



GENERAL AFFAIRS Council

15 December 2015 in Brussels

Starting work at 9.30 ministers will be invited to approve a provisional **agreement on better law-making** reached with the European Parliament and the Commission.

Ministers are expected to endorse the **18-month programme of the Council** (1 January 2016 - 30 June 2017).

The Council will prepare the **December European Council** by examining draft conclusions and discussing the five Presidents report on **completing the Economic and Monetary Union**.

Ministers are also due to discuss and adopt conclusions on the **enlargement and the stabilisation and association process**.

Finally, the Commission will present its **annual growth survey for 2016**.

A press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 15h00).

Meetings in the margins of the Council:

Monday 14 December:

- 17.30 EU-Turkey intergovernmental accession conference, followed by a press conference;
- 19.00 EU-Serbia intergovernmental accession conference, followed by a press conference.

Monday 21 December:

- 13.00 EU-Montenegro intergovernmental accession conference, followed by a press conference

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Office.

Preparation for the December European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 17-18 December, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Luxembourg presidency and the Commission.

The European Council is due to focus on:

- migration: the European Council will take stock of the implementation of its earlier orientations and take further action in light of the situation on the ground
- fight against terrorism: EU leaders will discuss the overall EU and member states' action in the fight against terrorism. They will take stock of the implementation of orientations agreed at their informal meeting on 12 February 2015 and set further orientations.
- economic and monetary union: the European Council will analyse the next steps to take following the publication of the five Presidents' report on completing the Economic and Monetary Union
- internal market: the European Council will address the strategy to deepen the European single market in all its dimensions; these include goods and services, the digital single market and the capital market union action plan
- energy union: the European Council will assess progress in building the energy union and set out the way ahead
- United Kingdom: the European Council will revert to the UK plans for an (in/out) referendum following the letter of UK Prime Minister of 10 November 2015

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 17 November 2015.

Interinstitutional agreement on better law-making

The Council will be invited to approve the text of a new interinstitutional agreement on better law-making provisionally agreed with the European Parliament and the Commission on 8 December 2015.

The interinstitutional agreement seeks to ensure that EU law focuses on areas where it has the greatest added value for European citizens, is simple, clear and as efficient and effective as possible in delivering the common policy objectives of the Union and avoids overregulation and administrative burden for citizens and businesses, especially SMEs. To achieve these objectives the agreement improves legislative programming, reinforces impact assessment of new initiatives, extends the evaluation of existing EU laws and strengthens public consultation.

18-month programme of the Council

The Council is expected to endorse the [18-month programme of the Council](#). The programme is drawn up by the incoming trio of presidencies (Netherlands, Slovakia, Malta) and sets out the Council activities for the next 18 months. The policy debate will take place in a public session.

Annual growth survey

After the presentation of the presidency and the incoming presidency of the agenda for 2016 during the CAG in November, the Commission will present its annual growth survey for 2016 to the Council, in which it outlines the main features of its jobs and growth agenda.

The annual growth survey sets out what more can be done at EU level to help member states support growth, reinforce economic convergence, create jobs and strengthen social fairness. The Commission proposes to pursue an integrated approach to economic policy built around three main pillars: boosting investment, accelerating structural reforms and pursuing responsible growth friendly fiscal consolidation.

The annual growth survey sets out the general economic priorities for the EU and provides member states with policy guidance for the following year.

Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process

The Council will discuss, in the light of an annual communication and country reports from the Commission:

- the EU's enlargement policy, covering Turkey, Montenegro and Serbia;
- the EU-Western Balkans stabilisation and association process, covering the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo.

It will be called on to adopt conclusions.

The Council is expected to reaffirm its commitment to the enlargement process and to the European perspective of the Western Balkans. Turkey remaining a key partner in many areas, the Council is expected to welcome the re-energizing of the accession process. Regarding enlargement, it is expected to welcome the Commission's continued efforts to address fundamental reforms early in the accession process. These include rule of law issues, fundamental rights, economic development and competitiveness, the strengthening of democratic institutions and public administration reform.

The Council is expected to underscore the need for strengthening the rule of law and protection of fundamental rights as well as for reinforcing cooperation in fighting terrorism. It is expected to commend in particular Turkey, Serbia and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia for their efforts in addressing the refugee and migration crisis which has seriously affected the region.
