



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹

Brussels, 16 November 2022

General Affairs Council Brussels, 18 November 2022

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

The meeting will begin at 10.00.

Ministers will focus on preparations for the December European Council, EU-UK relations, the Commission's work programme for 2023 and protection of EU values in Hungary.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting (+/- 17.15).

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[General Affairs Council, 18 November - meeting page](#)

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

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

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

December European Council

Ministers will discuss an annotated draft agenda for the European Council meeting to be held on 15 and 16 December.

At its meeting in December, the European Council will address Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine in all its dimensions and the EU's continued support to Ukraine. Leaders will also revert to the topics of energy and economy.

On security and defence, the European Council will discuss the implementation of the Strategic Compass and ways to further increase the EU's security and defence capacity. It will also give guidance on support to EU partners.

Leaders will also hold a strategic discussion on relations with the Southern Neighbourhood and may address other specific foreign policy issues in the light of events.

[Annotated draft agenda](#)

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 Commission will inform ministers about recent engagement between the EU and the UK to resolve the outstanding issues in the implementation of the Protocol.

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 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.

Unilateral action by the UK, such as the proposed Northern Ireland Protocol Bill, makes the work on possible solutions more difficult and undermines long-term legal certainty and predictability for the people and businesses in Northern Ireland. The EU has called on the UK to abandon this path and remains ready to react to any further developments in this direction.

[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 \(15 June 2022\)](#)

[EU relations with the United Kingdom \(background information\)](#)

Legislative programming

As part of the annual legislative programming exercise, ministers will hear a presentation by the Commission on its work programme for 2023, followed by an exchange of views. The discussion will take place in public session.

Ministers will be invited to outline their views on

- the policy areas or themes that should receive “priority treatment” during the next eighteen months, and
- the legislative proposals subject to the ordinary legislative procedure that should be emphasised before the end of the current legislative term.

The outcome of the exchange of views, together with the letter from the Presidency to the Commission following the discussion on legislative programming at the General Affairs Council meeting in September, will serve as a basis for engaging with the Commission and the Parliament in negotiations on the Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2023-2024.

The three EU institutions are set to agree the joint declaration by the end of the year. It 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.

[Commission work programme 2023](#)

[Background note for the discussion](#)

[Legislative programming - Letter from the Presidency to the Commission](#)

[Annual legislative programming process - timeline and steps](#)

Respect for EU values in Hungary

As part of the Article 7(1) TEU procedure regarding Hungary, the Council will hold a hearing. The aim of the hearing is to provide the Council with an up-to-date picture of the situation on the ground. Taking into account that significant developments may have taken place since the latest hearing of Hungary in May 2022, the hearing will cover all the issues raised in the reasoned proposal of the European Parliament.

The European Parliament adopted its reasoned proposal for a Council decision determining the existence of a clear risk of a serious breach by Hungary of the values on which the Union is founded on 12 September 2018. In its reasoned proposal, the Parliament describes a number of issues that, in its view, justify 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.

So far, four hearings of Hungary under Article 7(1) TEU have taken place: on 16 September 2019, 10 December 2019, 22 June 2021 and 23 May 2022.

[Reasoned European Parliament proposal triggering the Article 7\(1\) procedure for Hungary](#)

[Standard modalities for hearings under Article 7\(1\) TEU](#)