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THE EUROPEAN UNION**



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Agriculture and Fisheries

Brussels, 28 February 2005

President

Mr Fernand BODEN

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development,
Minister for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, the Liberal
Professions and the Self-Employed, Tourism and Housing, of
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6421/05 (Presse 35)

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Main Results of the Council

The Council reached a unanimous political agreement on an amended proposal for a Regulation authorising the dispatch of Community vessels, under certain conditions, to the areas of South-east Asia affected by the tsunami on 26 December 2004.

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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.
- The documents whose references are given in the text are available on the Council's Internet site <http://ue.eu.int>.
- 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 abovementioned Council 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:

M. Yves LETERME

Minister-President of the Flemish Government and Flemish Minister for Institutional Reform, Agriculture, Sea Fisheries and Rural Policy
Minister for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, the Liberal Professions and the Self-Employed and Agriculture

Ms Sabine LARUELLE

Czech Republic:

Mr Jaroslav PALAS

Minister for Agriculture

Denmark:

Mr Hans Christian SCHMIDT

Minister for Food, Agriculture and Fisheries

Germany:

Ms Renate KÜNST

Federal Minister for Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture

Estonia:

Ms Ester TUIKSOO

Minister for Agriculture

Greece:

Mr Evangelos BASIAKOS

Minister for Rural Development and Food

Spain:

Ms Elena ESPINOSA MANGANA

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food

France:

Mr Nicolas FORISSIER

State Secretary for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Rural Affairs attached to the Minister for Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and Rural Affairs

Ireland:

Ms Mary COUGHLAN

Minister for Agriculture and Food

Italy:

Mr Giovanni ALEMANNI

State Secretary for Agricultural and Forestry Policy

Cyprus:

Mr Efthymios EFTHYMIU

Minister for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment

Latvia:

Mr Mārtiņš ROZE

Minister for Agriculture

Lithuania:

Ms Kazimira PRUNSKIENE

Minister for Agriculture

Luxembourg:

Mr Fernand BODEN

Minister for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, Minister for Small and Medium-sized Businesses, the Liberal Professions and the Self-Employed, Tourism and Housing
State Secretary for Relations with Parliament, State Secretary for Agriculture, Viticulture and Rural Development, State Secretary for Culture, Higher Education and Research

Ms Octavie MODERT

Hungary:

Mr Ferenc NYUJTÓ

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Regional Development

Malta:

Mr Francis AGIUS

Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture and Fisheries, Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Environment

Netherlands:

Mr Cornelis Pieter VEERMAN

Minister for Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality

Austria:

Mr Josef PRÖLL

Federal Minister for Agriculture, Forestry, the
Environment and Water Management**Poland:**

Mr Andrzej KOWALSKI

Deputy State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development**Portugal:**

Mr Carlos DUARTE DE OLIVEIRA

State Secretary attached to the Minister for Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry**Slovenia:**

Mr Franci BUT

State Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and
Food**Slovakia:**

Mr Zsolt SIMON

Minister for Agriculture

Finland:

Mr Juha KORKEAOJA

Minister for Agriculture and Forestry

Sweden:

Ms Ann-Christin NYKVIST

Minister for Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs

United Kingdom:

Ms Margaret BECKETT

Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural
Affairs**Commission:**

Ms Mariann FISCHER BOEL

Member

Mr Joe BORG

Member

Mr Markos KYPRIANOU

Member

ITEMS DEBATED

TSUNAMI

The Council reached a unanimous **political agreement** on a proposal for a Regulation, as amended by a Presidency compromise supported by the Commission, concerning a specific action for transfers of vessels to countries hit by the Tsunami in 2004. The Council agreed to adopt the Regulation as an "A" item at a forthcoming meeting, following its finalisation by the legal-linguistic experts.

The proposal (6010/05), submitted to the Council on 11 February, was a follow-up to the Council meeting on 24 January at which Commissioner BORG had stated his intention to submit an early proposal to assist the fisheries sector in the countries of South-east Asia hit by the Tsunami.

The Regulation is mainly intended to authorise Member States to transfer vessels between 5 and 20 years old, less than 12 metres in length and fully seaworthy, to Asian countries affected by the Tsunami, in coordination with the FAO. Financing would be provided under the FIFG (Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance) for 2000-2006 and subject to budgetary neutrality, in the form of a basic premium and an additional premium of 20% to cover the cost of transport to the area concerned and the overhaul of the vessel. In the original proposal the Commission was empowered to suspend authorisations if the vessel failed to meet the above conditions. Quarterly reports are to be made on the vessel transfers. The deadline for administrative authorisation of transfers in Member States is 30 June 2006.

