

Together we' ve sailed further

That's it. The Greek Presidency's semester is coming to an end.

For six months we sincerely tried to do our best for Europe at a most challenging time for our country and the Union. Difficulties didn't make us falter. Instead, they made us more determined to live up to the challenge.

With less than a few days to go, we proudly present a list of agreements reached during the Greek Presidency. Over 65 agreements impacting and improving almost every aspect of European citizens' daily life.

No agreement could have been possible without the remarkable job of previous Presidencies or without the cooperation and unlimited support of our institutional partners, the European Parliament, the Commission and all Member States.

Our Presidency may have reached its end, but the journey is far from over. Handing over the Presidency to Italy, our common quest for a better Europe continues and together, united, we can do much better for our citizens. Together, we can sail further!

"In our eyes, it was essential to serve as a Presidency that aimed at achieving results on issues that demanded our immediate attention."

- Evangelos Venizelos



- [Our EU, our world](#)
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EU Maritime security strategy approved

Important because...

This is a framework that aims to effectively and comprehensively address the EU's maritime security challenges, risks and threats in the global maritime domain, such as cross-border and organised crime, threats to freedom of navigation, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction or environmental risks. The strategy covers both internal and external aspects of the Union's maritime security in a cross-sector and comprehensive approach, in accordance with the fundamental values and principles of the EU, including respect for international law and, in particular, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

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New regulation on the funding of European political parties: a leap forward for European democracy

Important because...

The new regulation constitutes a qualitative leap for European representative democracy as it will enable truly transnational European political parties to play their role in bridging the gap between national and EU politics. It also constitutes a breakthrough in institutional issues, since discussions on this proposal have lasted almost two years spanning through four Presidencies. The regulation provides EU-level legal status for European political parties and their affiliated political foundations, aiming to increase their visibility and EU-wide recognition. The European legal status will also be a pre-condition to receive public funding from the EU budget.

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Agreement on the Trade Enforcement Regulation

Important because...

The EU shall soon possess the mechanism to take measures against third countries that violate obligations stemming from international multi- and bilateral trade agreements of



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which the EU is a signatory.

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New framework for the safety of nuclear installations in Europe

Important because...

It puts safety on the spot, taking into account lessons learned from past nuclear accidents and international cooperation. For the first time, a legally binding “safety objective” is set in the regulatory framework for existing as well as new nuclear installations in Europe. This agreement demonstrates the EU’s and its member states’ reflexes to the universal demand of avoiding a nuclear accident in Europe. All member states, nuclear and non-nuclear, had an equal opportunity to participate in this negotiation, as the consequences of nuclear accidents do not stop at borders.

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Facilitating visually impaired persons’ access to books: Signing of the Marrakesh Treaty

Important because...

The Treaty aims at enabling the visually impaired and print-disabled community to have access to the same books as other people. According to the World Blind Union there are an estimated 285 million blind and partially sighted people in the world, most of them in developing countries, who can access only 5% of the worldwide book production. The European Union has been instrumental in pushing the Treaty forward.

[Read more](#)

Agreement on maritime spatial planning

Important because...

A step forward towards protecting the marine environment, while enhancing growth and promoting the sustainable development of maritime areas. This agreement is an essential element in the overall thematic of the Greek Presidency regarding the "Sea



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Pillar".

Maritime spatial planning is a process by which the relevant member state authorities analyze and organize human activities in marine areas to achieve ecological, economic and social objectives.

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New rules agreed for a faster, clearer and simpler European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF)

Important because...

The European Union Solidarity Fund (EUSF) was set up to respond to major natural disasters and express European solidarity to disaster-stricken regions within Europe. The Fund was created as a reaction to the severe floods in Central Europe in the summer of 2002. Since then, it has been used in 56 cases covering a range of different catastrophic events including floods, forest fires, earthquakes, storms and drought.

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Establishing a Union Action for the European Capitals of Culture (2020-2033)

Important because...

