

**PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Council adopts mandate to negotiate association agreement(s) with Andorra, Monaco and San Marino**

Today the Council adopted<sup>1</sup> a decision authorising the opening of negotiations on one or several association agreement(s) between the EU and the Principality of Andorra, the Principality of Monaco and the Republic of San Marino. This significant milestone responds directly to these countries' stated interest in building closer relations with the EU. Taken together, they have a combined population of almost 150 000, and have close ties with their respective neighbouring EU member state(s).

The agreement(s) will provide for the participation of these countries in the EU's single market and cooperation in other policy areas. Their rapprochement with the single market legal framework should benefit both sides by ensuring a more level playing field for businesses and citizens. Andorra, Monaco and San Marino stand to benefit through, in particular, the substantial reduction or elimination of obstacles to trade and the free movement of persons. Their level of market access should in due course be comparable to that enjoyed by the non-EU European Economic Area member states.

EU economic operators and citizens are also expected to benefit, such as through the facilitation of trade in goods and services, and greater employment opportunities, in particular in neighbouring EU regions. Moreover, the agreement(s) will establish a more coherent and efficient institutional framework for relations, including institutional provisions to ensure the homogeneity and good functioning of the internal market, while taking into account the particular situation of each of the three countries<sup>2</sup>.

The negotiations are expected to commence in early 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of the General Affairs Council.

<sup>2</sup> in line with the declaration on article 8 of the Treaty on European Union.