Amendments have been made to the original proposal to make the measure more effective, particularly as regards the level of equipment and seaworthiness of the vessels, to avoid any negative impact on fishery resources and the local economy, and transfer authorisation procedures. A parliamentary amendment has also been incorporated limiting transfers of vessels more than five years old to those not using towed gear.

At its sitting in Strasbourg on 24 February, the European Parliament was consulted and adopted an opinion by the urgent procedure.

HARMFUL ORGANISMS

The Council adopted by a qualified majority, with the French and Portuguese delegations abstaining, a Council Directive amending Annex IV to Directive 2000/29/EC on protective measures against the introduction into the Community of organisms harmful to plants or plant products and against their spread within the Community. The Council agreed to enter in the minutes of the meeting the Council/Commission statement annexed to 6561/05 to be entered in its minutes.

The Directive postpones for one year, until 1 March 2006, the requirement to debark wood packaging material imported into the Union, to enable the research carried out in this area to be reviewed.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT - FINANCING OF THE CAP

The Council held two policy debates on the two proposals submitted in July 2004, one on support for rural development by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD) (11495/04) and the other on the financing of the common agricultural policy (CAP) (11557/04).

The debate on rural development was based on a Presidency questionnaire (6415/05). In this connection the Presidency drew the following conclusions:

- the Council was clearly in favour of a strong rural development policy which would also make a tangible and significant contribution to achievement of the Lisbon objectives;
- the rural development policy would be of benefit not only to farmers but also to the rural community as a whole and society generally;
- the rural development policy would contribute to growth, employment and sustainable development, and to the achievement of sustainable and multifunctional agriculture distributed throughout the territory of the European Union;
- in this context the Council agreed to include support for innovation and development among the measures to be implemented.

The Council took particular note of:

- a demand from numerous delegations for eligibility to be extended to measures to assist medium-sized enterprises, particularly for the processing of agricultural products;
- a request by several delegations for further simplification of the proposal, involving greater subsidiarity;
- differing positions among delegations as to the potential beneficiaries of the support proposed for the implementation of Natura 2000.

The Presidency stated that a new compromise text would be drawn up very shortly, in agreement with the Commission, and submitted to delegations to reflect the concerns expressed during the debate. The Community rural development strategy, the minimum rates of financing per axis and the use of the Leader reserve funds would be addressed at the next Council meeting, on 14 March.

As regards the policy debate on the financing of the common agricultural policy, the Presidency summed up by stating that the Council had taken note of progress on the CAP financing proposal and the various delegations' comments.

The main points raised by delegations concerned the following provisions:

- on the setting of financial ceilings in euro, several Member States outside the euro zone voiced serious concern at the exchange risks they faced with the reimbursement of expenditure;
- regarding the authority to be responsible for ensuring compliance with the agricultural expenditure ceiling, several delegations asked that this prerogative should remain with the Council;
- as regards the obligation to sign a statement of assurance, several delegations feared that this provision would entail an additional and pointless administrative burden;
- several Member States were opposed to the financial consequences of non-recovery of amounts paid in error being shared 50%-50% by the Member State and the Community where recovery was the subject of proceedings before a national court.

Following these statements, the Presidency announced that it would endeavour to work out a solution with the Commission to the question of setting ceilings in euro, and that this would be included in a compromise text. If necessary, the SCA would instruct the Agrifin Working Party to examine certain specific technical points. Following this work, the Council could take up its discussion of the proposal again at its meeting on 26 April 2005.

OTHER BUSINESS

– BSE in a goat

The Council took note of the written information (6574/05), which the Commission forwarded as part of the information regularly supplied concerning bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), on the scientific confirmation of the diagnosis of this disease in a goat born in 2000 and slaughtered in France in 2002 and on the measures taken to step up monitoring of this disease in goats, although the present herd comprises animals born after 2000.

– EU/Russia plant health agreement

Commissioner Kyrianiou informed the Council orally of the outcome of his recent visit to Russia.

The French delegation referred to the continuing blockage of its pig meat exports to Russia, in contravention of the provisions of the veterinary agreement concluded with that country, and the ensuing damage to trade. The Danish delegation pointed to the instances of embargoes on exports of plant health products from individual Member States. The German delegation wondered whether it was necessary to gradually do away with the system of having Russian inspectors present to check on products in the Member States. The Polish delegation referred to the harm sustained as a result of the Russian authorities' refusal to approve some of its establishments without giving any reason. These delegations, backed by the Spanish delegation, wanted to discuss the agreements with the Russian Federation at the next Council meeting.

