

Background brief*16 October 2025*

General Affairs Council

21 October 2025, Luxembourg

PRESS**EN**

Chair: Marie Bjerre, Minister for European Affairs of Denmark

Commission representatives: Michael McGrath, European Commissioner for democracy, justice, the rule of law and consumer protection

Piotr Serafin, European Commissioner for budget, anti-fraud and public administration

Starting time: 10.00

Media opportunities:

- Doorstep Marie Bjerre: 21 October 2025, 09.30
- Press conference General Affairs Council: 21 October 2025, +/- 17.30

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Main agenda topics:

The Council will continue preparations for the **23 October 2025 European Council** by discussing draft conclusions.

In public session, the Council will hold a policy debate on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (**MFF**).

Also in public session, ministers will take note of a progress report on omnibus **simplification** legislative packages.

Finally, ministers will hold the ninth hearing on the rule of law situation in Hungary as part of the **Article 7** procedure.

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[General Affairs Council, 21 October 2025 - meeting page](#)

[Press conferences, doorsteps and other public events in video streaming](#)

[High quality photo and video material](#)

October European Council

The Council will continue preparations for the European Council meeting of 23 October 2025 by discussing draft conclusions. EU leaders are expected to discuss:

- Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine
- latest developments in the Middle East with a focus on Gaza
- European defence and security
- competitiveness and twin transition
- housing, and
- migration

[*European Council of 23 October, Invitation letter by President António Costa to the members of the European Council*](#)

[*European Council of 23 October 2025, provisional agenda*](#)

Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028-2034

Ministers will hold a policy debate on the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (**MFF**) 2028-2034.

Since 1988, the EU has been functioning with long-term budgets called **multiannual financial frameworks**. Long-term budgets aim to provide a stable framework, with overall spending limits to:

- align spending with the EU's political priorities
- increase predictability of EU finances for co-financers and beneficiaries
- ensure budgetary discipline
- make it easier to adopt the annual EU budget

On 16 July and 3 September 2025, the Commission presented its proposals for the **next MFF** amounting to **almost €2 trillion**. An exchange of views in the General Affairs Council of 18 July 2025 marked the beginning of the discussions in the Council and work has been ongoing since then at experts' level.

Ministers will hold an exchange of views on horizontal issues, such as simplification and governance, of the next MFF and on its '**Heading 2**', which includes the **European Competitiveness Fund** and **Horizon Europe**. This heading also includes key programmes to support the EU's cross-border connectivity (the Connecting Europe Facility), preparedness and response to crises, including health (the Union Civil Protection Mechanism+), as well as Europe's cross-border education flagship programme Erasmus+, and the new 'AgoraEU' programme that will support culture, media and civil society organisations.

Regular discussions in the General Affairs Council will continue to take place during the Danish presidency with a view to ensuring as much progress on the new MFF proposals as possible and to guide further negotiations.

[*The 2028-2034 EU budget for a stronger Europe, Commission background information, September 2025*](#)

[*A dynamic EU Budget for the priorities of the future - The Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, Commission communication, 16 July 2025*](#)

[*Questions and answers on the next long-term budget, Commission background information, 16 July 2025*](#)

[*EU budget 2028-2034, Commission factsheets, 16 July 2025*](#)

[*The EU long-term budget \(background information\)*](#)

Simplification

The Council will take note of a **progress report** on omnibus simplification legislative packages.

In October 2024, with the aim of enhancing the EU's competitiveness and achieving the full potential of the single market, the **European Council** called 'on all EU institutions, member states and stakeholders, as a matter of priority, to take work forward, notably in response to the challenges identified in the reports by Enrico Letta ('Much more than a market') and Mario Draghi ('The future of European competitiveness')'. The **Budapest declaration** of 8 November 2024 subsequently called for "launching a simplification revolution ensuring a clear, simple and smart regulatory framework for businesses and drastically reducing administrative, regulatory and reporting burdens, in particular for SMEs".

As a follow-up to the leaders' call, the Commission has put forward several '**Omnibus**' packages, aiming to simplify existing legislation in various fields, starting with corporate sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements and certain EU investment programmes, continuing with simplification measures for agriculture, small mid-cap companies and digitalisation, defence, and chemical industry.

The simplification agenda is a top priority for the Council. Following the impetus from the Polish presidency, the Danish presidency has been treating all current simplification omnibus proposals as a priority and has been advancing their examination, preparation of negotiating mandates and negotiations with the European Parliament at a high speed.

[*Simplification: Council gives final green light on the stop-the-clock mechanism to boost EU competitiveness and provide legal certainty to businesses, Council press release, 14 April 2025*](#)

[*Simplification: Council agrees position on sustainability reporting and due diligence requirements to boost EU competitiveness, Council press release, 23 June 2025*](#)

[*Simplification: Council agrees position on simplifying the Common Agricultural Policy \(CAP\), Council press release, 3 September 2025*](#)

[*InvestEU: Council and Parliament agree to make the programme easier and more efficient, Council press release, 23 September 2025*](#)

[*Simplification: Council agrees position on digitalisation and common specifications, as well as on small mid-caps to boost EU competitiveness, Council press release, 24 September 2025*](#)

[*Simplification: Council approves stop-the-clock mechanism on chemicals to provide legal certainty to businesses, Council press release, 24 September 2025*](#)

[*CBAM: Council signs off simplification to the EU carbon leakage instrument, Council press release, 29 September 2025*](#)

[*Simplification \(background information\)*](#)

Article 7 procedure concerning Hungary

As part of the Article 7(1) TEU procedure regarding Hungary, the Council will hold a hearing. This will be the **ninth hearing** of Hungary as part of this procedure. It will cover all the issues raised in the European Parliament's reasoned proposal of September 2018, which triggered the procedure. The aim is to provide the Council an up-to-date picture of the situation in Hungary.

The last such hearing was held on 27 May 2025 under the Polish presidency.

In its **reasoned proposal**, adopted on 12 September 2018, the European Parliament presents issues in several areas that, in its view, justified the triggering of the Article 7 procedure:

- (1) the functioning of the constitutional and electoral system,
- (2) the independence of the judiciary and of other institutions and the rights of judges,
- (3) corruption and conflicts of interest,
- (4) privacy and data protection,
- (5) freedom of expression,

- (6) academic freedom,
- (7) freedom of religion,
- (8) freedom of association,
- (9) the right to equal treatment,
- (10) the rights of persons belonging to minorities, including Roma and Jews, and protection against hateful statements against such minorities,
- (11) the fundamental rights of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees, and
- (12) economic and social rights.

[General Affairs Council, 27 May 2025 \(main results\)](#)

[Reasoned proposal triggering the Article 7 procedure for Hungary](#)

[Standard modalities for hearings referred to in Article 7\(1\) TEU](#)

[2025 Rule of law report \(European Commission\)](#)

[Rule of law \(background information\)](#)

European Democracy Shield

Over a working lunch, ministers will exchange views and give input to the Commission's upcoming proposal on a **European Democracy Shield**.

Other points

The Austrian minister will inform the Council about her recent visit to the **Western Balkan** countries.
