



General Affairs Council **Brussels, 13 December 2022**

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

The meeting will begin at 9.30.

Ministers will continue preparations for the European Council meeting on 15 December 2022.

They will seek to reach a general approach on the proposal for a regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.

The Council is expected to approve conclusions on the enlargement and stabilisation and association process.

Ministers will also hold a country-specific discussion in the framework of the annual rule of law dialogue and exchange views on follow-up to the feedback event of the Conference on the Future of Europe.

A press conference will take place at the end of the meeting (+/- 18.15).

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[General Affairs Council, 13 December - 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 continue preparations for the European Council meeting on 15 December 2022 by discussing draft conclusions.

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](#)

Transparency and targeting of political advertising

The Council will seek to reach a general approach on the proposal for a regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising.

The general approach will serve as a mandate for the Presidency to start negotiations with the European Parliament next year, once the Parliament has voted on its mandate.

The Commission presented the proposal for a regulation on the transparency and targeting of political advertising on 25 November 2021 in a context where political campaigning and advertising is increasingly taking place online and across national borders. The proposal is part of the Commission's 'democracy and integrity of elections' package aimed at protecting open democratic debate and the integrity of elections in the EU member states.

The draft Council mandate builds on the Commission proposal, strengthening the proposed rules in some cases, clarifying how they would be implemented and seeking to enhance legal certainty.

- [Draft negotiating mandate of the Council](#)
- [Electoral rights and democratic participation \(background information\)](#)

Enlargement and stabilisation and association process

Ministers will discuss the Council conclusions on enlargement and the EU-Western Balkans stabilisation and association process, with a view to their approval.

The discussion will take place in the light of the Commission's annual communication on EU enlargement policy and the reports on Montenegro, Serbia, Turkey, North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo*, published on 12 October 2022.

The Council will take stock of progress made and will discuss the conclusions, which are designed to assess the situation in each of the EU candidates and partners, set out guidelines on reform priorities, and reaffirm the Council's commitment to the EU's enlargement policy. In line with the revised enlargement methodology endorsed by the Council in 2020, a strong focus is put on fundamental reforms in the areas of the rule of law, fundamental rights, economic development and competitiveness, strengthening of democratic institutions and public administration reform. A

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

solid track record of reform implementation and concrete and tangible results in these crucial areas are essential, with particular regard to the overall pace of the accession negotiations.

The draft Council conclusions have been prepared against the backdrop of major developments on the EU enlargement agenda in 2022.

Following the EU membership applications submitted by Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia in spring 2022 and the European Commission's opinions on these applications, on 23 June 2022 the European Council recognised the European perspective of Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. It decided to grant candidate status to Ukraine and Moldova and expressed its readiness to grant candidate status to Georgia once the priorities specified in the Commission's opinion on Georgia's membership application have been addressed.

The European Council also expressed its full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans and called for the acceleration of the accession process. Building on the revised methodology, the European Council invited the Commission, the High Representative and the Council to further advance the gradual integration between the EU and the region already during the enlargement process itself in a reversible and merit-based manner. The EU leaders expressed their readiness to grant candidate status to Bosnia and Herzegovina and to that aim invited the Commission to report without delay to the Council on implementation of the 14 key priorities set out in its opinion with special attention to those which constitute a substantial set of reforms in order for the European Council to revert to decide on the matter.

On 19 July 2022, the first intergovernmental conferences on accession negotiations took place with North Macedonia and Albania, opening a new phase in their respective accession processes.

As part of its 2022 enlargement package, the Commission recommended that Bosnia and Herzegovina be granted candidate status, on the understanding that a number of steps are taken in order to strengthen the rule of law, the fight against corruption and organised crime, migration management and fundamental rights.

In the Tirana declaration issued at end of the EU-Western Balkans summit on 6 December 2022, the EU reconfirmed its full and unequivocal commitment to the EU membership perspective of the Western Balkans and called for the acceleration of the accession process, based upon credible reforms by partners, fair and rigorous conditionality and the principle of own merits, which is in our mutual interest.

[European Commission's 2022 enlargement package](#)

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

[EU-Western Balkans summit in Tirana](#)

[EU enlargement policy \(background information\)](#)

Annual rule of law dialogue

As part of the annual rule of law dialogue, ministers will hold a country-specific discussion. They will focus on key developments in Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden.

This will be the fifth round of country-specific discussions after the ones in November 2020, April and November 2021, and April 2022, covering 20 member states overall.

This exercise is part of the commitment to make the dialogue stronger and more structured, while fully respecting the principles of objectivity, non-discrimination and equal treatment of all member states. The objective is to have a constructive and open exchange of comments and best practices.

Ministers will devote around half an hour to each of the five member states, starting with a short introduction by the Commission based on the abstracts and the main findings of the respective country-specific chapter of its 2022 rule of law report. Then, each of the five delegations may wish to present key developments and the particular aspects of its national rule of law framework. This

will be followed by a round of comments in which other delegations can share their experiences and best practices in relation to the developments mentioned.

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

EU's legislative priorities for 2023-2024

The Council is expected to discuss the Joint Declaration on the EU legislative priorities for 2023-2024 during a public session.

The Joint Declaration is negotiated between the Commission, the Parliament and the Council Presidency, accompanied by the three incoming Presidencies. It outlines the key shared policy objectives and legislative priorities of the three EU institutions.

This instrument was set up by the Interinstitutional Agreement on Better Law-Making signed in April 2016. Its purpose is to strengthen the EU institutions' cooperation to tackle the big challenges which lie ahead.

[Commission work programme 2023](#)

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

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

European Semester 2023

The Czech presidency and the incoming Swedish presidency will present the roadmap for European Semester 2023.

The objective of the roadmap is to ensure that all relevant Council configurations, and their preparatory bodies, work in a coordinated and consistent manner towards a thorough preparation of the European Council debates on the European Semester and to enable Coreper and the General Affairs Council to oversee the process.

The roadmap is divided into two phases: the first, in more detail, covers the period up to the March European Council, and the second, more indicative, covers the period between the European Council meetings in March and June 2023.

The European Semester provides a framework for the coordination of economic policies across the European Union. It allows EU countries to discuss their economic and budget plans and monitor progress at specific times throughout the year.

[European Semester 2023 - Roadmap](#)

[European Semester \(background information\)](#)

Conference on the Future of Europe

Ministers will exchange views on follow-up to the feedback event of the Conference on the Future of Europe, which took place on 2 December.

The event featured an interactive exchange between the EU institutions and citizens who participated in the European Citizens' Panels, as well as representatives of National Citizens' Panels and events, on follow-up to the Conference and its proposals.

In the Joint Declaration on the Conference on the Future of Europe, the three EU institutions took a commitment to follow up effectively on the final outcome of the Conference in accordance with their respective competences under the EU Treaties. The feedback event allowed the EU institutions to inform citizens on the follow-up process, to answer to their questions and to listen to their comments.

The Council was represented at the feedback event by Minister Bek on behalf of the Czech presidency. He stressed the Council's commitment to ensuring the best possible follow-up to the Conference and outlined the work that has been undertaken in the Council in this regard.

[Conference on the Future of Europe: feedback event with citizens \(Presidency press release, 2 December 2022\)](#)

[Updated preliminary technical assessment of the proposals, 30 November 2022](#)

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