The Commissioner pointed to three problems: firstly, the arrangements for implementing the certification of animal products under the veterinary memorandum signed in 2004, on which discussions should be continued. He emphasised that the presence of Russian inspectors in the Member States was a temporary stage in the negotiation of the veterinary agreement.

Secondly, there was the issue of the conditions for approving animal product establishments in the new Member States, with the Russian authorities having undertaken to speed up inspections and give reasons for rejecting applications for approval.

As for the content of the trade negotiations in the plant health sector, the Commissioner stated that the Russian authorities were open to the idea of a transitional period prior to implementation of the agreements, particularly with regard to import certificates, which were due to come into force on 1 April, the deadline set by the Russian authorities.

The Presidency asked the Member States to notify the Presidency and the Commission of the outcome of their bilateral talks with Russia and agreed to discuss this matter at the next Council meeting.

– *Avian influenza in Asia*

The Netherlands delegation, backed by the German, Italian and Czech delegations, drew the Council's and the Commission's attention to the seriousness of the continuing avian influenza epidemic in South-east Asia. In some of the countries affected (Vietnam and Thailand) the situation was out of control. Some human cases of the disease had been confirmed and there was a danger of the virus mutating and causing a pandemic (6667/05). The delegation urged support for the relevant international organisations in coordinating and organising technical assistance on the ground. A donor conference had recently been held in Ho Chi Minh City under the aegis of the FAO, the WHO and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

Commissioner Kyprianou said that Commission inspectors and experts from the Member States were at present in Thailand assessing the situation and the measures taken to control and eradicate the disease. The Commission had committed EUR 1 million in Vietnam in 2004 and EUR 600 000 in 2005. The risk of the disease spreading was high: wild duck flocks and small poultry farms existed side by side, cock fighting was another source of infection, and inadequate basic structures hindered the fight against the epidemic.

The Presidency agreed to return to the matter at a future Council meeting and said that the Commission would be submitting a proposal for a directive updating the current legislation to combat the epidemic of avian influenza.

– *European action platform for diet, exercise and health*

The German delegation drew the Council's and the Commission's attention to the growing problem of obesity in young people in Europe and its negative impact, particularly in terms of health expenditure and psychological problems. Germany had introduced a platform for diet and exercise and an advertising campaign vaunting the merits of exercise and a better diet (6689/05). The delegation asked the Commission to report on the progress of its discussions and work on the creation of a European action platform for diet, exercise and health, and to clarify the role to be played by Member States. The Commission was also asked to submit the planned Green Paper on diet and health as soon as possible.

Commissioner Kyprianou stressed that obesity was a serious problem in Europe; preventive action was needed, given the potential impact of an increasingly obese population on health-care costs; a round table on obesity, involving various representatives from the food industry, consumer groups, health-care professions and the advertising industry had been organised, in conjunction with the Luxembourg Ministry of Health, to seek ways of dealing with the condition effectively. As regards the platform to be launched on 15 March, he appealed for closer coordination between Member States through sharing information and establishing best practice. A paper containing all the platform's goals was due to be published in the spring, and a Commission Communication on the subject was to be adopted at the end of the year or early in 2006. The Commissioner pointed to the need to tackle the nutritional aspects of the problem, but also to urge people to take more exercise and change their sedentary lifestyles.

– ***WTO Panel on GMOs***

The German delegation, supported by the Polish delegation, asked the Commission for information on the state of play as regards the Panel on WTO compatibility of Union measures on the approval and marketing of GMOs, which had been set up at the request of the United States, Canada and Argentina (6676/05).

Commissioner Kyprianou pointed out that the complaints lodged by the aforementioned States related to delays in the procedures for registering GMOs, not to the Community legislation. At the hearing on 21 and 22 February, the European Union had stated that it was taking a cautious approach; it had not adopted a substantive position on the subject, since the impact of GMOs was still difficult to evaluate. The Commission would keep the Council informed of developments at the Panel until the final report, due by 24 June at the latest.

