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Youth and Education

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President **Claude Meisch**
Minister for Education and Youth of Luxembourg

P R E S S

CONTENTS¹

ITEMS DEBATED

YOUTH.....	4
EU Youth Report	4
Work Plan for Youth.....	5
Political participation of young people	6
The role of youth policy and youth work with regards to migration	7
Other business	8
– Work programme of the incoming presidency	8
EDUCATION	9
Paris declaration.....	9
New priorities for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)	10
Reducing early school leaving	10
Education and migration:	11
Other business	12
– Work programme of the incoming presidency	12

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

– Partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia: Croatia	13
– European Union Special Representative for South Caucasus, Georgia: Mandate extended.....	13

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

– Bank capital requirements	13
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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.

AGRICULTURE

- Pesticides - maximum residue levels 14
- International Olive Council - EU position 14

TRANSPORT

- Inland navigation standards 15

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

- Interoperable digital services 15

ITEMS DEBATED

YOUTH

Before starting with the formal items on the agenda, the Presidency briefly outlined the main outcome of the informal meeting with representatives from youth organizations which took place before the Council meeting in the morning. The subject under discussion was youth work in the digital age. The main concerns expressed by the youth representatives were the following:

- Need to find the right balance between on-line and off-line activities
- Importance of maintaining personal contacts: social media is not always “social”
- Inclusion of this topic in the next Work Plan for Youth
- Increase the exchange of information and best practices in particular with the education sector
- Need to put in place on-line training schemes for youth workers and also on social media

EU Youth Report

The Council adopted the 2015 joint report on the implementation of the renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field ([13635/15](#))

The report evaluates progress towards the goals and priorities of the cooperation framework in the period 2013-2015, based on an assessment of young people’s situation and policy measures taken at EU and member state level. It also assesses the implementation of the "structured dialogue" with young people and puts forward new policy recommendations and priorities for the next three year period (2016-2018),

The report underlines that youth employment and employability remained top priorities for the EU and its member states throughout 2013-2015, with the support of the Youth Guarantee scheme¹ - the European Social Fund, the Youth Employment initiative and the Erasmus+ programme.

¹ OJ C 120, 26.4.2013.

It recommends the following priorities for the future work cycle of the cooperation:

- increased social inclusion of all young people,
- stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civic life in Europe;
- easier transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular the integration into the labour market.

It also calls on member states and the Commission to give particular attention to young people at risk of marginalisation, NEETs and young people with a migrant background, including newly arrived immigrants and young refugees.

COM reported that although the situation remained worrying there was a decrease in youth unemployment in the last year .it encouraged member states to continue to make the best use of all the EU programmes and funds available in this field

Work Plan for Youth

The Council and the representatives of the governments of the member states adopted a resolution on a new EU Work Plan for Youth (2016-2018) ([13631/15](#)).

It's a flexible, operational plan with a precise timetable so as to enable the EU and its member states to continue to tackle more promptly and efficiently the continuing high youth unemployment rates and the consequences of the economic crisis on young people. It sets out six priorities:

- Social inclusion of all young people;
- Participation of all young people in democratic and civic life;
- Transition of young people from youth to adulthood;
- Support to young people's health and well being;
- Addressing challenges and opportunities of digital era for youth policy; and
- Responses to the opportunities and challenges raised by the increasing numbers of young migrants and refugees in the EU.

These priorities are closely linked to those set out in the Joint EU Youth Report to ensure coherence and efficiency. The Work Plan is intended as a practical tool to implement these objectives, which require reinforced cross-sectoral cooperation in the youth field. It also calls for the active involvement of youth ministries in national policy-making in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy and the European Semester.

The Work Plan may be reviewed by the Council in light of results achieved and policy developments at EU level.

Political participation of young people

The Council adopted a resolution on improving young people political participation in the democratic life of Europe ([13850/15](#)), inviting member states to develop national, regional and/or local strategies and programmes for enhancing the political participation of all young people, especially young people with fewer opportunities.

