



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



6795/08 (Presse 47)

PRESS RELEASE

2852nd Council meeting

Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry and Research)

Brussels, 25 February 2008

President **Mr Andrej Vizjak**
Minister for the Economy
Ms Mojca Kucler Dolinar
Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology

P R E S S

Rue de la Loi 175 B – 1048 BRUSSELS Tel.: +32 (0)2 281 6715 / 6319 Fax: +32 (0)2 281 8026
press.office@consilium.europa.eu <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/Newsroom>

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Main results of the Council

*The Council adopted a **key issues paper** on competitiveness and innovation, as well as conclusions on the **single market review**. Both documents will be submitted to the spring meeting of the European Council, to be held in Brussels on 13 and 14 March.*

*The Council reached an agreement on the main elements for the launch of a **fuel cells and hydrogen joint technology initiative**.*

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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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PARTICIPANTS

The governments of the Member States and the European Commission were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Ms Sabine LARUELLE

Minister for Economic Affairs, the Self-Employed and Agriculture

Mr Benoit CEREXHE

Minister of the Brussels Capital Regional Government, with responsibility for Employment, Economic Affairs, Scientific Research, Fire Prevention and Emergency Medical Aid

Mr Jean-Claude MARCOURT

Minister for Economic Affairs and Employment (Walloon Region)

Bulgaria:

Mr Daniel Vassilev VALTCHEV

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Education and Science

Ms Nina RADEVA

Deputy Minister for the Economy and Energy

Czech Republic:

Mr Martin TLAPA

Deputy Minister for Industry and Trade

Denmark:

Mr Jens KISLING

Deputy Permanent Representative

Germany:

Mr Bernd PFAFFENBACH

State Secretary, Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs and Technology

Estonia:

Mr Juhan PARTS

Minister for Economic Affairs and Communications

Ireland:

Mr Micheál MARTIN

Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment

Greece:

Mr Meletios TZAFERIS

Secretary General for Industry, Ministry of Development

Mr Ioannis TSOUKALAS

Secretary General for Research and Technology, Ministry of Development

Mr Eleftherios STAVROPOULOS

Special Secretary for Competitiveness, Ministry of Development

Spain:

Mr Alberto NAVARRO GONZÁLEZ

State Secretary for the European Union

Mr Joan TRULLÉN

Secretary General of Industry, Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade

France:

Ms Valérie PÉCRESSE

Minister for Higher Education and Research

Mr Hervé NOVELLI

Minister of State with responsibility for Enterprise and Foreign Trade

Italy:

Mr Vincenzo GRASSI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Cyprus:

Mr George CHACALLI

Deputy Permanent Representative

Latvia:

Mr Kaspars GERHARDS

Minister for Economics

Lithuania:

Ms Virginija BŪDIENĖ

Deputy Minister for Education and Science

Luxembourg:

Mr Jeannot KRECKÉ

Minister for Economic Affairs and Foreign Trade, Minister for Sport

Hungary:

Mr Csaba KÁKOSY

Minister for Economic Affairs and Transport

Malta:

Ms Theresa CUTAJAR

Deputy Permanent Representative

Netherlands:

Ms Maria van der HOEVEN

Minister for Economic Affairs

Austria:

Mr Martin BARTENSTEIN

Mr Johannes HAHN

Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Labour

Federal Minister for Science and Research

Poland:

Mr Marcin KOROLEC

Deputy Minister for Economic Affairs, Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Economic Affairs

Portugal:

Mr Manuel PINHO

Minister for Economic Affairs and Innovation

Romania:

Mr Anton ANTON

State Secretary for Research, President of the National Authority for Scientific Research, Ministry of Education and Research

Slovenia:

Mr Andrej VIZJAK

Ms Mojca KUCLER DOLINAR

Minister for the Economy

Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology

Slovakia:

Mr Ivan RYBÁRIK

Mr Jozef HABÁNIK

State Secretary at the Ministry of the Economy

State Secretary at the Ministry of Education

Finland:

Mr Mauri PEKKARINEN

Ms Tarja CRONBERG

Minister for Economic Affairs

Minister for Labour

Sweden:

Mr Jöran HÄGGLUND

Mr Gunnar WIESLANDER

State Secretary to the Minister for Enterprise and Energy

State Secretary, Ministry for Trade

United Kingdom:

Mr Andy LEBRECHT

Deputy Permanent Representative

Commission:

Mr Günter VERHEUGEN

Mr Stavros DIMAS

Mr Janez POTOČNIK

Mr Charlie MCREEVY

Vice President

Member

Member

Member

ITEMS DEBATED**PREPARATION FOR THE SPRING EUROPEAN COUNCIL****Key issues paper on competitiveness and innovation**

The Council held an exchange of views on the Lisbon policy package for growth and jobs and adopted the key issues paper ([6993/08](#)) with a view to its submission to the 2008 Spring European Council.