– ***Information on the provenance of foodstuffs***

The German delegation, supported by the Italian, French, Irish, Finnish and Portuguese delegations, drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the fact that, in its opinion, current Community rules on food labelling¹ did not go far enough in requiring information on the place of origin or provenance of pre-packaged foodstuffs; consumers' information needs were not being given due weight (6578/05). The Commission was accordingly requested to submit a progress report on its efforts to improve information on provenance. These delegations argued that information on provenance should not be confined to processed food: it should also cover agricultural products, as with current beef labelling rules.

¹ Directive 2000/13/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 March 2000 on the approximation of the laws of the Member States relating to the labelling, presentation and advertising of foodstuffs.

Welcoming the review of the marketing rules for foodstuffs and supporting the German delegation's request for encouragement of husbandry methods which are especially sensitive to animal welfare and the environment, the Swedish delegation said that it would look favourably on any initiative aiming at applying the same labelling rules to all foodstuffs.

The Spanish delegation emphasised the complex nature of food labelling and suggested that an evaluation of the true extent of consumer demand in this area was needed and that the outcome of the negotiations in progress within the Codex Alimentarius should be awaited before undertaking any review.

Commissioner Kyprianou said that since his area of responsibility covered horizontal provisions on product labelling, review of Community legislation in this field was at present under discussion by his department with a view to the Commission's adoption of new legislation by the end of 2006. With this in mind, he stressed the need to analyse needs by consulting citizens. He reminded delegations of the principle that the labelling requirement was justified only where its absence would mislead the consumer.

Commissioner Fischer Boel, whose area of competence included the vertical provisions governing certain agricultural products, said that, while she recognised that labelling provided the consumer with better information and that a statement of origin was compatible with WTO rules, the matter required more detailed discussion; she would examine the matter as soon as possible.

– *Sugar/ACP-LDCs*

The Spanish delegation, supported by the Italian, Austrian, Belgian, Portuguese, Greek and Finnish delegations, wanted the Agriculture Council to examine the implications for the European sugar sector of the proposal for a Regulation on the system of generalised preferences, currently being debated by the General Affairs and External Relations Council, and a discussion to be held on the sectoral changes entailed by the proposal (6447/05). The delegation argued that as it stood the proposal would generate trade imbalances for the Community, the ACP countries and the least developed countries (LDCs). At the previous Council there had been an informal meeting of EU ministers with their counterparts in the ACP/LDCs to discuss in particular the impact of the planned reform of the Community sugar regime, and in the course of that meeting the possibility had been raised of classifying sugar as a sensitive product. With this in view, the delegation called for there to be no change in the scope of the "Everything but Arms" (EBA) Regulation and for this initiative to continue.

The French and Irish delegations stressed the need to take account of the concerns of the ACP/LDCs even outside the framework of reform of the sugar COM.

The Danish, United Kingdom, German, Swedish, Latvian and Maltese delegations reiterated their desire for rapid reform of the COM in sugar in order to make the sector more competitive, and stressed that the requests of the ACP/LDCs needed to be taken into account in the framework of the Commission's proposed Action Plan.

Commissioner Fischer Boel ruled out maintaining high intervention prices within the framework of what was felt to be the inevitable reform of the Community sugar regime. She stressed that the concerns of the ACP/LDCs would be taken account of in any action plan and that revision of the EBA initiative was excluded.

The Presidency noted that differences of opinion remained regarding the content and scope of the planned reform of the COM in sugar and emphasised the value of the informal meeting on 24 January. The Presidency said that the work timetable needed to take into account firstly the outcome of the WTO panel and secondly the Commission's legislative proposal, before taking discussions further with the main countries concerned.

– ***Tobacco: arrangements for implementing the reform***

The Spanish delegation drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the difficulties in applying the recent reform (April 2004) of the tobacco sector, in particular with regard to the case of transfers of quotas from one producer to another, following the reference period (2000-2002) on the basis of which payment entitlements were calculated. The delegation asked for direct payment of reference amounts and payment entitlements to those holding quotas for the 2005 harvest, as well as the option to apply different decoupling levels according to region and variety (6446/05).

On this point, the Italian delegation also drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the effects of the new Community tobacco legislation on beneficiaries of decoupled aid (6688/05). Starting from 2006, this legislation no longer provided for a quota regime, with the possible effect that tobacco producers could benefit from the coupled aid measures in respect of quantities which might be greater than the old quota held by them before 2006. In order to prevent premium hunting in this sector as a result of the linear reduction in the amount of aid, the Italian delegation wanted Member States to be able if necessary to adopt measures to control tobacco quantities, within the framework of the measures implementing the reform.

