



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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PRESS RELEASE

2876th Council meeting

Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs

Luxembourg, 9-10 June 2008

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10414/08 (Presse 166)

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Main results of the Council

*The Council reached political agreement on a package of two regulations on **working time** and **temporary agency** respectively.*

*The Council reached political agreement on a decision on **Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States for 2008**.*

*The Council reached general approaches on two draft regulations concerning the **coordination of the social security systems**.*

The Council adopted conclusions on:

- the Commission recommendation on **enhanced administrative cooperation** in the context of **posting of workers** in the framework of the provision of services;
- **anticipating and matching labour needs**, with special emphasis on **youth**;
- the implementation of the **Beijing Platform for Action**, with regard to **indicators in respect of "the Girl Child"** and **"Women in political decision-making"**, respectively;
- the elimination of **gender stereotypes** in society;
- reducing the **burden of cancer**;
- **antimicrobial resistance**;
- implementation of the **EU Health Strategy**;
- **information** to patients on **medicinal products**.

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 - Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
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PARTICIPANTS

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

Belgium:

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Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Employment and Equal Opportunities

Bulgaria:

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Mr Valery TZEKOV

Minister for Labour and Social Policy
Deputy Minister for Health

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Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs

Mr Tomáš JULÍNEK

Minister for Health

Denmark:

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Federal Minister for Labour and Social Affairs
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Minister for Employment and Social Protection
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Minister for the Economy, Treasury and Employment and Second Deputy President of the Council of the Generalitat of the Autonomous Valencian Community
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Minister for Social Security and Labour
Minister for Health

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Ms Marie-Josée JACOBS

Mr Mars DI BARTOLOMEO

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 Minister for the Family and Integration, Minister for Equal Opportunities
 Minister for Health and Social Security

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Mr László HERCZOG

Minister for Health
 State Secretary (with special responsibility), Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour

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Mr John DALLI

Minister for Social Policy

Netherlands:

Mr Piet Hein DONNER

Minister for Social Affairs and Employment

Austria:

Mr Martin BARTENSTEIN

Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Labour

Poland:

Ms Czesława OSTROWSKA

Mr Marek TWARDOWSKI

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Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Health

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Mr Francisco RAMOS

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Ms Denisa-Oana PĂTRAȘCU

Minister for Public Health
 State Secretary with responsibility for the Department for Social Dialogue, Labour Law and Relations with the Parliament, Ministry of Labour, the Family and Equal Opportunities

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 Minister for Health
 State Secretary, Ministry of Labour, the Family and Social Affairs

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Minister for Labour

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Mr Sven Otto LITTORIN

Mr Göran HÄGGLUND

Ms Cristina HUSMARK PEHRSSON

Minister for Employment
 Minister for Social Affairs
 Minister for Social Security

United Kingdom:

Mr John HUTTON

Mr Pat McFADDEN

Secretary of State for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform
 Minister of State for Employment Relations and Postal Affairs

Commission:

Mr Vladimír ŠPIDLA

Ms Androulla VASSILIOU

Member
 Member

Other participants:

Ms Elise WILLAME
Mr Emilio GABAGLIO

Chair of the European Social Protection Committee
Chair of the Employment Committee

ITEMS DEBATED

WORKING TIME

The Council has reached by qualified majority a political agreement on a directive amending Directive 2003/88/EC concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time.

The agreement was accompanied by a certain number of statements to be included in the Council Minutes.

The Council instructed the Permanent Representatives Committee to finalise the text with a view to the formal adoption of a Common Position as an "A" item at a forthcoming Council session and its transmission to the European Parliament in the framework of the co-decision procedure.

Directive 2003/88/CE establishes minimum requirements concerning the organisation of working time, in particular in respect of daily and weekly rest periods, breaks, maximum weekly working time, annual leave and certain aspects of night work, shift work and patterns of work.

The last outstanding issue resolved by the Council relates to the so-called "**opt-out** clause", i.e. the possibility of not applying the maximum weekly working time (48 hours) if the worker agrees to work longer hours.

The success of the Slovenian Presidency builds on the work of six previous presidencies and is part of an overall package which includes the **temporary workers** file, on which the Council also reached agreement by qualified majority.

The Directive is to be adopted under the co-decision procedure with the European Parliament.

The European Parliament delivered its first-reading opinion on 11 May 2005 (8725/05) and the Commission its amended proposal on 31 May 2005 (9554/05).

