the Commission of investment projects in energy infrastructure within the European Community (6502/10). The aim of the proposal is to bring more transparency to the process of investment in energy infrastructure, by generating more and better data and therefore improving coordination between Member States concerned and at Community level.

The Council will also adopt conclusions on the SET (Strategic Energy Technology) Plan (6510/10), on the basis of the Commission communication entitled "Investing in the development of low carbon technologies" (14230/09). These conclusions are a follow-up to the policy debate held at the last December TTE Council and to the discussion on low-carbon technologies which took place at the Informal Energy Ministerial in Seville last month. They largely endorse the priorities proposed by the Commission concerning the Technology Roadmaps 2010-2020.

In preparation of the European Council of 25 and 26 March, ministers will also hear a presentation from the Commission of its Communication "EUROPE 2020". On the basis of two questions prepared by the Presidency, they will hold an exchange of views on energy issues, in the framework of the European Strategy for Growth and Jobs.

Further information

- Commission communication: Second Strategic Energy Review - An EU energy security and solidarity action plan (15944/08);
- Action Plan 2007-09 on Energy Policy for Europe ([7224/07](#), Annex I).

Event

Meeting of the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (energy items) - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00)

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Tuesday 9 March at 10.00.

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

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Monday 15 March 2010

Climate change - follow-up to Copenhagen

The Environment Council will adopt conclusions on the follow-up to the Copenhagen climate conference (7-19 December 2009). Over lunch, ministers will in particular discuss the structure of the global negotiations with a view to a new international climate agreement.

In addition the Council will be briefed about preparations for the 16th conference of the parties (COP 16) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (29 November to 10 December in Cancún, Mexico) by the Mexican secretary of the environment and COP 16 president. The conference will be preceded by further UN negotiations, scheduled to take place from 9 to 11 April and from 31 May to 11 June in Bonn.

Background

The Copenhagen Accord - a political declaration negotiated during the conference - falls short of the EU's ambitious objective of securing a legally binding agreement that ensures that the average global temperature increase remains below 2°C above pre-industrial levels. Notwithstanding, the EU considers it a first step towards a more ambitious agreement and remains fully committed to continuing to negotiate with other parties.

In a letter dated 28 January 2010, the EU and its member states expressed their willingness to be associated with the Copenhagen Accord. At the same time, the EU also submitted its 2020 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets: the EU already has legislation in place that will ensure by 2020 a 20% cut in such emissions compared with 1990 levels. Furthermore, it maintains its conditional offer of a 30% reduction, provided there are comparable reductions by other developed countries and appropriate contributions by developing countries.

Further information

- Website of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC): <http://unfccc.int/2860.php>;
- Full text of the Copenhagen Accord: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/cop_15/application/pdf/cop15_cph_auv.pdf;
- EU letter to notify association with Copenhagen Accord: http://unfccc.int/files/meetings/application/pdf/europeanunioncphaccord_app1.pdf;
- Countries associated with the Copenhagen Accord and their emissions reduction targets: <http://unfccc.int/home/items/5262.php>

Event

Meeting of the Environment Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00)

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Thursday 11 March at 16.00 (tbc).

A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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Monday 15 March 2010

CO₂ emissions limits for light vans

The Environment Council will discuss for the first time the proposed regulation setting CO₂ emissions standards for light commercial vehicles, which is of critical importance in the context of reducing greenhouse gases from sectors not covered by the EU emissions trading scheme. In public deliberation, ministers will be asked to comment on the suggested emissions limits, penalties and flexibility mechanisms.

Background

This draft regulation ([15317/09](#)), proposed last November, complements the regulation setting CO₂ emission limits for new passenger cars. The new text provides for a limit of 175g CO₂/km on the average carbon dioxide emissions from new light vans registered in the EU. This target applies to a small van of average mass while specific targets for individual vehicles vary according to their weight. The objective is to be achieved by car manufacturers' fleets in 2016, phased-in from 2014. The proposal also includes an emissions target for 2020, set at 135g CO₂/km. In order to provide manufacturers with incentives to invest in new technologies, they would have to pay a penalty if their fleet fails to meet the targets. Flexibility mechanisms include the possibility for manufacturers to join up to meet their emissions obligations.

Further information

- Regulation 443/2009 setting CO₂ emission limits for new passenger cars (*OJ L 140, 5.6.2009*);
- Council press release on climate-energy package (*8434/09*)

Event

Meeting of the Environment Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00)
The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Thursday 11 March at 16.00 (tbc).
A press conference will take place at the end of the proceedings.
For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:
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Monday 15 March 2010

Protection of biodiversity

The Environment Council is expected to adopt conclusions on biodiversity that will set a new headline target for the protection of species within the EU until 2020 and define its vision for protecting biodiversity until 2050. The conclusions will also sketch out the EU position concerning biodiversity protection at global level.

Background

According to expert reports, more than a third of species assessed are facing extinction and an estimated 60 % of the earth's ecosystems have been degraded in the last 50 years. Such a loss of biodiversity has also a considerable economic impact as it weakens the functions ecosystems deliver for human societies, for instance as regards food and water, climate regulation or natural protection from floods and storms.

At the European Council in Göteborg in 2001, the EU set itself the objective of halting the loss of biodiversity by 2010. Despite the efforts undertaken, including an EU biodiversity action plan, there are clear indications that this target will not be met. The Commission points out that this is due, among other things, to incomplete implementation of nature protection laws and insufficient integration of biodiversity considerations into other policies. The Council, by adopting its conclusions, intends to give new impetus to action in this field.

At international level, discussions on the review of the UN convention on biological diversity (CBD) are currently under way in order to prepare the tenth conference of the parties to the CBD, scheduled in Japan from 18 to 29 October 2010.

Further information

- Commission communication: Options for an EU vision and target for biodiversity beyond 2010 ([5614/10](#))
- Council conclusions of December 2009 on international biodiversity beyond 2010 ([17785/09](#))
- Commission communication on the mid-term assessment of the EU Biodiversity Action Plan ([17473/08](#))

Event

Meeting of the Environment Council - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels (10.00).

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Thursday 11 March at 16.00 (tbc). A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For additional information concerning this meeting, please see:

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Tuesday 16 March 2010

Overview of the agenda of the ECOFIN Council

The Council will be called on to agree on a general approach regarding a draft directive on hedge fund and other alternative investment fund managers, as well as a draft directive on invoicing (VAT).

The Council will discuss implementation of the Stability and Growth Pact, in particular the follow-up to the notice served in February on Greece.

It will prepare the spring meeting of the European Council (25–26 March), focusing on conclusions on the EU 2020 strategy for growth and jobs, financial sector exit strategies and the financing of measures to tackle climate change.

The Council is also expected to adopt conclusions on budget guidelines for 2011.

In the margins of the Council, the following events will take place:

Monday 15 March

- Troika meeting with the European Parliament (14.00-15.00)
- Eurogroup meeting (17.00)

Event

Meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council (starting with a ministerial breakfast at 09.00) - Justus Lipsius building, Brussels .

The presidency will hold a briefing in the Council press room on Friday 12 March at 09.00

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting.

For full information concerning this meeting, please see:

<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/currentcouncilsessions>

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OTHER EVENTS

16 - 18 March 2010 (Málaga, Spain):

- Informal meeting of ministers in charge of territorial policy
www.eu2010.es
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