In reply to the Spanish delegation, Commissioner Fischer Boel pointed out that the reference amounts could only be attributed on the basis of payments made during the reference period 2000-2002. However, in the case of tobacco quotas transferred before 15 May 2004, the reference amount could be paid to new quota holders. With regard to the application of different decoupling rates according to tobacco variety group, the Commissioner said that such a distinction would introduce discrimination between producers. However, the possibility of introducing different decoupling rates according to region was currently under consideration by her department, subject to the Member State providing evidence that such a distinction would be justified and based on objective criteria.

With regard to the request by the Italian delegation, Commissioner Fischer Boel warned that the introduction of a production quantity limit would be contrary to the spirit of the reform, the aim of which was to abolish the quota system. In addition, she pointed out that the Member States already had suitable instruments to avoid speculative production, such as setting the aid level according to quality.

– ***Olive oil/International Olive Oil Council (IOOC)***

Supported by the Greek, Spanish, Portuguese and Cypriot delegations, the Italian delegation drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the urgent need to begin the necessary procedures for paying the voluntary Community contribution (about EUR 4 million) to the International Olive Oil Council (IOOC) for the financing of activities to promote olive oil (6553/05). The delegation wanted the IOOC to launch a programme of activities as soon as possible. The Community contribution had been suspended in 2002 by the Commission, which had exclusive competence for the Community, following an auditors' report revealing management and control weaknesses. A new management team for the executive secretariat of the IOOC had been confirmed to head the organisation at the 91st meeting of the IOOC from 29 November to 2 December 2004¹.

Commissioner Fischer Boel reminded delegations that after a difficult period and because of the very recent installation of the new IOOC management team, the Commission had not deemed it appropriate to pay a voluntary contribution for 2005 for promotional activities before ascertaining that the financial management of the IOOC was now absolutely stable and trustworthy. She did however say that the Commission hoped to resume financing these activities in 2006.

– ***Nuts***

In connection with the implementation of the CAP reform adopted in September 2003, the Italian delegation drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the new aid arrangements in the nut sector: while Community decoupled aid was set at EUR 120,75/ha and was an ***average*** level of aid, the national aid provided for in the legislation was a ***maximum*** of EUR 120,75/ha per year (6669/05). The Italian delegation contested this definition of the way in which national aid was calculated, which did not offer the same flexibility as that for Community aid, and therefore suggested amending the legislation (Article 87(1) of Regulation EC/1782/2003) to align the provisions regarding national aid on those relating to Community aid.

Commissioner Fischer Boel stated that this request would be considered by her department, in particular if it had relevance for other producer Member States in addition to Italy.

¹ For more information, see <http://www.internationaloliveoil.org/news.asp?pDiv=0>

– *Situation on the cereals market*

The Czech delegation, with support from the Hungarian, Austrian and Slovak delegations, drew the attention of the Council and the Commission to the serious crisis affecting the Czech cereals sector, where prices had fallen steeply (below the intervention threshold) (6694/05). The 2004/2005 harvest had been exceptional and storage capacity was inadequate. The Czech delegation therefore called for appropriate measures, including emergency measures, to cope with the situation. The Czech Republic, Hungary, Austria and Slovakia felt that the measures taken by the Commission to date had not solved the crisis for landlocked countries. They therefore asked the Commission to take, without delay, all available measures to stabilise the cereals market.

The Portuguese delegation stated that it was currently experiencing a shortage of cereals, given the exceptional climatic conditions, and hoped that it would be possible to authorise a transfer of cereals stores from the aforementioned countries to Portugal.

Commissioner Fischer Boel acknowledged the seriousness of the situation in these Central European countries, given the storage problems, but pointed out that as early as the autumn of 2004 the Commission had launched calls for tenders for the export of rye, and subsequently wheat, to third countries. However, she ruled out recourse to the Community's short-term aid system to cope with the glut. The Commission was considering the possibility of opening Community stocks to intervention, once the critical mass of cereals in storage in the Member States had been reached. Since this critical threshold - approximately 9,7 million tonnes - of cereals for intervention was now very close, she had asked her department to draw up specific measures.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED**AGRICULTURE****Imports of sugar from the Balkans***

The Council adopted by a qualified majority a Regulation providing for a transition from unlimited duty-free access for sugar imported from the Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia and Montenegro, including Kosovo) to admission subject to zero-duty tariff quotas (5250/05, 5251/05 + ADD 1 + ADD 2). The Portuguese and Czech delegations abstained and the Maltese, Swedish and United Kingdom delegations voted against.