Those strategies could include in particular developing cross-sectoral cooperation between formal education and non-formal learning, promoting alternative forms of political participation, increasing local and regional participation opportunities, supporting youth work and youth organisations.

Ministers underlined that this has now become a vital issue for our democracies. Participation and active citizenship can prevent marginalisation, intolerance and radicalisation.

The Presidency recalled that a key issue for the structured dialogue during the 18 months of the Trio Presidency (IT, LV and LU) has been how to encourage young people to participate in democratic life in Europe.

The Presidency stressed that the "structured dialogue" constitutes an important tool to promote the participation of young people in the decision-making process in the EU since it allows for a continuous joint reflection on the priorities, implementation and follow-up of European cooperation involving a diverse range of young people and youth organisations in the consultations at all levels in the member states, at the EU Youth Conferences and during the European Youth Week.

The Presidency also recalled that overall thematic priority of the structured dialogue for the period 1 January 2016 -30 June 2017 will be "Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe – Ready for Life, Ready for Society". This theme reflects the EU Youth Report and takes into account the feedback from the pre-consultation phase, which the upcoming trio presidencies have conducted

In this context, the Luxembourg Presidency briefly presented to the Council the final recommendations on political participation of young people resulting from the EU Youth Conference that took place in Luxembourg from 21 to 24 September ([12651/15](#))

The role of youth policy and youth work with regards to migration

Ministers were invited to reflect on how youth policy and youth work can best address the challenges raised by increasing migration flows, on the basis of a Presidency background document ([13640/15](#)).

According to Eurostat¹, 81% of the 689 000 people who applied for asylum in EU countries this year (through August) were younger than 35; more than half (55%) were aged 18 to 34.

Ministers welcomed the compendium of best practices prepared by the Presidency ([13640/15 ADD 1](#)), which shows that most member states have already put in place a large number of initiatives and measures to tackle this problem.

The main outcome of the ministerial debate was the following:

- Need for an integrated approach in this field, involving education, employment, cultural, and sport sectors, as well as parent support, in particular at local and regional level
- Youth work can be an instrument of inclusion by fostering intercultural understanding between the local and immigrant populations (involving also volunteers and young migrants in the process)
- European values must be systematically promoted as early as possible, for instance through education for citizenship in order to avoid intolerance xenophobia and radicalisation
- Importance of fostering language learning either through formal education or non-formal learning methodologies
- EU Youth Work Plan has a strategic role to play in coordinating member states actions and to increase synergies
- Make the best use of Erasmus + programme

¹ ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/asylum-and-managed-migration/data/database

Following a minute of silence, the French minister made a short declaration on the events in Paris, underlining France's determination to preserve its way of life and its freedoms and thanked all its colleagues for the solidarity shown following the terrorist attacks of November 13th.

The Commission supported France's declaration and underlined that time for rhetoric is over and we must now act together. He underlined the need to mobilise all possible European instruments and financial tools in order to combat radicalisation and extremism. The Commission stands ready to help member states in their efforts.

Other business

Work programme of the incoming presidency

The Council took note of the incoming Netherlands presidency main priorities in the field of youth for the coming six months, in particular:

- prevention of radicalism through youth work
- encouraging the participation and integration of young people with mental health problems
- developing the new cycle of the structured dialogue " Enabling all young people to engage in a diverse, connected and inclusive Europe – Ready for Life, Ready for Society"

EDUCATION

Paris declaration

Following a minute of silence in tribute to the victims of Paris attacks, the French minister for Education made a short statement sharing her deep emotion and shock in the aftermath of the Paris tragedy but wished to underline as well that terrorists did not and could not destroy the core values of the French Republic – “Liberty, equality and fraternity”- which are also those of Europe. She thanked warmly all colleagues for their solidarity.

All ministers expressed their deepest sympathy and solidarity towards France in this painful moment. They agreed that the Paris attacks were targeted not only at France but to the whole Europe, therefore a European response must be given, not only in words but also in actions.

