

Brussels, 14 March 2016
(OR. en)

5862/16

LIMITE

CO EUR-PREP 10

NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: European Council (17-18 March 2016)
- Draft conclusions

In accordance with Article 2(3)(a) of the Council's Rules of Procedure, delegations will find attached the draft conclusions prepared by the President of the European Council, in close cooperation with the member of the European Council representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council and with the President of the Commission.

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I.

MIGRATION

1. The European Council confirms its comprehensive strategy to tackle the migration crisis. Several elements of our common European response are in place today and yield results. Work on other elements is being taken forward diligently, so that they can be implemented as soon as possible. Priority will continue to be given to regaining control of our external borders.
2. Following the decisions of the Heads of State or Government of 7 March, and in the context of the Joint Action Plan with Turkey and its possible expansion, the European Council calls for:
 - more work to be done on hotspots; a lot of progress has been achieved to make all hotspots fully operational and to increase reception capacities; this effort should be continued, with full assistance of the EU, including support to Greek asylum structures;
 - the use of all means to support the capacity of Greece for the return of irregular migrants to Turkey;
 - emergency support to be provided to help Greece cope with the humanitarian situation. The rapid adoption of the Regulation on emergency support and the proposal of a draft amending budget by the Commission are important steps in that respect. Member States are invited to make immediate contributions under the Civil Protection Mechanism as well as to provide bilateral humanitarian assistance;
 - speeding up relocation from Greece, which includes conducting the necessary security checks; the number of applications now being larger than the number of offers, [as shown in the Commission report of 16 March], Member States should swiftly offer more places, in line with the existing commitments.
- 3.

The European Council once again emphasises the need to be extremely vigilant as regards possible new routes for irregular migrants and is determined to take any measures that may become necessary in that respect. In this context, the fight against smugglers everywhere and by all appropriate means remains key.

4. The European Council reaffirms its previous conclusions on the various elements of the comprehensive strategy and is pleased with progress on the European Border and Coast Guard proposal. Reflections will also be taken forward on the future architecture of the EU's migration policy, including the Dublin Regulation.

II. JOBS, GROWTH AND COMPETITIVENESS

5. To steer the Council's discussions on the 2016 European Semester, the European Council endorsed the policy priority areas of the Annual Growth Survey: re-launching investment, pursuing structural reforms to modernise our economies, and conducting responsible fiscal policies. Member States will reflect these priorities in their forthcoming National Reform Programmes and Stability or Convergence Programmes. Such policies will contribute to setting the current recovery on a more sustainable basis and to fostering employment.
6. At its June meeting, the European Council will discuss the progress achieved in the work towards completing the Economic and Monetary Union. It will also discuss progress in the implementation of the Single Market, including delivery of the Commission's Single Market, Digital Single Market and Capital Markets Union strategies, with a view to exploiting in full its untapped growth and productivity potential.

III. OTHER ITEMS

7. The European Council may also address specific external relations issues in the light of developments on the international scene.