



GENERAL AFFAIRS Council
Tuesday 9 April 2019 in Luxembourg

Chair: George Ciamba, Romanian Minister Delegate for European Affairs

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

The Council will adopt **conclusions on sustainable development**, in response to the Commission's reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030".

Ministers will also discuss the state of play regarding the **values of the Union in Hungary and the rule of law in Poland**, under Article 7(1) TEU.

Over lunch, ministers will focus on the topic of the upcoming **European Parliament elections**.

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/-14:30).

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[General Affairs Council meeting page](#)

[Press conferences and public events by video streaming](#)

[Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery](#)

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](#).

The debate will focus on aspects of the MFF that relate to **cohesion** and **the common agricultural policy (CAP)**, and in particular the following:

- Cohesion:
 - a) How to ensure that the “*no region is left behind*” principle is properly reflected in the new MFF, while ensuring that the regions most in need also benefit the most from the cohesion funds and that all regions that are below the EU average continue to move towards it?
 - b) Ministers will also be invited to assess the proposal for the Cohesion policy as regards its capacity to react to new priorities and unforeseen events.
- CAP:
 - a) How can the proposal on CAP best support the development of rural areas across the Union and guarantee a fair standard of living for the agricultural population, while increasing the productivity and competitiveness of European agriculture?
 - b) Ministers will also be invited to discuss how the EU agricultural sector can become economically, environmentally and socially sustainable in the long run.

The Presidency will also present an updated progress report ([6443/3/19 REV 3](#)) to the Council, for information, outlining progress made in negotiations on MFF-related sectoral proposals.

Conclusions on sustainable development

The Council will be invited to adopt a set of conclusions concerning the implementation by the EU of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, which was set up in 2015 and comprises a set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Given the horizontal nature of the 2030 Agenda, its implementation requires a cross-policy approach by the EU and its member states. Earlier this year, the Commission published a reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030," to which the conclusions now respond.

In its conclusions, the Council underlines the central importance of sustainable development for the European Union and stresses that it is in the EU's interest to continue to play a leading role in implementing the 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs. Recognising this as an overarching priority for the EU, the Council calls for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda to be accelerated “both globally and internally, as an overarching priority of the EU, for the benefit of its citizens and for upholding its credibility within Europe and globally.”

The Council welcomes the Commission's reflection paper "as an urgently needed contribution to the debate on a more sustainable future" and to "the strategic priority setting for the new Commission." The main policy foundations for a sustainable future identified by the Council include a decisive transition towards a circular economy, striving for climate neutrality, protecting biodiversity and ecosystems and tackling climate change, along with sustainable agriculture and food, and safe and sustainable low carbon energy, buildings and mobility. The Council also stresses the importance of fostering European cohesion and calls for the social dimension to be strengthened.

Moreover, the Council reiterates its earlier call for the Commission to draw up "a comprehensive implementation strategy outlining timelines, objectives and concrete measures to reflect the 2030 Agenda" and to mainstream the SDGs into "all relevant internal and external EU policies."

[Commission reflection paper "Towards a sustainable Europe by 2030"](#)

Respect for EU values in Hungary

Ministers will exchange views on the state of play of the Article 7(1) TEU procedure concerning Hungary.

The procedure was triggered on 12 September 2018 when the European Parliament's plenary adopted a resolution with a [reasoned proposal](#) asking the Council to determine whether there was a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values referred to in Article 2 TEU. The reasoned proposal was submitted to the Council on 18 September.

The GAC discussed the state of play at its meeting on 19 February 2019.

Rule of law in Poland

The Commission will provide member states with an update on the latest developments regarding the rule of law situation in Poland, after which member states will have an opportunity to discuss the state of play.

Hearings with Poland took place at the meetings of the General Affairs Council held on 26 June, 18 September and 11 December 2018, and the GAC discussed the state of play at its meeting on 19 February 2019.

The Article 7(1) TEU procedure was triggered for Poland on 20 December 2017 when the Commission published its reasoned proposal on the rule of law in Poland. The reasoned proposal contains a detailed explanatory memorandum and a proposal for a Council decision which (i) determines that there is a clear risk of a serious breach by Poland of the rule of law and (ii) sets out recommendations for Poland.