To better promote mutual understanding between European citizens, to strengthen the feeling of European citizenship and forge a common identity, this agreement paves the way for the continuation of one of the most successful EU initiatives, highlighting the richness of European cultures, in both their diversity and shared features.

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EU to secure an easier way home for unlawfully removed national treasures

Important because...

The new proposal aims to improve the efficiency of the mechanisms to secure the return



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of cultural objects classified as national treasures, updating the current directive 93/7/EEC2, which was adopted when the single market was established and consequently internal borders were abolished.

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The economy, the currency... our money

A deal of major importance on the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM)

Important because...

The aim is to ensure the orderly resolution of failing banks without recourse to taxpayers' money. This will involve both a systematic recourse to the bail-in of shareholders and creditors, in line with the bank recovery and resolution directive agreed in December, and the possible recourse to a single fund fully financed by banks.

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A Single Resolution Fund to complete the Single Resolution Mechanism

Important because...

The signing of the Intergovernmental Agreement on the transfer and mutualisation of contributions to the Single Resolution Fund, constitutes the final step in the completion of the Single Resolution Mechanism. The Single Resolution Fund will be fully financed by bank contributions.

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Capital increase of the European Investment Fund for Small and Medium Enterprises

Important because...

The European Investment Fund (EIF) capital increase aims at improving Small and Medium sized Enterprises (SMEs) access to financing, developing SMEs' loan capital markets, supporting EIF's role as the cornerstone investor in the venture and growth capital market and enhancing its role in micro finance and social impact investing.

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Final adoption of the Bank Recovery and Resolution Directive (BRRD)

Important because...

Together with two other major developments - the deal on the Single Resolution Mechanism (SRM) and the agreement on Deposit Guarantee Schemes (DGS) - the BRRD completes the legislative work underpinning the Banking Union. This constitutes a crucial achievement in restoring confidence in the EU's banks after the recent financial crisis. Establishing these common rules for a clear and comprehensive bank recovery and resolution regime, the BRRD is crucial for ensuring long-term financial and economic stability, and for reducing the potential costs for public funding and for taxpayers, in the event of a future financial crisis.

[Read more](#)

Recasting rules on Deposit Guarantee Schemes

Important because...

The agreement constitutes an essential step towards strengthening financial stability and confidence in credit institutions in the EU internal market. The rules preserve the coverage level of €100,000 per depositor and per bank, harmonizing the framework for DGS across the European Union and ensuring a uniform, high level of protection for depositors in all Member States.

[Read more](#)

General approach on Anti-Money Laundering (AML) legislative package

Important because...

The agreement strengthens the rules and the tools to be used in the fight against money laundering and terrorist financing, in line with the revised Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). It also responds to the international community's de-



The economy, the currency... our money

mand for greater transparency in the companies' ownership and follows the G7 commitments.

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Against tax fraud: Agreement on proposal to amend the Parent Subsidiaries Directive

Important because...

This is a crucial step forward in the fight against tax fraud and tax avoidance. The agreement counters double non-taxation of corporate groups deriving from hybrid loan arrangements. The aim is to close a loophole that currently allows corporate groups to exploit mismatches between national tax rules so as to avoid paying taxes on some types of profits distributed within the group.

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Agreements on the Payment Accounts Directive (PAD) and on the Regulation on Key Information Documents for Packaged Retail and Insurance Based Investment Products

Important because...

The Payment Accounts Directive addresses fee transparency and comparability of payments made and received via a bank account. The main objective of the Regulation on Key Information Documents is to strengthen consumer protection by increasing transparency offered to retail investors with regard to packaged retail and insurance-based investment products.

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Updated rules for markets in financial instruments

Important because...

It constitutes an important step aimed at establishing a safer, sounder, more transparent and more responsible financial system, given that, with the revised rules, the EU acquires a significant tool to reduce systemic risk and to ensure financial markets stability as well as adequate investor protection.

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Legislative package of own resources

Important because...