The key aspects of the text as agreed by the Council (doc. 10583/08) are the following:

With regard to **on-call time**, the text introduces a distinction between "active" and "inactive" on-call time. It defines the inactive part of on-call time as the period during which the worker has the obligation to be available at the workplace but is not required by his employer to effectively carry out his activity or duties. Active on-call time at the workplace continues to be working time and cannot be treated as rest time, in accordance with the SIMAP-Jaeger Court of Justice's jurisprudence. Inactive on-call time does not have to be regarded as working time unless national law or, in accordance with national law and/or practice, a collective agreement or an agreement between the social partners so provides.

With regard to **compensatory rest**: the text provides that in cases where derogations are made to the provisions applicable to daily rest, breaks, weekly rest periods, length of night work and to reference periods, compensatory rest periods will have to be granted within a reasonable period, to be determined by national legislation or a collective agreement or agreement concluded between the social partners. This introduces more flexibility in the timing of compensatory rest with regard to the current Directive.

With regard to the **reconciliation of work and family life**, the text provides that the Member States should:

- encourage the social partners at the appropriate level to conclude agreements aimed at improving reconciliation of work and family life;
- ensure, without prejudice to Directive 2002/14/EC and in consultation with the social partners, that employers inform workers in due time of any substantial changes in the pattern or organisation of their working time;
- in accordance with national practices, also encourage employers to examine requests for changes to such working hours and patterns, subject to business needs, and to both employers' and workers' needs for flexibility.

The **standard limit to weekly working time** remains at 48 hours per week, including any overtime and active on-call time, to be calculated over a reference period. Under the present Directive, the maximum reference period is 12 months but this is only available by collective agreement. The text agreed by the Council also allows for a 12-month reference period by legislation, following consultation of the social partners. However, the maximum reference period will be six months if Member States decide to use the opt-out provisions.

Substantive provisions have been agreed as regards **the opt-out**. In the preamble, the text clearly states that the opt-out is a derogation, which is subject to the effective protection of workers' health and safety and to the express, free and informed consent of the worker concerned. Its use must be subject to appropriate safeguards and close monitoring. A recital refers to the Charter of Fundamental Rights, including the right of every worker to a limitation of their maximum working hours.

The text provides for a **series of reinforced protective conditions for workers using the opt-out**. In particular, in the case of workers on probationary periods, they may withdraw consent to the opt-out either within the first six months or at any time during the probationary period and within three months after the end of the probationary period, whichever period is the longer. In addition, only workers employed for a contract or contracts totalling less than 10 weeks per year for the same employer will now be able to opt out from the beginning of their employment contract, or excluded from the 'cap' if they opt out.

The special "cap" for opted-out workers is either 60 hours generally, averaged over 3 months (which can be exceeded via collective agreement) or a maximum 65 hours, averaged over 3 months (available only if inactive on-call time is counted as working time and there is no collective agreement).

The review clause provides that three years after the entry into force of the Directive, the Member States which allow for the opt-out shall report to the Commission on its use, including details on the reasons, the sectors, activities and numbers of workers concerned, as well as the effects of the opt-out on workers' health and safety and the views of the social partners at national level. The Member States which use the 12-months reference period by legislation will also have to report to the Commission. Within 1 further year, the Commission will report on both issues to Council and Parliament, and may add appropriate proposals to reduce excessive working hours.

The Council will evaluate the use of the opt-out, and the extended reference period, based on the Commission's report. One year later, the Commission may submit a proposal to Council and Parliament to revise the Directive, taking account of the Council's evaluation.

TEMPORARY AGENCY WORK

The Council has reached political agreement on a common position on the draft Directive on temporary agency work. The common position will be transmitted to the European Parliament for a second reading after the text has been finalised by legal and linguistic experts..

The core element of the compromise is a balance between ensuring the protection of temporary agency workers and, at the same time, allowing sufficient flexibility in labour markets which indeed have very different traditions of concluding agreements between the social partners.

The main elements in the Council's agreement are the following:

The principle of equal treatment

The principle of equal treatment from day one will be the general rule. However, Article 5(3) will allow Member States to give the social partners the option of upholding or concluding collective agreements which, while respecting the overall protection of temporary agency workers, establish working and employment conditions which may differ from the principle of equal treatment.

In addition, Article 5(4) introduces a mechanism according to which Member States which do not operate with collective agreements can, on the basis of an agreement negotiated by the social partners at national level, derogate, within limits, from the principle of equal treatment.