The Council also adopted a Decision authorising the Commission to enter into negotiations with Croatia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia with a view to introducing tariff quotas for sugar into the bilateral agreements with those two countries (5258/05).

The Regulation adopted amends Regulation No 2007/2000 introducing exceptional trade measures for countries and territories participating in or linked to the EU's Stabilisation and Association process by setting the following tariff quotas:

- 1 000 tonnes for sugar products originating in Albania;
- 12 000 tonnes for sugar products originating in Bosnia and Herzegovina;
- 180 000 tonnes for sugar products originating in Serbia and Montenegro.

As Serbia and Montenegro has undertaken to grant the EU a satisfactory tariff preference for its own imports, the tariff quotas in the Regulation are 30 000 tonnes higher than in the Commission proposal. Should it fail to comply with its commitments, the quota would again be reduced to 150 000 tonnes as initially provided for.

The new Regulation will enter into force on 1 July 2005. It also amends Regulation No 2820/98 and repeals Regulations Nos 1763/99 and 6/2000.

Special Reports by the Court of Auditors

The Council took note of Special Reports by the Court of Auditors:

- concerning pre-accession aid – "Has SAPARD been well managed?"
(14727/04 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)
- concerning the recovery of irregular payments under the common agricultural policy
(12681/04 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)
- concerning the organisation of the system for the identification and registration of bovine animals in the European Union (14730/04 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)
- on the common organisation of the market in raw tobacco (14731/04 + ADD 1 + ADD 2)
- on the Commission's management and supervision of the measures to control foot and mouth disease and of the related expenditure (14732/04 + ADD 1 + ADD 2).

EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Agreement with South Africa – Enlargement of the EU

The Council adopted a Decision on the signing and provisional application of an Additional Protocol to the Agreement on Trade, Development and Cooperation between the Community and South Africa to take account of the accession of the ten new Member States to the European Union (5769/05).

The Additional Protocol determines the technical adjustments to that Agreement which concern, inter alia, institutional and trade provisions and rules of origin.

Chile – Association Agreement with the EU

The Council adopted a Decision on the conclusion of an Association Agreement with Chile (6098/05).

This Association Agreement, signed in November 2002, provides for the intensification of dialogue on bilateral and international issues of common interest, including cooperation in the fight against terrorism and strengthening cooperation in the political, commercial, economic, financial, scientific, technical, social and cultural fields.

The Agreement includes a trade section providing, in particular, for the establishment of a free trade area for goods and services, the liberalisation of investments and the reciprocal opening-up of public procurement.

It has been concluded for an unlimited period and provides for an institutional framework in order to supervise its implementation.

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Revision of the EIB Statute – elements for the revision of country groupings with a view to the future accession of Bulgaria and Romania

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"The Council recalled the EU's common position of 14 June 2004 on the EIB Statute – elements for revision with a view to the future accession of Bulgaria and Romania. It agreed that Article 11(2), first, second and third subparagraphs, of the EIB Statute should be amended in the context of the accession of Bulgaria and Romania as follows:

- 1) Romania joins the grouping of Denmark, Greece and Ireland;
- 2) Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia move from the grouping of the ten new Member States to the grouping of Sweden, Austria and Finland;
- 3) Bulgaria joins the grouping of the other new Member States;
- 4) each of the two enlarged country groupings sub (1) and (2) above appoints an additional alternate in the Board of Directors."

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

"eContentplus" programme 2005-2008*

The Council adopted a Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a multiannual Community programme to make digital content in Europe more accessible, usable and exploitable – "*eContentplus*" (5789/05, 5793/05 ADD 1).

The Decision provides for a financial framework of EUR 149 million for the period 2005-2008.

The programme is aimed at creating conditions for broader access to and use of digital content and, where appropriate, for greater economic return from services based on access to and (re)use of digital content by making a significant contribution to the "eEurope" strategy.

APPOINTMENTS

Europol

The Council adopted an Act appointing Mr Max Peter RATZEL as Director of Europol from 16 April 2005 to 15 April 2009 (6744/05).

Committee of the Regions

The Council adopted a Decision appointing Mr Pieter Theodoor VAN WOENSEL, Wethouder van Den Haag, a member of the Committee of the Regions in place of Mr G.A.A. VERKERK for the remainder of his term of office, which runs until 25 January 2006 (6182/05).
