



**COUNCIL OF  
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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**LEGISLATIVE ACTS AND OTHER INSTRUMENTS**

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Subject : Agreement between the Member States of the European Union, meeting within the Council, regarding the protection of classified information exchanged in the interests of the European Union

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AGREEMENT  
BETWEEN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION,  
MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,  
REGARDING THE PROTECTION OF CLASSIFIED INFORMATION  
EXCHANGED IN THE INTERESTS OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENTS OF THE MEMBER STATES OF THE EUROPEAN UNION, MEETING WITHIN THE COUNCIL,

Whereas:

- (1) The Member States of the European Union (hereinafter referred to as "the Parties") recognise that full and effective consultation and cooperation may require the exchange of classified information among them in the interests of the European Union, and between them and European Union institutions or agencies, bodies or offices established by the latter.
- (2) The Parties share the common desire to contribute to putting in place a coherent and comprehensive general framework for the protection of classified information originating in the Parties in the interests of the European Union, in European Union institutions, or in agencies, bodies or offices established by the latter or received from third States or international organisations in this context.
- (3) The Parties are conscious that access to and exchanges of such classified information require appropriate security measures for its protection,

HAVE AGREED AS FOLLOWS:

## ARTICLE 1

The purpose of this Agreement is to ensure the protection by the Parties of classified information:

- (a) originating in European Union institutions, or in agencies, bodies or offices established by the latter and provided to or exchanged with the Parties;
- (b) originating in the Parties and provided to or exchanged with European Union institutions, or agencies, bodies or offices established by the latter;
- (c) originating in the Parties in order to be provided or exchanged between them in the interests of the European Union and marked to indicate that it is subject to this Agreement;
- (d) received by European Union institutions or agencies, bodies or offices established by the latter from third States or international organisations and provided to or exchanged with the Parties.

## ARTICLE 2

For the purposes of this Agreement, "classified information" shall mean any information or material, in any form, the unauthorised disclosure of which could cause varying degrees of prejudice to the interests of the European Union, or of one or more of the Member States, and which bears one of the following EU classification markings or a corresponding classification marking as set out in the Annex:

- "TRES SECRET UE/EU TOP SECRET". This marking is applied to information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which could cause exceptionally grave prejudice to the essential interests of the European Union or of one or more of the Member States.
- "SECRET UE/EU SECRET". This marking is applied to information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which could seriously harm the essential interests of the European Union or of one or more of the Member States.
- "CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL". This marking is applied to information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which could harm the essential interests of the European Union or of one or more of the Member States.
- "RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED". This marking is applied to information and material the unauthorised disclosure of which could be disadvantageous to the interests of the European Union or of one or more of the Member States.

### ARTICLE 3

1. The Parties shall take all appropriate measures in accordance with their respective national laws and regulations to ensure that the level of protection afforded to classified information subject to this Agreement is equivalent to that afforded by the security rules of the Council of the European Union for protecting EU classified information bearing a corresponding classification marking as set out in the Annex.

2. Nothing in this Agreement shall cause prejudice to the national laws and regulations of the Parties regarding public access to documents, the protection of personal data or the protection of classified information.

3. The Parties shall notify the depositary for this Agreement of any changes to the security classifications set out in the Annex. Article 11 shall not apply to such notifications.

#### ARTICLE 4

1. Each Party shall ensure that classified information provided or exchanged under this Agreement is not:

- (a) downgraded or declassified without the prior written consent of the originator;
- (b) used for purposes other than those established by the originator;
- (c) disclosed to any third State or international organisation without the prior written consent of the originator and an appropriate agreement or arrangement for the protection of classified information with the third State or international organisation concerned.

2. The principle of originator consent shall be respected by each Party in accordance with its constitutional requirements, national laws and regulations.

## ARTICLE 5

1. Each Party shall ensure that access to classified information is granted on the basis of the need-to-know principle.
2. The Parties shall guarantee that access to classified information bearing the classification marking CONFIDENTIEL UE/EU CONFIDENTIAL or above or a corresponding classification marking as set out in the Annex is granted only to individuals who hold an appropriate security clearance or who are otherwise duly authorised by virtue of their functions in accordance with national laws and regulations.
3. Each Party shall ensure that all individuals granted access to classified information are informed of their responsibilities to protect such information in accordance with the appropriate security regulations.
4. Upon request, the Parties shall, in accordance with their respective national laws and regulations, provide mutual assistance in carrying out security investigations relating to security clearances.
5. In accordance with its national laws and regulations, each Party shall ensure that any entity under its jurisdiction which may receive or generate classified information is appropriately security cleared and is capable of providing suitable protection, as provided for in Article 3(1), at the appropriate security level.
6. Within the scope of this Agreement, each Party may acknowledge the personnel and facility security clearances issued by another Party.