Although most ministers acknowledged the importance of education in preventing exclusion and radicalisation, several ministers pointed out that it cannot be the only answer. Employment, health and cultural aspects must also be addressed.

Ministers underlined the relevance of the Paris declaration of 17 March 2015 – in the aftermath of the Charlie Hebdo attacks - on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination through education.

The declaration was adopted at an informal meeting of EU education ministers which was attended by all the member states - 26 at ministerial level - and French President François Hollande also made an appearance.

Following a first assessment of initiatives and measures already taken at EU level, the French delegation underlined the need to maintain the political momentum by making it a long term commitment under Erasmus+ and in the framework of European cooperation in education and training (ET2020).

The Commission recalled that it had already highlighted the key role which the education and youth sectors have to play in promoting common European values in its communication on a European Agenda for Security ([8293/15](#)) and that it will launch in November, in the framework of the Erasmus+ programme, a specific call for proposals in this field with a budget of 3 million euros.

New priorities for European cooperation in education and training (ET2020)

The Council adopted the 2015 joint report of the Council and the Commission on the implementation of the strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training ([13858/15](#)).

ET 2020¹ is the key European-level framework that helps member states to modernise their education and training systems, thus contributing to the overall political priorities set under the Europe 2020 strategy. ET 2020 established four general long-term objectives which European cooperation in education and training should seek to achieve by the end of this decade²

The current report takes stock not only of progress during the most recent work cycle (2012-2014) in the process, it also reviews the ET 2020 framework as a whole at its half-way stage and puts forward proposals for adjustment. These are essentially aimed at providing greater focus, improved governance and better dissemination of the results of European cooperation.

For the remaining five years up to 2020 ET 2020 will have 6 new priority areas (instead of 13), aiming to ensure that education and training systems promote employability, skills and innovation, increase social mobility and equality, help to prevent radicalisation and lay the foundations for democratic values and active citizenship.

Finally, the Commission recommended a better use of financial instruments of the Union, such as Erasmus +, the Structural Funds and the Investment Plan for Europe.

Reducing early school leaving

The Council adopted conclusions on reducing early school leaving and promoting success in school ([13860/15](#)), which take stock of the progress made so far in this field, with a view to consolidating and improving measures aimed at tackling this problem.

The conclusions also invite member states to make the best use of the funding opportunities offered by EU instruments such as the Erasmus+ Programme, the European Social Fund and the European Fund for Strategic Investments to support comprehensive policy measures in this area and to promote cooperation in and around schools.

1 OJ C 119, 28.5.2009

2 making lifelong learning and mobility a reality improving the quality and efficiency of education and training promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship enhancing creativity and innovation, including entrepreneurship, at all levels of education and training

Over the last five years there has been consistent progress towards the 10% benchmark established by the Europe 2020 strategy. The EU average currently stands at 11.1% (down from 14.2% in 2009). However, significant discrepancies remain between and within member states.

Early school leaving is a serious issue throughout Europe, both for individuals and society as a whole since it often leads to marginalisation. Low levels of education not only have severe consequences for the young people concerned, they also bring high economic and social costs for society.¹

Education and migration:

Ministers discussed strategies for integrating recently arrived migrants and people with a migrant background.

The Presidency underlined that the successful integration of migrants into society remains a precondition for Europe's economic competitiveness, as well as for social cohesion.

However, a number of member states also draw attention to the practical and financial problems created by the unprecedented influx of migrants, in particular young migrants.

In general ministers considered necessary to put the focus on the following issues:

- ensure effective learning of the language(s) of the host country
- speed-up assessment and validation of prior qualifications
- promoting common European values systematically at all levels of education
- avoid geographical concentration of migrants
- preparing teachers and trainers - but also learners and parents - for more multicultural diversity in the learning environment
- increase the exchange of best practices among member states

¹ According to 2014 data, 11.1% of 18 to 24 year-olds have left education and training without completing an upper secondary programme, amounting to around 4.4 million young people.