Single market review - *Council conclusions*

The Council exchanged views on the Commission's Communication from November last year on "A single market for the 21st century Europe" ("Single Market Review") in which the Commission sets out its views as to how the functioning of the internal market can be further improved and better respond to globalisation and other challenges. The Council adopted conclusions addressed to the European Council inviting it to endorse the general orientation of a policy for the internal market based on the Single Market Review and the conclusions.

These conclusions are to be found in document [6992/08](#).

STRATEGIC ENERGY TECHNOLOGY ACTION PLAN

The Council held an exchange of views on the strategic energy technologies action plan (SET-plan).

The exchange of views, based on a questionnaire drawn up by the presidency (6155/1/08), focussed on energy-related research as well as on the impact of the plan on the competitiveness of European industry.

The debate revealed a broad consensus on the importance of the SET-plan in order for the EU to be a leading actor in this area and on the new opportunities that it might represent for European companies. Research in this field could also significantly contribute to the reduction of greenhouse-gas emissions.

Conclusions on the SET-plan will be adopted at the Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council meeting on 28 February, with a view to providing input for the Spring European Council.

The conclusions are based on a Commission communication (15458/07) presented last year in response to a request from the 2007 Spring European Council, where it was recognised that there was a need to step up energy research, in particular to boost the competitiveness of sustainable energies, notably renewables, and low carbon technologies and to pursue the further development of energy efficient technologies.

JOINT TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVE ON FUEL CELLS AND HYDROGEN

The Council reached an agreement on a general approach¹ for the setting up of a fuel cells and hydrogen joint technology initiative (JTI) (6115/08).

This JTI is aimed at coordinating European research efforts by providing a framework encouraging large companies and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) throughout the EU to cooperate between themselves together with other stakeholders within the fuel cells and hydrogen field.

Major specific objectives of the initiative include:

- enabling market breakthrough of fuel cell and hydrogen technologies, thereby allowing commercial market forces to drive the substantial public benefits;
- placing Europe at the forefront of fuel cell and hydrogen technologies worldwide;
- reaching the critical mass of research effort to give confidence to industry, public and private investors, decision-makers and other stakeholders to embark on a long-term programme;
- leveraging further industrial, national and regional investment in research and technological development.

This JTI is a research programme that aims, over the next six years, to speed up the development of fuel cells and hydrogen technologies in Europe so that they can be brought onto the market between 2010 and 2020. The EU would contribute EUR 470 million and the private sector is expected to raise a similar amount.

¹ A general approach is an agreement on the essential elements of a legal act, pending the opinion of the European Parliament.

In the light of climate change and the need for significant reductions in cumulative greenhouse gases and pollutants, fuel cells and hydrogen have the potential to become a viable alternative to traditional energy sources. Fuel cell and hydrogen technologies are not commercially available at present and further research and technical development is needed before they can be brought into use.

JTIs were introduced in EU's Seventh Framework Programme for research (2007-13) as a way of creating public-private partnerships in research at European level.

The first four JTIs were adopted in December 2007.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Council took note of information regarding the following items:

(a) ***CO2 emissions from cars***

The presidency and the Commission informed the Council on the state of play on this draft regulation (5089/08), which will be the subject of a policy debate at the next Environment Council meeting on 3 March 2008.

(b) ***Defence package***

(i) Communication on a strategy for a stronger and more competitive European defence industry (16682 /07)

(ii) Draft directive on simplifying terms and conditions of transfers of defence-related products within the Community (16534/07)

(iii) Draft directive on the coordination of procedures for the award of certain public works contracts, public supply contracts and public service contracts in the fields of defence and security (16488/07)

The Commission informed the Council about the main content and objectives of the proposed legislative package.

(c) ***Consumer markets scoreboard***

The Council took note of a presentation on the initiative for creating a consumer scoreboard.

The consumer scoreboard will be a new policy tool to evaluate, on the basis of 5 main indicators (prices, consumer complaints, possibility of switching providers, consumer satisfaction and safety), whether consumer markets function properly. It would be integrated into the single market scoreboard.

(d) ***Internal market scoreboard***

The Council took note of the latest data regarding the transposition of internal market directives into national law and their implementation .

(e) ***Conference on innovation and clusters***

The Council took note of the outcome of this conference, held in Stockholm on 22 and 23 January (6440/08).

(f) ***Research programme on quality of life for older people through the use of new technologies ("Ambient Assisted Living" programme).***

The presidency briefed ministers on the state of play.

(g) ***Draft decision on the participation by the Community in a research programme aimed at supporting SMEs working in the field of research and development of SMEs (Eurostars)***

The Council took note of a progress report (5881/08).

(h) ***Better regulation***

The Council took note of the second strategic report on "better regulation" (6840/08).

It will revert to this subject at the next meeting of the Competitiveness Council on 29-30 May 2008.

The report assesses progress in all areas of the better regulation initiative (simplification, impact assessment, reduction of administrative burdens, consultations with stakeholders) and proposes further guidelines for these fields.