## ARTICLE 6

The Parties shall ensure that all classified information within the scope of this Agreement transmitted, exchanged or transferred within or between any of them shall be appropriately protected, as provided for in Article 3(1).

## ARTICLE 7

Each Party shall ensure that appropriate measures are implemented for the protection, as provided for in Article 3(1), of classified information processed, stored or transmitted in communication and information systems. Such measures shall ensure the confidentiality, integrity, availability and, where applicable, non-repudiation and authenticity of classified information as well as an appropriate level of accountability and traceability of actions in relation to that information.

## ARTICLE 8

The Parties shall provide one another, upon request, with relevant information about their respective security rules and regulations.



## ARTICLE 9

1. The Parties shall take all appropriate measures, in accordance with their respective national laws and regulations, to investigate cases where it is known or where there are reasonable grounds for suspecting that classified information within the scope of this Agreement has been compromised or lost.
2. A Party which discovers a compromise or loss shall, through the appropriate channels, immediately inform the originator of such an occurrence and subsequently inform the originator of the final results of the investigation and of the corrective measures taken to prevent a recurrence. Upon request, any other relevant Party may provide investigative assistance.

## ARTICLE 10

1. This Agreement shall not affect existing agreements or arrangements on the protection or exchange of classified information entered into by any Party.
2. This Agreement shall not preclude the Parties from entering into other agreements or arrangements relating to the protection and exchange of classified information originated by them, provided that such agreements or arrangements do not conflict with this Agreement.

## ARTICLE 11

This Agreement may be amended by written agreement between the Parties. Any amendment shall enter into force upon notification pursuant to Article 13(2).

## ARTICLE 12

Any dispute between two or more Parties relating to the interpretation or application of this Agreement shall be settled through consultations between the Parties concerned.

## ARTICLE 13

1. The Parties shall notify the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union of the completion of the internal procedures necessary for the entry into force of this Agreement.
2. This Agreement shall enter into force on the first day of the second month following notification to the Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union of the completion of the internal procedures necessary for its entry into force by the last Party to take this step.
3. The Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union shall act as depositary for this Agreement which shall be published in the Official Journal of the European Union.

## ARTICLE 14

This Agreement is drawn up in a single original in the Bulgarian, Czech, Danish, Dutch, English, Estonian, Finnish, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Irish, Italian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Maltese, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Slovak, Slovenian, Spanish and Swedish languages, all twenty-three texts being equally authentic.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the undersigned Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, meeting within the Council, have signed this Agreement.

Done at Brussels on the ... day of ...in the year two thousand and ...

For the Government of the KINGDOM OF BELGIUM,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA,

For the Government of the CZECH REPUBLIC,

For the Government of the KINGDOM OF DENMARK,

For the Government of the FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF ESTONIA,

For the Government of IRELAND,

For the Government of the HELLENIC REPUBLIC,

For the Government of the KINGDOM OF SPAIN,

For the Government of the FRENCH REPUBLIC,

For the Government of the ITALIAN REPUBLIC,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF LATVIA,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA,

For the Government of the GRAND DUCHY OF LUXEMBOURG,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF HUNGARY,

For the Government of MALTA,

For the Government of the KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF AUSTRIA,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF POLAND,

For the Government of the PORTUGUESE REPUBLIC,

For the Government of ROMANIA,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA,

For the Government of the SLOVAK REPUBLIC,

For the Government of the REPUBLIC OF FINLAND,

For the Government of the KINGDOM OF SWEDEN,

For the Government of the UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND  
NORTHERN IRELAND