With the unanimous political agreement, within the Council of EU, on the legislative package of own resources, related to the EU's multiannual financial framework (MFF) 2014 -20, the prompt and steady financing of the EU policies is assured.

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Agreement on UCITS (Undertakings for the Collective Investment in Transferable Securities)

Important because...

The agreement on the UCITS V Directive enhances investor confidence and protection by introducing additional safeguards as regards depositary functions, avoids excessive risk taking by establishing appropriate remuneration policies and harmonises administrative sanctions at a European level.

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Extension of deadline for SEPA migration

Important because...

It postpones to 1 August 2014 the end-date in the euro area for the migration of domestic and intra-European credit transfers and direct debits in euros towards SEPA credit transfers and SEPA direct debits.

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Directive on mortgage credits

Important because...

The directive sets out to create an efficient and competitive single market for the benefit of consumers, creditors and credit intermediaries. It seeks to establish a high level of protection whilst addressing irresponsible lending and borrowing which has contributed to increased numbers of unaffordable loans, defaults and foreclosures throughout the EU. By ensuring that mortgage credit markets operate in a responsible manner, the directive also seeks to promote financial stability.

[Read more](#)

New rules on Central Securities Depositories (CSDs)

Important because...

Aiming at removing existing barriers to the market, the draft regulation introduces an obligation to represent all transferable securities in book entry form and to record them in CSDs before trading them on regulated venues. It harmonizes settlement periods and settlement discipline regimes across the EU. As a result, CSDs will benefit from uniform requirements for licensing and an EU-wide "passport".

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Children first: Ratification of the Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support

Important because...

The Convention is first and foremost a measure to protect children. Its objective is to ensure the effective international recovery of child support. How? By establishing a comprehensive system of administrative co-operation between the contracting states concerning the recognition and enforcement of maintenance decisions through procedures which are accessible, efficient, cost-effective and fair.

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New rules on insolvency for Small and Medium enterprises

Important because...

New legislation will make cross-border insolvency procedures more efficient and quicker, contributing thus to the survival of small and medium businesses, in the wake of the financial crisis, a legislation that constituted one of the key priorities for the Greek Presidency.

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Amending "Brussels I Regulation" (EU, No 1215/2012)

Important because...

It is a significant step forward in implementing the new EU patent law and the rules on jurisdiction and the recognition and enforcement of the respective judgments

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Protecting the Euro and other currencies against counterfeiting

Important because...

This new Directive addresses the weaknesses of the existing legal framework and creates a sound basis to prevent, investigate and sanction Euro- and other currencies-counterfeiting in a consistent manner throughout the Union.

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Partial General Approach on Data Protection Regulation

Important because...

Safeguarding the fundamental right to data protection while guaranteeing the free flow of data between Member States is the centrepiece of existing EU legislation on personal data protection. Building confidence in an online environment is also key to economic development, as the lack thereof makes consumers hesitate to shop online, thus slowing down the development of innovative uses of new technologies. The new agreement includes the territorial scope, the respective definitions of "Binding Corporate Rules" and "international organisation" and the transfer of personal data to third countries or international organisations.

[Read more](#)

Regulation for a European Account Preservation Order

Important because...

In a tough economic climate, it is vital for Member States' economies to be able to provide citizens and businesses alike with a significant procedural tool that can help them recover their cross-border claims in a quick and efficient manner.

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Fair rules for entry and stay of non EU seasonal workers

Important because...

The directive as agreed sets out fair and transparent rules for entry and stay of seasonal workers who are not EU citizens. It also lays down a common set of rights to which seasonal workers are entitled to during their stay in the EU in order to avoid their economic and social exploitation. At the same time, it provides for incentives and safeguards to prevent temporary stays from becoming permanent. Member states can still determine the levels of admission and can reject applications if EU workers are available.

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Visa waiver for Moldovan citizens with biometric passports

Important because...

The visa liberalization dialogue with Moldova was opened in June 2010 and a Visa Liberalization Action Plan was established. The decision on visa free access to the Schengen area is based on the progress made by the country in implementing major reforms.