In this context, the Presidency recalled that the working lunch of ministers of education also addressed promotion of language learning and inclusion but focusing in (high quality) early childhood education and care. Against the background of increasing diversity of migrant children in member states, ministers discussed how to foster general access and simultaneously ensure high quality early childhood education and care.

Other business

Work programme of the incoming presidency

The Council took note of the incoming Netherlands presidency's main priorities in the field of education for the coming six months, namely:

- Contribution of education to jobs and growth in the framework of the New Agenda for Skills
- Vocational education and training
- Countering radicalisation

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Partnership and cooperation agreement with Russia: Croatia

The Council adopted a decision on the conclusion of the protocol to the EU-Russia partnership and cooperation agreement to take into account the accession of Croatia to the EU. ([11878/14 COEST 249](#))

European Union Special Representative for South Caucasus, Georgia: Mandate extended

The Council extended the mandate of the European Union Special Representative (EUSR) for the South Caucasus and the crisis in Georgia until 28 February 2017. [See press release](#)

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Bank capital requirements

The Council decided not to object to a Commission regulation supplementing regulation 575/2013 on bank capital requirements ([14013/15](#) + [13443/15](#) + [13443/15 ADD 1](#)).

The text relates to draft technical standards for prudential valuation, submitted by the European Banking Authority in accordance with article 105 of the capital requirements regulation. It specifies the conditions by which those standards will be applied.

The regulation is a delegated act pursuant to article 290 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU. It can now enter into force, unless the European Parliament objects.

AGRICULTURE

Pesticides - maximum residue levels

The Council decided not to oppose the adoption of a Commission regulation amending annex IV to regulation 396/2005¹ as regards COS-OGA, cerevisane, calcium hydroxide, lecithins, *Salix* spp cortex, vinegar, fructose, Pepino mosaic virus strain CH2 isolate 1906, *Verticillium albo-atrum* isolate WCS850 and *Bacillus amyloliquefaciens* subsp. *plantarum* strain D747 (13068/15);

Regulation 396/2005 establishes the maximum quantities of pesticide residues permitted in products of animal or vegetable origin intended for human or animal consumption. These maximum residue levels (MRLs) include, on the one hand, MRLs which are specific to particular foodstuffs intended for human or animal consumption and, on the other, a general limit which applies where no specific MRL has been set. MRL applications are communicated to the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which issue a scientific opinion on each intended new MRL. Based on EFSA's opinion, the Commission proposes a regulation such as those listed above to establish a new MRL or to amend or remove an existing MRL and modifying the annexes of regulation 396/2005 accordingly.

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

International Olive Council - EU position

The Council adopted a decision on the position to be adopted on behalf of the EU within the Council of members of the International Olive Council (IOC) concerning the accession of new members (14123/15).

At the next session of the Council of members of the OIC, the EU should request the postponement of votes on all requests for new accessions until a new international agreement on olive oil and table olives replacing the 2005 Agreement is in force.

¹ OJ L 070, 16.3.2005, p. 1.

The IOC is an international intergovernmental organisation in the field of olive oil and table olives. It was set up in Spain in 1959, under the auspices of the United Nations. The Council contributes to the sustainable and responsible development of olive growing and it serves as a world forum for discussing policymaking issues and tackling present and future challenges. The EU is member of the IOC.

TRANSPORT

Inland navigation standards

The Council adopted a decision setting out the position of the EU on the adoption of a standard concerning technical requirements for inland waterway vessels. The EU position is established for the meetings of the European Committee for drawing up standards in the field of inland navigation (CESNI) on 26 November 2015 and of the Central Commission for the Navigation of the Rhine (CCNR) on 3 December 2015, and any relevant subsequent meetings of the CCNR.

[Council decision on the position to be adopted in relation to the adoption of a standard concerning technical requirements for inland waterway vessels](#)

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Interoperable digital services

The Council adopted a decision on a programme to promote the interoperability of digital services across Europe (ISA²). The programme aims to help member states' public administrations interact more efficiently with each other and offer more user-friendly digital services for citizens and businesses. [See press release](#). See also: [ISA² decision](#), [ISA² - Statement of the Commission](#)
