



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹

Brussels, 19 September 2022

General Affairs Council Brussels, 20 September 2022

Chair: Mikuláš Bek, Minister of European Affairs of the Czech Republic.

The meeting will begin at 10.00.

The Council will start preparations for the European Council meeting on 20-21 October. In the framework of the annual rule of law dialogue, it will hold a horizontal discussion. Ministers will also discuss EU-UK relations and the follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe. In public session, they will hear a presentation on the priorities of the Czech presidency and exchange views on legislative programming.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting (+/- 17.40).

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[General Affairs Council, 20 September - meeting page](#)

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

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

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October European Council

The Council will start preparations for the European Council meeting on 20-21 October by discussing an annotated draft agenda.

At the European Council meeting, leaders will revert to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its consequences. They will also address the economic situation, and assess the situation of energy prices and security of supply, market optimisation measures and progress with demand reduction, and decide on any further action that needs to be taken. As regards external relations, the European Council will address EU-Asia relations, prepare the EU-ASEAN summit and hold a strategic discussion on China. It will also take stock of preparations for the UN Climate Change conference in Sharm El-Sheikh (COP27) and for the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Montreal.

[Draft annotated agenda of the European Council meeting](#)

Annual rule of law dialogue

As part of the annual rule of law dialogue, ministers will hold a horizontal discussion focused 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, issued on 13 July 2022.

An annual political dialogue between member states in the Council to promote and safeguard the rule of law within the framework of the Treaties was initiated by the Council conclusions of 16 December 2014.

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 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 (Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden).

[2022 Rule of law report \(European Commission\)](#)

EU-UK relations

Ministers will assess the state of play of EU-UK relations. They will focus on the implementation of the Withdrawal Agreement, in particular the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

The EU has consistently reiterated that it stands ready to constructively discuss a negotiated solution within the Protocol. To this end, it has provided further detail on its proposals, which would reduce sanitary and phytosanitary checks by more than 80%, cut customs paperwork in half, simplify certification and allow the movement of otherwise restricted goods.

The EU's aim is to help minimise disruption caused by the withdrawal of the United Kingdom and to help facilitate the everyday life of citizens in Northern Ireland. This is why, a number of meetings between the European Union and the UK took place at technical and political level earlier this year, with the aim of reaching a joint solution within the Protocol to the practical difficulties in implementing it on the ground.

However, in June 2022, the UK government tabled legislation disapplying core elements of the Protocol, confirming its intention to unilaterally break international law. In reaction to this, the EU decided to continue the infringement procedure launched against the UK government in March 2021 and which had been put on hold in September 2021 to create the space to look for joint solutions. It also launched six new infringements against the UK for not complying with significant parts of the Protocol.

At the same time, the EU has called on the UK government to engage seriously and constructively to find joint solutions within the framework of the Protocol, which is the solution found to reconcile the challenges created by Brexit.

[Commission launches four new infringement procedures against the UK \(22 July 2022\)](#)

[Commission launches infringement proceedings against the UK and provides further details on possible solutions to facilitate the movement of goods \(15 June 2022\)](#)

[Remarks by Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič at the press conference on the Protocol of Ireland / Northern Ireland \(15 June 2022\)](#)

Conference on the Future of Europe

The Council will exchange views on the follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe.

The discussion will focus on the possible use of *passerelle* clauses included in the Treaties to switch from unanimity to qualified majority voting in the Council, and Conference-related initiatives highlighted in the State of the Union address of President Von der Leyen. Ministers will also have an opportunity to express their first comments as regards the Conference proposed measures where the Council could act on its own.

Since the conclusion of the work of the Conference on the Future of Europe on 9 May 2022, the focus is on the follow-up. Under the Joint Declaration, the three EU institutions undertook to examine swiftly how to follow up effectively to the final report of the Conference, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties.

The Council started discussions on the follow-up at its meetings on 23 May and 21 June 2022, based on a comprehensive preliminary technical assessment prepared by the General Secretariat of the Council.

The preliminary assessment outlines the extent to which EU institutions are already working on the proposals and related measures contained in the final report of the Conference and explains how they could be further implemented and on which legal basis. According to the assessment, a significant number of proposals and related measures are currently being addressed or are already addressed by the EU institutions. Where they could be further addressed, this could be done, in a large majority of cases, within the current Treaty framework.

The European Council addressed the outcome of the Conference during its meeting on 23 and 24 June 2022. EU leaders took note of the proposals outlined in the final report and stated that the EU institutions should ensure an effective follow-up to the report, each within their own sphere of competences and in accordance with the Treaties, and that citizens are informed about it.

At an informal meeting of Ministers for European Affairs in Prague on 15 July 2022, ministers discussed the implementation of the conclusions of the Conference, focusing mainly on cross-cutting proposals and measures.

The Council is expected to continue work on the follow-up in the coming months, both at the political and technical levels.

A feedback event for citizens is scheduled for 2 December 2022.

[Conference on the Future of Europe \(background information and timeline\)](#)

[Report on the final outcome of the Conference \(May 2022\)](#)

[Preliminary technical assessment of the proposals \(10 June 2022\)](#)

[European Council conclusions, 23-24 June 2022](#)

Legislative programming

During a public debate, the Commission will present the 2022 Strategic Foresight Report and its letter of intent, followed by an exchange of views. Ministers will be invited to comment on the envisaged initiatives presented in the letter of intent and highlight the initiatives that in their view are the most needed.

The aim of the discussion is to allow the Commission to hear from ministers in view of drawing up its 2023 work programme. The discussion will be summarised by the Presidency in a letter addressed to the Commission, which will serve as input into the annual programming exercise.

Once the Commission has adopted its work programme, the three EU institutions are set to agree, by the end of the year, on a joint declaration on legislative priorities for 2023-2024. The next joint declaration will cover two years, as the current legislature will end during the first semester of 2024 when the EP elections are scheduled to take place.

The 2022 Strategic Foresight Report was published by the Commission on 29 June and the letter of intent was circulated to delegations after its official submission by the Commission on 14 September.

[Presidency background note](#)

[2022 Strategic Foresight Report](#)

[Letter of intent](#)

Presidency priorities

During a public session, the Czech presidency will present its overall priorities, as well as those falling within the remit of the General Affairs Council.

[Czech presidency programme](#)