The text also includes a new Article 5(5) on preventing the misuse of these possibilities, in particular in the context of successive short-term assignments.

Review of prohibitions and restrictions

Article 4 envisages that existing prohibitions and restrictions on temporary agency work should be reviewed in order to ascertain that such restrictions are justified.

Some examples of restrictions to be reviewed are:

- various limits on the sectors or occupations that might use temporary agency workers (e.g. a restriction on their use for dangerous work);

- maximum contract duration; limiting temporary agency work only to certain situations (such as situations of peak or unexpected workload).

Restrictions should be justified on various grounds of general interest, citing the protection of temporary agency workers, the requirements of health and safety at work, as well as the need to ensure that the labour market functions properly.

The Council's debate was based on a text resulting from the discussions in the preparatory bodies and which is part of an overall package including the *working time* file, also on the agenda of today's Council meeting.

The directive is to be adopted under the co-decision procedure with the European Parliament.

The European Parliament delivered its first-reading opinion on 21 November 2002 ([14331/02](#)).

ENHANCED ADMINISTRATIVE COOPERATION IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTING OF WORKERS* - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on a Commission recommendation on enhanced administrative cooperation in the context of the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services.

These conclusions were accompanied by a statement by several delegations set out in [9935/08 ADD1](#).

Through this initiative, the Commission recommends that Member States enhance their administrative cooperation in order to facilitate the effective implementation and enforcement of the Community legislation in this field; more specifically, it recommends action in three areas:

- (a) developing an electronic information exchange system;
- (b) improving access to information on the terms and conditions of employment both for foreign service providers and for the posted workers; and
- (c) promoting the exchange of information and of best practices.

See the full text of the conclusions at [9935/08](#).

GUIDELINES FOR THE EMPLOYMENT POLICIES OF THE MEMBER STATES

The Council reached political agreement on a decision establishing the Guidelines for the Employment Policies of the Member States for the year 2008 ([10090/08](#)).

The Commission proposed in December 2007 the Integrated Guidelines, which include the Employment Guidelines, should remain unchanged for the next Lisbon cycle.

The Council has also constantly stressed the importance of the stability of the Guidelines and the need to concentrate on their implementation. This is especially important in the run-up to the year 2010 where the results achieved by the Lisbon Strategy as a whole will have to be evaluated.

The Council received the opinion of the European Parliament on 20 May 2008.

SKILLS, JOBS AND YOUTH

ANTICIPATING AND MATCHING LABOUR MARKET NEEDS - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on "Anticipating and matching market labour needs, with special emphasis on youth - A Jobs and Skills initiative".

The March 2008 European Council conclusions invited the Commission to present a comprehensive assessment of the future skills requirements in Europe up to 2020, taking account of the impacts of technological change and ageing populations and to propose steps to anticipate future needs.¹

See the full text of the conclusions at [\(10091/08\)](#).

EMCO OPINION ON YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The Council endorsed the opinion presented by Mr Emilio GABAGLIO, chair of the Employment Committee, on Youth employment set out in [9898/08](#).

¹ 7652/08, conclusion No 14.

SOCIAL SECURITY

Implementing Regulation

Pending the European Parliament first reading opinion to be adopted early in July, the Council reached a unanimous partial general approach regarding part of a regulation aimed at implementing Regulation (EC) No 883/2004¹ on the coordination of social security systems and covering **chapter III of title IV (financial provisions - recovery of benefits provided but not due, recovery of provisional payments and contributions, offsetting and assistance with recovery)** ([9988/08 + ADD1](#)).

Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 was the first step in a process aimed at modernising and simplifying EU rules on the coordination of national social security systems. Such rules are intended to allow EU citizens to move freely within Europe, while maintaining their social rights and expectations (health, pensions, unemployment protection, etc.).

The process must be completed by adoption of the implementing regulation², the proposal for which is now under examination. The regulation will replace Regulation (EEC) No 574/72³, with provisions designed to strengthen cooperation between national institutions and improve the methods of data exchange.

Annexes to Regulation (EC) No 883/2004

Pending the European Parliament first reading opinion to be adopted early in July, the Council has agreed on a general approach on a regulation amending Regulation (EC) No 883/2004 on the coordination of social security systems and determining the content of its Annexes ([9939/08](#)).

These Annexes are necessary in order to ensure that the particular characteristics of the various systems in the Member States are taken into account.