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Streamlining judicial cooperation on criminal investigations across the EU

Important because...

The goal of the directive is to allow member states to carry out investigative measures at the request of another member state on the basis of mutual recognition. The new rules would replace the current patchwork of legal provisions in this area with a single new instrument aiming to make judicial cooperation on investigations faster and more efficient.

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Freezing and confiscation of criminal proceeds directive adopted

Important because...

The directive aims to make it easier for national authorities to confiscate and recover the profits made by criminals from cross-border and organised crime, in cases of the flight of the person concerned or illness.

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Agreement on list of non-EU countries exempt from the visa requirement

Important because...

The evolving nature of the EU's visa policy and the increased need to ensure more coherence between visa policy and other EU policies justify that some additional criteria should be taken into account when reviewing the lists of non-EU countries subject to or exempt from the visa requirement.

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Social Policy and Health

Posting of workers: legal certainty and transparency

Important because...

The text strikes a balance between the necessity of guaranteeing legal certainty and transparency for service providers, while acknowledging member states' competence.

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Making tobacco products less attractive

Important because...

The main objective of the directive's revision was to make tobacco products less attractive, especially to young people, by strengthening the rules on how tobacco products can be manufactured, presented and sold.

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Joint Procurement Agreement for medical countermeasures

Important because...

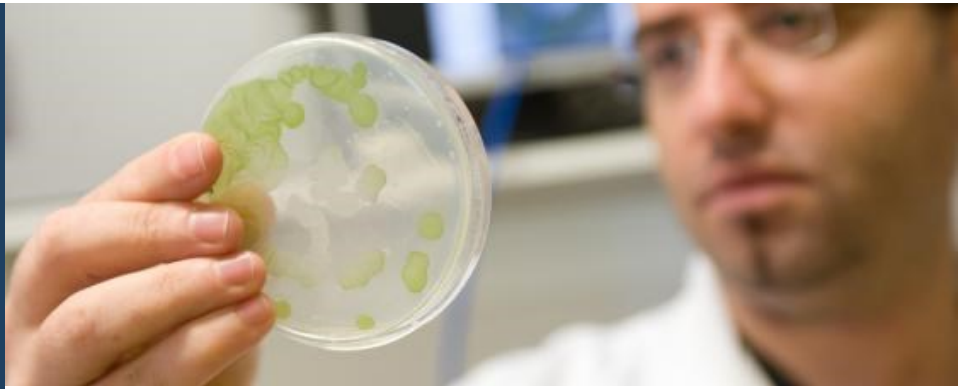
The agreement aims to help member states ensure that pandemic vaccines and medicines are available in sufficient quantities and at an advantageous price in case a cross-border health threat emerges.

[Read more](#)

Financing of reinforced pharmacovigilance

Important because...

The agreement that has been endorsed is expected to provide the means to finance the



Social Policy and Health

work of addressing the safety concerns and maintain high standards of quality, safety and efficacy of medicinal products.

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Enhancing cooperation between Public Employment Services (PES)

Important because...

The establishment of a PES network is a positive contribution to the ongoing efforts to make existing structures more effective in tackling the unemployment crisis at a time when it has reached high levels in most Member States.

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Protection of trade secrets

Important because...

The draft directive on which a general approach was agreed by the Council aims at protecting business against the theft of confidential business information, by making it easier: for national courts to deal with such a crime, for victims to claim compensation and for products which infringe trade secrets to be removed from the market.

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New rules to facilitate damage claims for anti-trust law violations

Important because...

The new directive will harmonize and ensure the effective enforcement of antitrust damages rules within the EU, thereby allowing the victims of a cartel to receive full compensation for both the actual loss suffered and for lost profits.

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Social responsibility for big companies

Important because...