## Equivalence of security classifications

| EU                | TRES SECRET<br>UE/EU TOP SECRET                                    | SECRET UE/<br>EU SECRET                                  | CONFIDENTIEL UE/<br>EU CONFIDENTIAL                                   | RESTREINT UE/<br>EU RESTRICTED     |
|-------------------|--|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Belgium           | Très Secret (Loi<br>11.12.1998)<br>Zeer Geheim (Wet<br>11.12.1998) | Secret (Loi<br>11.12.1998)<br>Geheim (Wet<br>11.12.1998) | Confidentiel (Loi<br>11.12.1998)<br>Vertrouwelijk (Wet<br>11.12.1998) | <i>nota below</i> <sup>1</sup>     |
| Bulgaria          | Строго секретно  | Секретно   | Поверително   | За служебно ползване               |
| Czech<br>Republic | Přísně tajné   | Tajné  | Důvěrné   | Vyhrazené                          |
| Denmark           | Yderst hemmeligt   | Hemmeligt  | Fortroligt  | Til tjenestebrug                   |
| Germany           | STRENG GEHEIM  | GEHEIM   | VS <sup>2</sup> —<br>VERTRAULICH                                      | VS — NUR FÜR DEN<br>DIENSTGEBRAUCH |
| Estonia           | Täiesti salajane   | Salajane   | Konfidentsiaalne  | Piiratud                           |
| Ireland           | Top Secret   | Secret   | Confidential  | Restricted                         |
| Greece            | Άκρως Απόρρητο<br>Abr: ΑΑΠ   | Απόρρητο<br>Abr: (ΑΠ)                                    | Εμπιστευτικό<br>Abr: (ΕΜ)   | Περιορισμένης Χρήσης<br>Abr: (ΠΧ)  |
| Spain             | SECRETO  | RESERVADO  | CONFIDENCIAL  | DIFUSIÓN<br>LIMITADA               |
| France            | Très Secret Défense  | Secret Défense   | Confidentiel Défense  | <i>nota below</i> <sup>3</sup>     |

<sup>1</sup> Diffusion Restreinte / Beperkte Verspreiding is not a security classification in Belgium. Belgium handles and protects "RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED" information in a manner no less stringent than the standards and procedures described in the security rules of the Council of the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Germany: VS = Verschlussache.

<sup>3</sup> France does not use the classification "RESTREINT" in its national system. France handles and protects "RESTREINT UE/EU RESTRICTED" information in a manner no less stringent than the standards and procedures described in the security rules of the Council of the European Union.

| EU                  | TRES SECRET<br>UE/EU TOP SECRET   | SECRET UE/<br>EU SECRET | CONFIDENTIEL UE/<br>EU CONFIDENTIAL    | RESTREINT UE/<br>EU RESTRICTED                |
|---------------------|---|-------------------------|--|---|
| Italy               | Segretissimo  | Segreto                 | Riservatissimo                         | Riservato                                     |
| Cyprus              | Άκρως Απόρρητο<br>Abr: (AII)  | Απόρρητο<br>Abr: (AII)  | Εμπιστευτικό<br>Abr: (EM)              | Περιορισμένης<br>Χρήσης<br>Abr: (IIX)         |
| Latvia              | Sevišķi slepeni   | Slepeni                 | Konfidenciāli                          | Dienesta vajadzībām                           |
| Lithuania           | Visiškai slaptai  | Slaptai                 | Konfidencialiai                        | Riboto naudojimo                              |
| Luxembourg          | Très Secret Lux   | Secret Lux              | Confidentiel Lux                       | Restreint Lux                                 |
| Hungary             | Szigorúan titkos!   | Titkos!                 | Bizalmas!                              | Korlátozott<br>terjesztésű!                   |
| Malta               | L-Ogħla Segretezza  | Sigriet                 | Kunfidenzjali                          | Ristrett                                      |
| Netherlands         | Stg. ZEER GEHEIM  | Stg. GEHEIM             | Stg.<br>CONFIDENTIEEL                  | Dep.<br>VERTROUWELIJK                         |
| Austria             | Streng Geheim   | Geheim                  | Vertraulich                            | Eingeschränkt                                 |
| Poland              | Ścisłe Tajne  | Tajne                   | Poufne                                 | Zastrzeżone                                   |
| Portugal            | Muito Secreto   | Secreto                 | Confidencial                           | Reservado                                     |
| Romania             | Strict secret de<br>importanță deosebită  | Strict secret           | Secret                                 | Secret de serviciu                            |
| Slovenia            | Strogo tajno  | Tajno                   | Zaupno                                 | Interno                                       |
| Slovakia            | Prísne tajné  | Tajné                   | Dôverné                                | Vyhradené                                     |
| Finland             | ERITTÄIN<br>SALAINEN<br>YTTERST HEMLIG  | SALAINEN<br>HEMLIG      | LUOTTAMUKSELLI<br>NEN<br>KONFIDENTIELL | KÄYTTÖ<br>RAJOITETTU<br>BEGRÄNSAD<br>TILLGÅNG |
| Sweden <sup>1</sup> | HEMLIG/TOP SECRET<br>HEMLIG AV<br>SYNNERLIG<br>BETYDELSE FÖR<br>RIKETS SÄKERHET | HEMLIG/SECRET<br>HEMLIG | HEMLIG/CONFIDENTIAL<br>HEMLIG          | HEMLIG/RESTRICTED<br>HEMLIG                   |
| United Kingdom      | Top Secret  | Secret                  | Confidential                           | Restricted                                    |

<sup>1</sup> Sweden: the security classification markings in the top row are used by the defence authorities and the markings in the bottom row by other authorities.