¹ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the coordination of social security systems, OJ L 166, 30.4.2004, corrigendum OJ L 200, 7.6.2004.

² See Article 89 of Regulation (EC) No 883/2004.

³ OJ L 74, 27.3.1972, as last amended by Regulation (EC) No 647/2005, OJ L 28, 30.1.1997.

Annex XI contains provisions regarding specific aspects of individual Member States' legislation.¹

The Council decided to enter in its minutes the statement as set out in Annex III to document [9939/08](#).

Legal basis proposed: Articles 42 and 308 of the Treaty – unanimity required for a Council decision; co-decision procedure with the European Parliament applicable.

¹ See Article 83 of the Regulation.

BEIJING PLATFORM FOR ACTION - FOLLOW-UP

The follow-up to the Beijing Platform, a set of actions for the advancement of women, was agreed at the United Nations World Conference on Women in 1995.

Since 1999, successive EU Presidencies have already developed indicators on 10 of the 12 critical areas of concern of the Beijing Platform for Action, and the Council has adopted conclusions endorsing these indicators, which represent a crucial policy instrument.

Girl Child - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on the review of implementation by the Member States and the EU institutions of the Beijing Platform for Action, accompanied by indicators in respect of *the Girl Child*, and took note of the accompanying report by the Presidency set out in [9669/08 ADD1](#).

See the full text of the conclusions at [9669/08](#)

Women in political decision-making - *Council conclusions*

The Council also adopted conclusions on *Women in political decision-making* and took note of the accompanying report by the Presidency set out in [9670/08 ADD1](#).

See the full text of the conclusions at [9670/08](#).

GENDER STEREOTYPES - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on the elimination of gender stereotypes in society.

Gender-stereotyping is one of the most persistent causes of inequality between women and men in all spheres and at all stages of life.

See the full text of the conclusions at [9671/08](#).

REDUCING THE BURDEN OF CANCER - *Council conclusions*

The Council held a public debate and adopted conclusions on reducing the burden of cancer.

The importance of this issue is evidenced by the fact that statistically one in three Europeans will develop cancer during his or her lifetime.

In its conclusions, the Council invites:

- Member States to develop and implement comprehensive cancer strategies or plans,
- the Commission to present an EU action plan on cancer addressing all aspects of comprehensive cancer control and to promote exchange of information and sharing of expertise.

As one third of cancer cases could be avoided by **prevention**, the conclusions stress the need to raise awareness among the population in this respect and highlight prevention as the most effective long-term strategy in the fight against cancer, with the following main lines of action:

- promotion of a healthy lifestyle,
- early diagnosis by screening,
- reduction of occupational and environmental exposure to carcinogenic risks,
- food safety.

Other issues include action in order to ensure:

- quality of life for cancer patients through support, rehabilitation and palliative care,
- population-based cancer registration as a resource for epidemiological studies,
- investment in training a qualified workforce, and in appropriate equipment and effective diagnostics and medicines,
- better EU and international collaboration in cancer research.

Finally, the importance of the role of civil society in this context was underlined.

See the full text of the conclusions at [09636/08](#).

ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE - Council conclusions

The Council adopted conclusions on antimicrobial resistance and took note of the following information:

- France will organise a technical workshop on antimicrobial resistance in Paris, on 6 and 7 November 2008;
- The Czech Republic will, during its Presidency¹, organise a conference with a view to formulating basic standards for hospitals' antimicrobial programmes.

Commissioner Vassiliou took this opportunity to announce the "Antibiotic Awareness Day" on 18 November 2008 in Strasbourg and made a presentation of the event's logo (see below).

See the full text of the conclusions at [9637/08](#).



¹ First half of 2009

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EU HEALTH STRATEGY - Council conclusions**Cooperation mechanism between the Council and the Commission for the implementation of the EU Health Strategy (*public debate*)**

The Council adopted **conclusions** and held a public debate on a cooperation mechanism between the Council and the Commission for the implementation of the EU Health Strategy.

On the basis of the EU Health Strategy (Commission's White Paper: "Together for Health: A Strategic Approach for the EU, 2008-2013"¹), the Council adopted conclusions on the strategic cooperation that will permit the Commission, Member States and the Council to work together on EU matters with an impact on health (e.g. ageing of population, health threats, etc.), which will have a real added value for Member States and ensure the implementation of the EU Health Strategy, including the "health in all policies" approach.