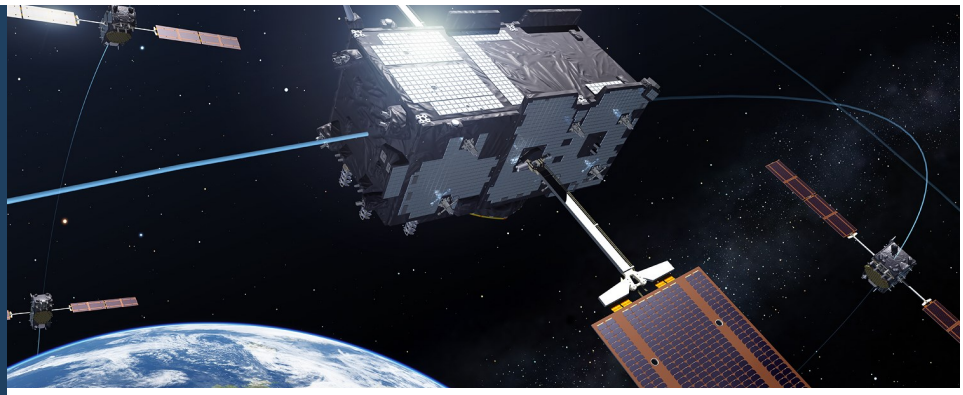
New measures will require certain big EU companies to draw up, on a yearly basis, a statement relating to environmental, social and employee-related matters, respect for human rights, anti-corruption and bribery matters. These new measures are aimed at strengthening the company's transparency and accountability.

[Read more](#)

New directive on electronic invoicing in public procurement

Important because...

The directive will contribute to improving the functioning of the internal market by re-



Competitiveness: the key to growth

ducing the obstacles to entering the market, especially for SMEs, and by solving the problem of the compatibility of different e-invoicing systems in various member states.

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Innovation investment package

Important because...

The innovation investment package, which implements the Innovation Union strategy to stimulate the creation of growth and jobs, will contribute to pool research and innovation investments in sectors facing major societal challenges in the next seven years.

[Read more](#)

Protection of satellites & space infrastructures

Important because...

Space infrastructures are increasingly threatened by collision risks due to the growing population of satellites and the amount of space debris. The EU has a strong interest in building a space situational awareness capability to ensure the protection of space and ground infrastructure it owns and uses for the benefit of its Member States.

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New framework for radio equipment

Important because...

The draft directive lays down harmonised rules for placing radio equipment on the internal market. The new rules aim to keep pace with the growing number and variety of radio equipment devices and ensure that they do not interfere with each other and respect essential health and safety requirements. Interoperability between radio equipment and accessories such as chargers should simplify the use of radio equipment and reduce unnecessary waste and costs.

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Agreement for the safety of pressure equipment

Important because...

The directive aims at reinforcing and simplifying the market surveillance for the free movement of pressure equipment in the internal market. The new directive is in line with the Single Market Act, which stressed the need to restore consumer confidence in the quality of products on the market and the importance of reinforcing market surveillance.

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The future is now for Europe

New agreement to cut broadband cost

Important because...

This directive will make it easier and cheaper to roll out high-speed electronic communications networks, among other things by promoting the joint use of infrastructure, such as electricity, gas and sewage pipes. It also aims to increase the performance of high-speed broadband networks and will contribute to the establishment of a single market at EU level.

[Read more](#)

Council adopts guidelines for trans-European telecommunications networks

Important because...

The regulation covers projects in the area of digital service infrastructures and broadband networks which meet the general objective of contributing to growth in line with the Europe 2020 strategy as well as a set of other conditions.

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Inland navigation: New regulation promoting inland waterway transport

Important because...

The new regulation broadens the scope of the reserve funds called Inland Waterway Funds. While the measures included in the existing regulation concern only social matters and the safety of the working environment, other types of support measure are now introduced to encourage innovation and environmental friendliness.

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The future is now for Europe

Building up clean fuel infrastructure across the EU

Important because...

