



Council of the European Union

PRESS
EN

BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 7 January 2019

GENERAL AFFAIRS Council

Tuesday 8 January 2019 in Brussels

Chair: George Ciamba, Romanian Minister Delegate for European Affairs

The meeting will start at 10.00.

The Romanian presidency will present its priorities for the next six months.

The presidency will also inform ministers about its plans regarding discussions on the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027.

Both presentations will take place in public session.

Ministers will exchange views on a coordinated response to disinformation.

The Council will review the state of play on legislative files in view of the end of the legislative cycle.

Over lunch, ministers will exchange views on how to better communicate Europe to citizens.

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 13.00).

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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 at:

<https://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu/permalink/206173>

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

Priorities of the Romanian presidency

The Romanian presidency will present the priorities for its term of office, which runs from 1 January to 30 June 2019.

The priorities are organised around four pillars:

- Europe of convergence
- A safer Europe
- Europe as a stronger global actor
- Europe of common values

For more information, see the [website of the Romanian presidency](#).

Next multiannual financial framework

The presidency will inform ministers about its plans regarding work on the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027.

Prior to the meeting of the General Affairs Council on 11 December 2018, the Austrian presidency presented two documents about the next MFF – a progress report and a draft Negotiating Box.

The [progress report](#) outlines the work undertaken on the MFF since the Commission adopted the MFF package and sectoral proposals in May and June 2018.

The [draft Negotiating Box](#) brings together those elements which are most likely to require political guidance from the EU leaders with a view to the Council reaching its position. It is a tool for structuring and facilitating the negotiations on the MFF. Early versions are prepared under the responsibility of the presidency. The draft Negotiating Box is discussed and constantly updated as negotiations move forward.

At their meeting on 13-14 December 2018, EU leaders welcomed the intensive preparatory work carried out during the Austrian presidency. They called on the Romanian presidency to continue that work and develop an orientation for the next stage of the negotiations, with a view to achieving an agreement in the European Council in autumn 2019.

Coordinated response to disinformation

Ministers will exchange views on a coordinated response to disinformation.

The discussion will take place against the background of several recent initiatives on tackling disinformation and calls from the European Council to develop a coordinated response to the challenges in this field, especially in view of the forthcoming European elections.

At their meeting on 13-14 December 2018, EU leaders called for the prompt and coordinated implementation of the [Joint Action Plan against disinformation](#) presented by the Commission and the High Representative on 5 December 2018. The Council was invited to continue work on disinformation and to report back to the European Council in March 2019. The discussion in the General Affairs Council forms part of the answer to this call.

During their exchange of views, ministers are expected to focus on three questions:

- What are the priority lines of the Action Plan that should be addressed without delay, bearing in mind the upcoming European Parliament elections?
- How best can coherence be ensured between the internal and external dimensions of combating disinformation?
- Taking into account the challenges posed by disinformation campaigns both online and offline, how can the EU and member states step up their efforts to increase societal awareness of disinformation and enhance the resilience of citizens of member states and partner countries in building informed opinions?

The discussion will support efforts by member states and European institutions to step up their coordinated action in this field. It will also feed into the development of a long-term EU strategy on disinformation.

The Action Plan against disinformation, presented on 5 December 2018, focuses on four areas:

- improving the capabilities of the Union's institutions to detect, analyse and expose disinformation
- strengthening coordinated and joint responses by EU institutions and member states to disinformation
- mobilising the private sector to tackle disinformation
- raising awareness about disinformation

The proposed actions include the following:

- 1) strengthening the capacity of the Strategic Communication Task Forces of the EEAS and Union delegations to detect, analyse and expose disinformation activities;
- 2) reviewing the mandates of the Strategic Communications Task Forces for Western Balkans and South to enable them to address disinformation effectively in these regions;
- 3) establishing, by March 2019, a Rapid Alert System for addressing disinformation campaigns;
- 4) with a view to the upcoming European elections, stepping up communication efforts on Union values and policies;
- 5) strengthening strategic communications in the Union's neighbourhood;
- 6) closely monitoring the implementation of the [Code of Practice on Disinformation](#), agreed by online platforms and the advertising industry in September 2018;
- 7) raising awareness of the negative effects of disinformation and supporting the work of independent media and quality journalism as well as research into disinformation;
- 8) supporting the creation of teams of multi-disciplinary independent fact-checkers and researchers to detect and expose disinformation campaigns;
- 9) supporting cross-border cooperation amongst media literacy practitioners and the launch of practical tools for the promotion of media literacy for the public;
- 10) implementing the [Elections Package](#) presented by the Commission on 12 September 2018, and notably the [Commission recommendation](#) on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents and fighting disinformation campaigns.

See also [Questions and Answers – The EU steps up action against disinformation](#)

State of play on legislative files

The Council will review the state of play on legislative files in view of the end of the legislative cycle.