See the full text of the conclusions at [9639/08](#).

¹ COM(2007) 630 final

INFORMATION TO PATIENTS ON MEDICINAL PRODUCTS - *Council conclusions*

The Council adopted conclusions on a communication from the Commission ([5242/08](#)) analysing current practice as regards information to patients on medicinal products.

The Council also held a policy debate which Ministers were invited to base their discussions on a number of questions prepared by the Presidency ([9608/08](#)):

- Which are the essential elements for the necessary distinction between information to patients and advertising for medicinal products?
- Should the legislation on information to patients on medicinal products be decided at EU or at national level? Should this regulation include *a priori* or *a posteriori* control of the information or should the principle of self-regulation be applied?
- Can the discrepancies between Member States concerning patients' access to information on medicinal products be resolved by EU legislation?

Most delegations agreed on the following:

- the need to further develop means of distinction between advertising and information,
- the need to maintain the ban on advertising for prescription-only medicines,
- the role of the authorities responsible for health and healthcare professionals in providing information to patients.

Furthermore, the Council took note of the Commission's ¹ intention to submit a legislative proposal establishing a framework for information to patients on medicinal products.

See the full text of the conclusions at [9437/08](#).

¹ Commissioner Vassiliou took the floor on behalf of Commissioner Verheugen to whom she will convey Member States' views on the matter.

AOB

Any other business

- (a) Amended proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights

– Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the state of play of the negotiations on a Directive on minimum requirements for enhancing worker mobility by improving the acquisition and preservation of supplementary pension rights.

- (b) Proposal for a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010)

– Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on a draft Decision on the European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (2010) and took note of the views expressed by several delegations¹ on the co-financing of actions undertaken within the framework of the European Year ([10360/08](#)).

- (c) Social Services of General Interest

– Progress report by the Chair of the Social Protection Committee

The Council took note of an oral progress report by Mrs Elise WILLAME, Chair of the Social Protection Committee, as part of the open consultation mentioned in the Commission communication: "Implementing the Community Lisbon programme: social services of general interest in the EU"².

¹ Czech Republic, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovakia.
² 9038/06

(d) Information on events organised during the Slovenian Presidency:

i) Conference on "Jobs for Youth – Prosperity for All"¹

In the context of the discussion point on skills, jobs and youth , the Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Conference on "Jobs for youth - Prosperity for all", held in Brdo on 24 and 25 April 2008 ([10317/08](#)).

ii) Conference on "Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies"

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Conference on "Intergenerational Solidarity for Cohesive and Sustainable Societies", held in Brdo from 27-29 April 2008 ([10318/08](#)).

iii) Seventh European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on the Seventh European Meeting of People Experiencing Poverty, held in Brussels on 16 and 17 May 2008 ([10319/08](#)).

This year's meeting focused on four pillars in the fight against poverty: services of general interest, social services, housing and minimum income.

iv) Conference on "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – From Words to Reality?"²

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on a Conference on "Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – From Words to Reality?" held in Kranjska Gora, on 22 and 23 May 2008 ([10320/08](#)).

¹ http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0516MDDSZ_Poverty.html

² http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0509MDDSZ_invalid.html

(e) Activities of the Expert Group on Demographic Issues

- Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on the activities of the Expert Group on Demographic Issues ([10321/08](#)).

(f) European Social Policy Week

- Request from the Bulgarian delegation

The Council took note of the information provided by the Bulgarian delegation concerning the European Social Policy Week which took place in Sofia from 26-30 May 2008 ([10308/08](#)).

(g) Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment

- Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency with regard to a draft Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment and of the comments made by the Czech Republic, Hungary and Belgium on the item.

(h) Proposal for a Community framework on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare

- Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on a proposal for a Community framework on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, which should be adopted in the coming months ([10197/08](#)).

(i) Conference "eHealth without frontiers" ¹ (Portorož, Slovenia, 6–7 May 2008)

- Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on a conference on "eHealth without frontiers" held in Portorož, on 6 and 7 May 2008 ([9749/08](#)).

(j) EU Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm

- Information from the Commission and the Presidency

The Council took note of the information given by the Presidency on the EU Strategy to support Member States in reducing alcohol related harm ([9806/08](#)).

(k) Health issues related to nutrition, overweight and obesity

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency and the Commission on health issues related to nutrition, overweight and obesity ([9810/08](#)).