Creating a sufficient network of recharging and refueling stations is considered crucial in order to drive consumer demand for vehicles powered by "clean fuel", such as electricity, hydrogen and natural gas, and to encourage manufacturers to develop such vehicles and to sell them at competitive prices.

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eCall system: saving lives on European roads

Important because...

A decision to introduce a mandatory EU-wide system to handle emergency calls sent automatically by cars or triggered manually by people in the car in case of a crash (eCalls).

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Establishing a reliable digital world for online transactions

Important because...

This regulation aims to technically establish and legally enhance all tools required by EU citizens, public services, and the private sector, in order to have a safe transition to digital infrastructure.

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The future is now for Europe

Agreement on indirect land-use change directive (biofuels production)

Important because...

By 2020, the EU aims at achieving a 20% share of renewables in the Union's energy consumption, a 10% share for renewable energy in the transport sector and a 6% reduction in the greenhouse gas intensity of fuels used in road transport and non-road mobile machinery. However, there could be negative effects on greenhouse gas savings which might result from the conversion of land (in order to produce biofuels). The draft directive on indirect land-use change (ILUC) aims to minimise the impact of indirect changes of land use on greenhouse gas emissions, while protecting existing investments in biofuels production.

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EU railways: political agreement on the 4th railway package (technical pillar)

Important because...

Completion of the technical pillar would increase economies of scale for railway undertakings across the EU, reduce administrative costs and speed up procedures. It should also help to avoid any discrimination in the issuing of safety certificates and vehicle authorisations.

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Better rail services for all: Shift2Rail undertaking

Important because...

Aiming at supporting the development of better rail services in Europe, the Council adopted a regulation setting up a public-private partnership joint undertaking called Shift2Rail.



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The new entity will manage a research and innovation work programme, with a mandate to double the capacity of the railway transport system, reduce its life-cycle cost by 50% and decrease unreliability and late arrivals by 50%. The innovative technologies are expected to boost the EU rail sector's competitiveness vis-à-vis other modes of transport and foreign competition, as well as to create jobs and increase exports.

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New lorry sizes for enhanced road safety

Important because...

Aiming at saving lives on the road throughout the EU, the proposal grants derogations on vehicle length so as to improve the drivers' field of vision and thus the safety of both drivers and other road users, pedestrians, cyclists and other drivers. The agreed text also promotes the use of clean fuels by allowing a limited weight increase for alternative fuel vehicles.

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“Athens Declaration” for European shipping

Important because...

The Declaration sets policy priorities for the EU Member States and EEA Countries aiming at ensuring the support, growth and sustainability of European shipping, recognising its important role to Europe's economy and welfare. The policy priorities include: securing the long-term competitiveness of the EU's maritime industry, increasing employment in the maritime sector, free access to markets, stronger role for Short Sea Shipping, efficient EU-wide digital maritime services, the EU's leading role in maritime technology & innovation and ensuring equal growth opportunities for smaller and remote islands.

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Strengthening European Maritime Safety Agency response mechanism

Important because...

The agreement regards a regulation to finance the actions of the European Maritime Safety Agency (EMSA) in the field of response to marine pollution caused by ships and oil and gas installations in the years 2014 to 2020.

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Agreement on updated rules for the introduction of noise-related operating restrictions at EU airports

Important because...

Noise is a significant issue for the people living in the vicinity of airports. It is important for the EU to have rules harmonizing the decision-making process on noise-restriction measures, across the Union.

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Updated rules for marine equipment

Important because...

Aiming at enhancing maritime safety and thus protecting the marine environment, the directive regulates marine equipment to be placed on board EU ships.

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Promoting EU quality agricultural products

Important because...

An agreement of great importance for the new European Union policy on the promotion of quality agricultural products on the internal market and in third country markets, within the CAP reform. The adoption of this regulation provides multiple benefits compared to the existing regime, amongst others, the significant increase in both the total budget allocated to the promotion programmes and the EU financial contribution.

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Financing the new Common Fisheries Policy

Important because...

