



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 11 October 2019

GENERAL AFFAIRS Council

Tuesday 15 October 2019 in Luxembourg

Chair: Tytti Tuppurainen, Finnish minister for European affairs

The meeting will start after the meeting of the General Affairs Council (Article 50), at around 11.00.

As agreed at the General Affairs Council meeting in June, the Council will return to **enlargement and the stabilisation and association process** as regards Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia.

Ministers will continue preparations for the **European Council meeting on 17-18 October** by examining draft conclusions. They will also take stock of the implementation of previous European Council conclusions.

Under 'any other business', the presidency will debrief ministers on the **transparency seminar** held in Brussels on 24 September. This item will be taken in public session.

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting.

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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://newsroom.consilium.europa.eu/events/20191015-general-affairs-council-october-2019>

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

Enlargement and stabilisation and association process

The Council will discuss enlargement and the EU-Western Balkans stabilisation and association process, focusing on Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia.

The discussion follows on from the conclusions adopted at the General Affairs Council on 18 June 2019. In these conclusions the Council took good note of the Commission's recommendation to open accession negotiations with both countries based on its positive evaluation of the progress made and of the fulfilment of the conditions identified by the Council in June 2018. In light of the limited time available and the importance of the matter, the Council undertook to revert to these issues with a view to reaching clear and substantive decisions no later than October 2019.

The Council earlier discussed the matter in June 2018, during the Bulgarian presidency. In its conclusions of 26 June 2018, the Council agreed to respond positively to the progress made by the Republic of North Macedonia and Albania, and set out the path towards opening accession negotiations with both countries in June 2019.

On that occasion, the Council underlined the critical need for North Macedonia to continue making concrete progress on the Urgent Reform Priorities and to deliver further tangible results in the fight against corruption, maintaining and deepening the current reform momentum with a particular focus on results in certain enumerated key areas.

As regards Albania, the Council underlined the critical need for the country to further consolidate progress made on judicial reform in particular through the vetting, and to deliver further tangible results in the fight against corruption at all levels and in the fight against organised crime, in particular on the cultivation and trafficking of drugs. This included, inter alia, further advancing the process of re-evaluating judges and prosecutors, finalising the establishment of the independent judicial structures and specialised bodies such as the Special Anti-Corruption and Organised Crime Structure (SPAK), and strengthening the track record of proactive investigations, prosecutions and final convictions in the fight against corruption and organised crime, including at high level. The Council also underlined the importance of further reform results in particular on the rule of law, electoral reform and on reducing the number of manifestly unfounded asylum applications.

In the Council conclusions, the Commission was also called upon to closely monitor the above reform efforts of both countries and the Council undertook to assess progress on the basis of the yearly Commission report.

All decisions taken at the Council to evaluate progress made by candidate countries on their EU path, including the decision to open accession negotiations, require unanimous agreement between all the EU member states.

[Council conclusions of 18 June 2019 on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process](#)
[Council conclusions of 26 June 2018 on Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process](#)
[2019 Commission communication on EU enlargement policy](#)
[EU enlargement \(background information\)](#)

October European Council

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

At their meeting in October, leaders are expected to have a substantive discussion on the next multiannual financial framework on the basis of the work of the presidency.

Leaders will also discuss the follow-up to the Strategic Agenda 2019-2024 for the Union. President-elect of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen has been invited to present and discuss her plans for the next five years with the leaders.

The European Council is also expected to adopt a decision appointing Christine Lagarde as President of the European Central Bank.

Leaders are expected to talk about international aspects of climate change, following the UN Climate Action Summit and ahead of the Climate Conference in Santiago de Chile in December.

In the light of events, the European Council may also address specific foreign policy issues.

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 16 September.

[European Council, 17-18/10/2019](#)

Transparency

Under 'any other business', the presidency will brief ministers on the main takeaways from the seminar on the future of EU transparency organised by the Finnish presidency on 24 September in Brussels.

[Seminar on the future of EU transparency \(Presidency website\)](#)
