



GENERAL AFFAIRS Council
Tuesday 19 March 2019 in Brussels

Chair: George Ciamba, Romanian Minister Delegate for European Affairs

Ministers will hold a policy debate on the **multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027**. This item will be taken in public session.

Also in public session, the Council will prepare a partial general approach on the **Regulation establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance**.

The Council will continue preparations for the **European Council meeting on 21 and 22 March** by examining draft conclusions. It will take stock of the implementation of previous European Council conclusions.

Ministers will discuss a synthesis report on Council contributions on the **2019 European Semester** and an updated roadmap on the 2019 European Semester. They will also examine a draft recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area to be transmitted to the European Council.

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 14.00).

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

Next multiannual financial framework

In public session, ministers will hold a policy debate on the multiannual financial framework (MFF) for 2021-2027 on the basis of a [presidency note](#).

They will be invited to provide their views on the measures envisaged in the MFF on climate mainstreaming and on migration. The debate will be guided by the following questions:

- Climate mainstreaming:

Whether ministers consider the proposed framework (including the 25% target) adequate to ensure a results-oriented approach or whether additional elements are required;

- Migration:

How to ensure coordination and consistency between various funding possibilities in the area of migration (EU budget, trust funds);

How ministers see the June 2018 European Council conclusions, followed by the debate in the Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting of October 2018, reflected across headings in the draft negotiating box.

The Presidency will present a progress report (6443/1/19) to the Council, for information, outlining developments achieved in negotiations on MFF-related sectoral proposals. The Council will be asked to endorse the letter which the Presidency will send to the European Parliament together with the progress report and the list of achieved common understandings.

Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

The Council will aim to agree a [partial general approach](#) on the Regulation establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III).

IPA III is a part of the multiannual financial framework for 2021-2027. It supports EU partners in adopting and implementing key political, institutional, social and economic reforms to comply with EU values and to progressively align to its rules, standards and policies.

The agreed text does not cover financial and horizontal issues which will depend on the overall agreement on the next multiannual financial framework.

The Commission has proposed an overall budget for the programme of €14,5 billion in current prices for the period 2021-2027.

March European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 21-22 March, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Romanian presidency and the Commission.

The European Council will focus on:

- jobs, growth and competitiveness: EU leaders will adopt conclusions on several issues relevant for jobs, growth and competitiveness, such as the future development of the Single Market, the Capital Markets Union, industrial policy and European digital policy in preparation for the next Strategic Agenda. They will also address priorities for the 2019 European Semester and endorsement of the Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area;
- climate: leaders will reconfirm their commitment to the Paris agreement and will provide guidance on overall direction and political priorities to enable the European Union to submit a long-term strategy by 2020 in line with the Paris Agreement;
- external relations: leaders will prepare for the EU-China summit to be held on 9 April 2019;
- disinformation: finally, the European Council will discuss progress in tackling disinformation and the need to protect the democratic integrity of the European elections and national elections across the EU.

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 19 February 2019.

European Semester

The Council will examine a presidency synthesis report (7137/1/19) on the contributions of other Council configurations involved in the current European Semester exercise.

The report notes that the European economy is entering its sixth year of uninterrupted growth. Real convergence has resumed, with higher growth rates recorded in member states with lower levels of GDP per capita. However, the growth of the economy is still not benefitting all citizens and countries in the same manner and growth remains vulnerable to global instability and medium- to long-term challenges. Investment and structural reforms need to focus even more on boosting productivity and growth potential.

The European Semester involves simultaneous monitoring of the member states' fiscal, economic and employment policies over 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.