The tentative agreement sets the ground for the timely adoption of the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund regulation, which is a prerequisite for the smooth funding of policies and measures under the reformed Common Fisheries Policy and the planning of fisheries operational programmes for the 2014-2020 period.

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Plant protection measures adopted

Important because...

Plant protection products used on a smaller scale (minor uses), although considered as economically non-viable by the plant protection industry, are an important issue for farmers, especially in countries like Greece, where the production is characterized by a wide range of different and specialized crops. This affects almost a quarter of the crop production in the EU and at the same time creates an additional - over € 1 billion a year - cost to farmers, so it is important to seek measures that would ensure the availability of modern and efficient products at reasonable prices. As a first step, the Council supported the establishment of an independent technical secretariat to coordinate actions at both national and stakeholder's level.

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Talking Green

Amending EU Emissions Trading Scheme for aviation

Important because...

As the aviation sector has a strong international character, a global approach to addressing emissions from aviation offers the best prospects of ensuring sustainability in the long term. A single global market-based measure applying to international aviation emissions should be in place from 2020 onwards and the new regulation is intended to maintain the momentum towards this goal of utmost importance for the global environment.

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Updated rules for shipment of waste

Important because...

The new regulation amends an older one, which lays down requirements for shipment of waste within the EU and between the EU and third countries in order to protect human health and the environment. The new regulation contains strengthened measures to ensure a more uniform implementation of the waste shipment regulation throughout the EU. By 1 January 2017, member states will have to establish inspection plans, satisfying specific requirements, plans that are to be regularly reviewed and updated. Information related to inspections should be made publicly available on an annual basis.

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New rules for growing genetically modified organisms

Important because...

The draft directive provides the legal basis for member states to restrict or prohibit the cultivation of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) on their territory, for reasons other than health or environment considerations. The proposal applies to GMOs that are authorised or under authorisation at EU level. Possible grounds that can be used by member states to ban or restrict GMOs include: socioeconomic reasons, land use and town planning, agricultural policy objectives and public policy

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Regulation for CO₂ emissions reduction from new light commercial vehicles

Important because...

From 2020, a target of 147 g CO₂/km is set for the average emissions of new light commercial vehicles registered in the Union. In view of the link between CO₂ emissions and fuel consumption, reducing CO₂ emissions from light commercial vehicles will also contribute to reducing fuel consumption and related costs for owners of such vehicles in a cost-effective manner.

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Protecting our ecosystem from invasive alien species

Important because...

The regulation lays down rules to prevent, minimise and mitigate the adverse impacts of the introduction and spread, both intentional and unintentional, of invasive alien species on biodiversity, the related ecosystem services, as well as other economic and social impacts.

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Technical implementation of the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

Important because...

The new regulation provides rules to ensure the technical implementation of the Kyoto Protocol in the EU for the second commitment period 2013-2020. These rules are necessary to enable the effective operation of the joint fulfilment of the commitments of the EU, its member states and Iceland on emissions control and reduction.

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Our European Union is Our strength

“Greece assumed the Presidency of the EU Council under difficult circumstances. It was difficult for Greece itself, because Greece is only now recovering from its worst crisis in decades. But also for the entire EU, which faced its biggest challenge since it was established: A financial crisis that shook the certainties of European citizens and, for a moment, created doubts even regarding the Union itself.

Our first objective was to respond to the pressing needs of European citizens. And then we had to restore to the extent possible, the credibility of the EU to European citizens and its ability to generate results in critical circumstances.

This is the only way a crisis can eventually strengthen you: When people, despite doubts, despite trials, learn to trust their leadership; and when they see that changes being introduced allow development again, shield social cohesion, and correct errors of the past, leading to a renaissance of Hope. [...]

Our European Union – and I deeply believe this – is our strength. And our ability to overcome problems is proof that we use this strength wisely. And that we deserve the position we hold today in the world and the role we continue to claim.”

Antonis Samaras

Prime Minister of Greece



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