(i) ***Climate-energy legislative package***

The Council took stock of information provided by the presidency on this package. The package will be the subject of a policy debate at the Energy Council meeting on 28 February and at the Environment Council meeting on 3 March.

(j) ***Goods package***

The Council took note of the outcome of the European Parliament vote on 21 February 2008 approving the compromise which had been negotiated with the Slovenian Presidency on behalf of the Council whereby a first reading agreement on the three legislative proposals of the goods package was achieved. The new legal framework will clarify and strengthen the application of the principle of mutual recognition and will thereby facilitate access to the internal market not least for small and medium sized enterprises throughout the EU. The new rules will also improve market surveillance and strengthen the confidence of consumers. (6814/08).

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**RESEARCH****Scientific cooperation agreement with Switzerland (EC and EURATOM)**

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of an agreement between the European Community (EC) European Atomic Energy Community (EURATOM) of the one part, and Switzerland of the other part, for research and development cooperation in several fields (5656/08).

The agreement was signed in June 2007 and has been applied provisionally since 1 January 2007.

Scientific cooperation agreements with Egypt and Israel

The Council adopted decisions approving the conclusion of agreements on scientific and technological cooperation with Egypt (5654/08) and with Israel (5655/08).

Committee for the fusion programme - EU enlargement

The Council adjusted the weighted voting system of the consultative committee for the fusion programme following the accession of Bulgaria and Romania on 1 January 2007 (5658/08).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS**EU/Georgia - Partnership and cooperation agreement**

The Council adopted a decision on the Community position to be adopted in the cooperation committee established by the partnership and cooperation agreement with Georgia in relation to the establishment of a subcommittee on justice, freedom and security.

Transnistria (Republic of Moldova) - Visa ban

The Council adopted a common position updating the list of persons targeted by a ban on travel to the EU and extending it for 12 months.

The list now contains 19 names (see [Official Journal of the EU, L 51, 26.2.2008, p.23](#)).

In 2004, the Council adopted restrictive measures against persons deemed responsible for the design and implementation of the intimidation and closure campaign against Latin-script Moldovan schools in Transnistria.

EU/Central Asia/Caucasus countries - Partnership and cooperation agreements - EU enlargement

The Council adopted decisions approving the signing and provisional application of protocols to the partnership and cooperation agreements with Uzbekistan (8137/07), the Kyrgyz Republic (8873/07) and Tajikistan (8837/07) in order to take account of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU in January 2007.

Burma/Myanmar - Restrictive measures

The Council adopted a regulation approving the practical implementation of tougher restrictive measures in respect of Burma/Myanmar (6271/08).

The regulation extends and updates the list of enterprises, legal persons, entities or bodies subject to a travel or investment ban.

The regulation provides for a prohibition on investments in Burmese state-owned enterprises and a ban on the provision of financial assistance to them for any supply of goods and technology and on the provision of related technical assistance or training.

This regulation repeals the Regulation (EC) No 817/2006.

The Council adopted conclusions on Burma/Myanmar on 18 February 2008 (see press release 6946/08).

In October, the Council condemned the brutal repression by the Burmese authorities of peaceful protestors and the continuing serious violations of human rights in Burma/Myanmar.

EU/Mexico - Partnership Agreement - EU enlargement

The Council adopted a decision approving the conclusion of a second additional protocol to the economic partnership, political coordination and cooperation agreement with Mexico to take account of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania to the EU.

The agreement was signed in Brussels in December 1997 and entered into force in October 2000.

FISHERIES

New data collection and management system

The Council adopted a regulation establishing a Community framework for the collection, management and use of data in the fisheries sector and support for scientific advice regarding the Common Fisheries Policy (16806/07).

The new rules are aimed at improving the EU's data collection system; they cover the whole process, from the collection of data in ports or at sea to its use by end-users (bodies with a research or management interest in the scientific analysis of data in the fisheries sector). Moreover, the regulation is intended to develop multi-annual national sampling programmes covering, in particular, biological, socio-economic, and ecosystem data.

The multi-annual Community programme for the collection, management and use of biological, technical, environmental and socio economic data will be drawn up for three-year periods and the first period will cover 2009 to 2010 inclusive.

This programme should enter into force before spring 2008.

TRADE POLICY

Antidumpings

– *Ferro-silicon from third countries*

The Council adopted a regulation imposing a definitive anti-dumping duty and collecting definitively the provisional duty imposed on imports of ferro-silicon originating in China, Egypt, Kazakhstan, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Russia (5903/08).

– *Antidumping - Bicycles from China*

The Council adopted a regulation maintaining Regulation No 71/97 on the extension of the anti-dumping duty imposed on imports of bicycles originating in China to imports of certain bicycle parts from China (5827/08).

DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION

Special report No 6/2007 from the Court of Auditors on the effectiveness of technical assistance in the context of capacity development - *Council conclusions*

These conclusions are to be found in document [6299/08](#) and [6299-co01/08](#).