



GENERAL AFFAIRS Council

Tuesday 7 March in Brussels

Starting at 10.00, the Council will prepare the **European Council on 9-10 March 2017** by examining draft conclusions.

Ministers will then examine a presidency synthesis report on Council contributions to the 2017 **European Semester**. They will also look at a draft **recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area** to be transmitted to the European Council.

Finally, ministers will be informed by the presidency on the state of play of the **implementation of the better law-making agreement**.

Without discussion the Council will adopt

- two regulations improving the **safety of medical devices** to enhance patients' health
- a directive **strengthening the fight against terrorism**

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 12.30).

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/en/webcasts>
Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on:
<https://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/event/general-affairs-council-february-2017-16190>

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

Preparation for the March European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 9-10 March, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Maltese presidency and the Commission.

The European Council will focus on:

- jobs, growth and competitiveness: the European Council will discuss how to ensure the sustainability of the economic growth in the 28 member states; it will examine the implementation of structural reforms by member states and call for a rapid extension of the European fund for strategic investments; the European Council will assess the state of play of the EU trade policy and review progress on legislative priorities and major strategies, including those to deepen the single market
- external security and defence: the European Council will assess the implementation of its December 2016 conclusions and reflect how to strengthen Europe's security and defence to better protect its citizens in a challenging geopolitical environment
- migration: the European Council will take stock of the implementation of the measures agreed by EU leaders in Malta on 3 February 2017 to further curb the migratory flow on the Central Mediterranean route
- external relations: the European Council will discuss the situation in the Western Balkans and may address other items in the light of events

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 7 February 2017.

European Semester

The Council will examine a presidency synthesis report [6756/17, still to be published] on the contributions of five Council configurations involved in the current European Semester exercise.²

The report notes that, according to the Commission's latest winter forecast, the economies of all 28 member states are currently growing. It emphasises that decisive and coordinated policy action as well as swift reform implementation remain essential to strengthening the ongoing recovery.

The European Semester involves simultaneous monitoring of the member states' fiscal, economic and employment policies during a six-month period every year. In the light of the guidance provided by the European Council, the member states will prepare their national reform programmes (economic and employment policies) and stability or convergence programmes (fiscal policies) for this year.

The Council is also expected to agree to forward a [draft recommendation](#) on the economic policy of the euro area to the European Council.

² Economic and Financial Affairs Council, Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, Competitiveness Council, Environment Council and Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council

Implementation of the better law-making agreement

The Council will be informed by the presidency on the progress in implementing the better-law making agreement concluded in 2016 by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission.

The main purpose of the better law-making agreement is to improve the way in which the European Union legislates to ensure that EU laws better serve citizens and businesses.

The presidency will focus in particular on the upcoming exchange of views with the European Parliament and the Commission on the implementation of the [joint declaration](#) on EU's legislative priorities for 2017, agreed between the three institutions at the end of 2016.

The three institutions agreed to give priority treatment to legislative initiatives in the following six policy areas: 1) jobs, growth, investments 2) social Europe 3) security 4) reform migration policy 5) digital single market 6) energy and climate.
