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PROVISIONAL VERSION

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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3770th Council meeting

General Affairs

Brussels, 22 September 2020

President

Michael Roth
Germany's Minister of State for Europe

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¹ • Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
• Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
• Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED**Special European Council**

Ministers exchanged views on the draft conclusions for the special European Council meeting to be held on 1 and 2 October.

At their meeting, EU leaders will discuss the single market, industrial policy and digital transformation. They will also hold a strategic discussion on Turkey. Following the EU-China summit on 22 June 2020 and the meeting with President Xi on 14 September 2020, both by videoconference, the European Council will discuss EU-China relations. In the light of events, leaders may also address other specific foreign policy issues.

[Special European Council on 1-2 October 2020](#)

EU-UK relations

The Union's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier, informed ministers of the state of play of the EU-UK negotiations, the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement and the EU's readiness efforts in view of the end of the transition period on 31 December 2020.

Ministers reaffirmed their support for the chief negotiator and his mandate, and expressed their trust that further progress could be achieved in the next round of negotiations scheduled for the week of 28 September. They also stressed that the Withdrawal Agreement had to be respected.

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the EU and UK negotiators held negotiations in April, May and June via video conference. Negotiations resumed in person at the end of June. The 8th round of talks took place in London on 8-10 September. The next round of negotiations, the last one scheduled so far, is planned to be held in the week of 28 September. The third regular meeting of the Joint Committee will take place on 28 of September in Brussels.

[EU-UK negotiations on the future relationship \(background information\)](#)

Next multiannual financial framework and the recovery package

The presidency briefed ministers on the trilateral contacts held with the European Parliament and the Commission since late August to secure the required consent of the European Parliament on the MFF regulation.

The discussions have focused on new own resources, the governance of Next Generation EU, the envelopes of EU programmes and horizontal issues, such as climate, gender and biodiversity. The negotiating teams are working hard to conclude the process quickly.

In their comments, several speakers stressed that the MFF and the recovery instrument formed an inseparable package. Ministers also underlined the need to finalise all the procedures as soon as possible, in order to be able to help member states and regions affected by the pandemic and ensure a timely start of the new programmes.

[Special European Council, 17-21 July 2020](#)

[Negotiating the EU long-term budget \(background information\)](#)

COVID-19 - EU coordination

On the basis of a presidency progress report, ministers discussed how to achieve greater cooperation at EU level on national measures limiting free movement during the Covid-19 pandemic. Member states expressed broad support for the collection and presentation of data by the ECDC, and stressed the importance of clear and timely communication between member states and to the public.

The ECDC will be asked to provide a comprehensive data set of the following key indicators on a weekly basis:

- the 14-day notification rate of new cases per 100,000 inhabitants;
- the testing rate per 100,000 inhabitants;
- the test positivity rate.

In addition, the ECDC will be invited to provide data on the population size, the hospitalisation rate, the rate of ICU admission and the mortality rate, if available, on a weekly basis.

In terms of information sharing between member states and communication to the public, there is consensus that this should occur in a clear and timely manner. Member states should inform the public and relevant stakeholders as early as possible before new general measures come into effect and, as a general rule, 24 hours before the measures come into effect, taking into account that some flexibility is required for epidemiological emergencies. Member states have also been supportive of the idea of systematically using the ‘Re-open EU’ website for public communication purposes.

Member states will further explore ways to coordinate on risk assessment, designation of risk areas and measures to be triggered. Discussions on a joint risk assessment and on possible common measures seem particularly sensitive. Member states have confirmed their general willingness to cooperate while underlining the responsibilities of national governments for questions related to public health.

Work will continue within the Council in the coming weeks with a view to reaching agreement on a Council recommendation.

[Presidency progress report on COVID-19 - EU coordination](#)

[COVID-19: travel and transport \(background information\)](#)

[Re-open EU website](#)

Article 7 procedures

As part of the Article 7(1) TEU procedure, the Commission updated ministers on the developments in Poland and Hungary since the end of last year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the impossibility of holding physical Council meetings, the Council has not been able to hold discussions under Article 7 this year.

In its overview on Poland, the Commission focused on disciplinary sanctions for judges and the implementation of the Court of Justice order of 8 April 2020 on the Disciplinary Chamber of the Supreme Court. Concerning Hungary, the Commission outlined the situation in several areas, including the independence of the judiciary, media pluralism and academic freedom.

Legislative programming

Following the State of the Union address by President von der Leyen, the Commission presented to the Council the letter of intent concerning its draft work programme for 2021. The Council is expected to return to the annual programming exercise later in the autumn.

The Commission also presented to ministers its 2020 Strategic Foresight Report, which will serve as input for the multiannual programming exercise involving the Council, the Commission and the European Parliament.

That exercise, which is also provided for in the better law-making agreement, will take place for the first time with the 2019–2024 Commission. It is intended to facilitate longer-term planning and is expected to continue in the autumn and culminate in joint conclusions by the three institutions.

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

External auditors of Suomen Pankki

The Council approved KPMG Oy Ab as the external auditors of Suomen Pankki for the financial years 2020 to 2025 ([10339/2020](#)).

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Schengen evaluation - Croatia

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2019 evaluation of Croatia on fulfilling the conditions necessary for the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of management of the external borders (revisit land border) ([11022/2020](#)).