(l) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

- Information from the Commission

The Council was informed by the Commission about the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ([9757/08](#)).

¹ http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Press_Releases/May/0507MZ-eHealth.html

(m) Organ donation and transplantation

- Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on organ donation and transplantation ([10198/08](#)).

(n) Patient safety package

- Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on the Patient Safety Package ([9764/08](#)).

(o) Matters relating to health security

- Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission on matters relating to health security ([9767/08](#)).

(p) Mental health for Europe

- Information from the Commission

The Council took note of the information provided by the Commission concerning mental health for Europe ([9770/08](#)).

- (q) Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2001/82/EC and Directive 2001/83/EC as regards variations to the terms of marketing authorisations for medicinal products

– Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the information provided by the Presidency on a proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2001/82/EC and Directive 2001/83/EC as regards variations to the terms of marketing authorisations for medicinal products ([9920/08](#)).

- (r) Networking Meeting of the Competent Authorities for Pricing and Reimbursement of Medicinal Products

– Information from the Presidency

The Council took note of the feedback provided by the Presidency on a Networking Meeting of the Competent Authorities for Pricing and Reimbursement of Medicinal Products which took place in Brdo, on 28 and 29 April 2008.

- (s) Food Improvement Agents Package

– Information from the Presidency

The Council was informed by the Presidency on the state of play regarding the Food Improvement Agents Package.

- (t) European dimension of problems arising from coeliac disease: Spanish government support plan to assist gluten-intolerant people: need to amend European legislation

– Information from the Spanish delegation

The Council took note of the concerns expressed by the Spanish delegation relating to gluten-intolerant people ([9772/08](#)).

Commissioner Vassiliou informed the Council on progress made at international level on standards for gluten labelling.

She draw the attention of Ministers to the need to take efficient and proportionate action at Community level.

- (u) Social inclusion of Roma

– Request from the Romanian delegation

The Council took note of the information provided by Romania ([10481/08](#)) and of the comments made by Italy and Spain on the matter.

Commissioner Špidla mentioned that non discriminatory measures will be included in the Social Agenda expected in July 2008.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**COMMON FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY****EU military operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA – Participation of Albania**

The Council adopted a Decision approving the conclusion of an agreement with Albania on the participation of that country in the EU-led operation in Chad and in the Central African Republic (EUFOR Tchad/RCA) ([9405/08](#)).

On 15 October 2007, the Council adopted Joint Action 2007/677/CFSP on the EU military operation EUFOR Tchad/RCA. The Joint Action provides that detailed arrangements regarding the participation of third countries are to be the subject of an agreement, in accordance with Article 24 of the EU Treaty.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS**Dock dues in French overseas departments**

The Council adopted a Decision updating the lists of products manufactured in the French overseas departments eligible for exemptions from or reductions in dock dues ([8988/08](#)).

The lists will be updated in order to take into account the emergence of new products and manufacturing processes in the French overseas departments which are not covered by current EU legislation, such as yoghurt, coffee roasting, chocolate manufacturing, manufacturing of cassava chips, banana chips and roasted peanuts, and beer brewing.

The new products and those already included in the lists suffer a handicap in comparison with imported products because of the higher costs of production in the overseas departments. The higher costs are due mainly to the departments' remoteness, the difficult climate and the small scale of the local market.

The maximum permitted tax differential is 10%, 20% or 30%, depending on the product and on the overseas department.

TRADE POLICY

Agreement with Ukraine on trade in services

The Council adopted a Decision approving the signature and provisional application of an agreement with Ukraine aimed at preserving the provisions on international maritime transport contained in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) with Ukraine, following its accession to the WTO on 16 May 2008.

The PCA provisions on trade in services will automatically be superseded by Ukraine's commitments under the General Agreement on Trade in Services. These commitments cover the corresponding PCA provisions except for those on international maritime transport, which the new agreement maintains on a bilateral basis.

STATISTICS

Public health and safety at work

The Council reached a political agreement on a Regulation aimed at establishing a common framework for the systematic production of statistics in the areas of public health and safety at work [9823/08](#). The agreement allows the Council to adopt its common position at a forthcoming meeting and forward it to the European Parliament for a second reading, in accordance with the codecision procedure.

The statistics will provide data for indicators that are necessary for the monitoring of Community actions in the fields of public health and health and safety at work.

There will be close cooperation between Eurostat and the relevant national bodies in order to collect and process data in a harmonised manner.