



## **General Affairs Council Luxembourg, 19 October 2021**

**Chair:** Gašper Dovžan, State Secretary at the Slovenian Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The meeting will start at 10.00.

The Council will exchange views on the draft conclusions of the European Council meeting to be held on 21-22 October.

Ministers will hold a horizontal discussion on the annual rule of law dialogue.

The Presidency will provide information about the Conference on the Future of Europe.

A **press conference** will be held at around 16.15.

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[General Affairs Council, 19 October - meeting page](#)

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

## European Council on 21-22 October

The General Affairs Council will exchange views on the draft conclusions of the European Council meeting to be held on 21-22 October.

EU leaders will meet in Brussels to discuss COVID-19, digital transformation, energy prices, migration, trade and external relations.

The European Council will take stock of the epidemiological situation following the significant progress achieved through the vaccination campaigns against **COVID-19** around Europe. Leaders are also expected to discuss free movement and travel as well as prevention, preparedness and response to future health emergencies. The European Council will also address international solidarity and the need to ensure access to vaccines for all.

On Europe's **digital transformation**, leaders are expected to review and call for progress on the digital agenda and key legislative files, as well as highlighting the importance of digital connectivity and global partnerships.

EU leaders will discuss the recent hike in **energy prices** and assess what measures can be taken at both national and European level to address the impact of this price increase.

Regarding **migration**, the European Council will assess the implementation of its conclusions of June 2021.

EU leaders will also hold a strategic discussion on **trade**.

On **external relations**, the European Council is expected to take stock of preparations for:

- the ASEM summit to be held virtually on 25-26 November 2021
- the Eastern Partnership summit on 15 December 2021
- the COP26 meeting on climate change on 31 October-12 November 2021 in Glasgow
- the COP15 meeting on biological diversity in Kunming

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

[European Council on 21-22 October](#)

## Annual rule of law dialogue

As part of the **annual rule of law dialogue**, Ministers will hold a horizontal discussion focusing on developments in the EU and structured around four pillars: justice systems; the anti-corruption framework; media pluralism; other institutional issues linked to checks and balances.

The discussion in the Council will make use of the rule of law **report by the Commission**, which was issued on 20 July 2021.

On 16 December 2014, the Council adopted conclusions that established an annual political dialogue between all Member States within the Council to promote and safeguard the rule of law within the framework of the Treaties.

The dialogue is currently organised in two different types of political discussions: a horizontal discussion covering general rule-of-law developments in the EU and country-specific discussions addressing key developments one by one in each Member State.

The aim of this structured approach is to enhance the preventive and constructive nature of the tool, allowing for an open exchange of comments and best practices while fully respecting the principles of objectivity, non-discrimination and equal treatment of all Member States.

Country-specific aspects will be covered at the meeting of General Affairs Council in November for five Member States (Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania).

[2021 Rule of law report \(European Commission\)](#)

## Conference on the Future of Europe

The Presidency will present the state of play of the Conference on the Future of Europe following the first European **citizens' panels**. Three out of four panels have already had their inaugural sessions. The fourth panel, focusing on the role of the EU in the world and on migration, will meet for the first time on 15-17 October. The first sessions of the panels have served to identify streams and subtopics that participants will discuss in greater depth in the following sessions. The Presidency will also provide updates on the preparations for the next **plenary** of the Conference, which will take place in Strasbourg on 23 October.

The Conference on the Future of Europe is aimed at involving citizens in a wide-ranging debate on Europe's future over the coming decade and beyond, including in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 10 March, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission signed a joint declaration that sets out the objectives, structure, scope and timing of the conference.

The Conference on the Future of Europe was formally inaugurated on 9 May in Strasbourg, following the launch of the conference's digital platform on 19 April.

[Conference on the Future of Europe: citizens in the spotlight](#)

[Conference on the Future of Europe: launch of the citizens' platform on 19 April](#)

[Joint declaration](#)

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