



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹

Brussels, 7 July 2023

General Affairs Council Brussels, 10 July 2023

Chair: Pascual Ignacio NAVARRO RÍOS, Spanish State Secretary for the European Union

The meeting will begin at 10.00.

The Spanish presidency will present the priorities for its term of office.

The Council will hold a policy debate on the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027.

The presidency will give a presentation on the planned evaluation of the Council's annual rule of law dialogue.

Under 'Any other business', the Commission will present its 2023 rule of law report and provide information on the proposed interinstitutional ethics body.

Over lunch, ministers will discuss the Commission's 2023 Strategic Foresight Report with Commission Vice-President Maroš Šefčovič.

A press conference will take place after the meeting (+/- 14:45).

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[General Affairs Council, 10 July 2023 - 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.

Presidency priorities

In public session, the Spanish presidency will present the priorities for its term of office. Ministers will have an opportunity to present their comments.

The Spanish presidency has established four priorities for its semester:

- reindustrialising the EU and ensuring its open strategic autonomy
- advancing in the green transition and in environmental adaptation
- promoting greater social and economic justice
- strengthening European unity

As regards the General Affairs Council configuration, the main lines of action include:

- various initiatives to bring Europe closer to citizens
- taking forward the accession process of candidate countries
- continuing with follow-up to the Conference on the Future of Europe, including discussions on the extension of qualified majority voting, and preparing the EU for future enlargement
- developing relations with the UK, whilst ensuring compliance with the existing agreements
- continuing work on rule of law related issues, including an evaluation of the Council's rule of law dialogue
- taking forward legislative work to strengthen European democracy
- addressing the EU's demographic challenges

[Spanish presidency priorities](#)

[Spanish presidency programme](#)

EU's long-term budget

The Council will hold a policy debate on the mid-term revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2021-2027, presented by the Commission on 20 June 2023. This point will also be taken in public session.

The Commission will present its package to the Council. Ministers will have an opportunity to provide their initial reactions.

The revision of the MFF proposed by the Commission includes most notably the following elements:

- the setting up of a Ukraine facility, of €50 billion for 2024-2027, to address Ukraine's immediate needs, recovery and modernisation on its path towards the EU
- €15 billion to help the EU address internal and external dimensions of migration, needs arising from the global consequences of Russia's war of aggression in Ukraine, and stronger partnerships with key third countries
- a Strategic Technologies for Europe Platform (STEP) to promote the EU's long-term competitiveness on critical technologies
- a mechanism to cater for the higher NextGenerationEU funding costs due to the surge in interest rates

Intensive work has started at technical level in the Council to examine the package, including the proposed revision of the MFF regulation and the legislative proposals for the Ukraine facility and for STEP.

At the meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 14 July, finance ministers will exchange views on financial support to Ukraine in the context of the mid-term revision of the MFF. To be adopted, the revision of the MFF regulation requires unanimity in the Council and the consent of the European Parliament. The proposals for STEP and for the Ukraine facility fall under the ordinary legislative procedure but depend on agreement on the MFF regulation.

[Revision of the MFF 2021-2027 \(European Commission\)](#)

[Commission communication and legislative proposals \(European Commission\)](#)

Evaluation of the annual rule of law dialogue

The presidency will present its plans regarding work on the evaluation of the Council's annual rule-of-law dialogue, as laid down in the presidency conclusions of 2019. The aim is to reach consensus on a set of conclusions on the evaluation before the end of the year.

The Council's annual rule of law dialogue was initiated with Council conclusions agreed on 16 December 2014. The dialogue was evaluated in 2016 and 2019.

The presidency conclusions of 19 November 2019 provided guidance on a new, more structured approach to the dialogue. They laid the basis for a yearly stocktaking exercise focused on the rule-of-law situation in each member state and in the EU, making use of the Commission's annual rule-of-law reports.

The aim of the new approach is to enhance the preventive and constructive nature of the tool. It allows 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.

Since the second half of 2020, three horizontal discussions on the rule of law situation in the EU have taken place in the General Affairs Council, as well as country-specific discussions covering all the member states. On 21 March 2023, a second cycle of country-specific discussions started.

[Conclusions of the Council of the EU and the Member States meeting within the Council on ensuring respect for the rule of law, 16 December 2014](#)

[Presidency conclusions - Evaluation of the annual rule of law dialogue, 19 November 2019](#)

Any other business

- Rule of law report 2023

Under 'Any other business', the Commission will present its rule of law report 2023, published on 5 July 2023.

The report, including its 27 country chapters, examines developments across all member states in four key areas for the rule of law: the justice system, the anti-corruption framework, media pluralism and freedom, and other institutional issues related to checks and balances.

As in 2022, the report also includes recommendations for member states. The recommendations either build on last year's recommendations, where they were not fully implemented, or address new challenges.

According to the Commission's assessment, 65% of last year's recommendations have been fully or partially addressed by member states within one year only, marking a significant positive development. At the same time, systemic concerns remain in some member states.

The Council is expected to hold a more detailed discussion on the horizontal chapter of the Commission's rule of law report in September, while a country-specific discussion is scheduled for October.

[2023 Rule of law report](#)

- **Interinstitutional ethics body**

The Commission will also provide information on its proposal for an interinstitutional ethics body, presented on 8 June 2023.

According to the proposal, the new body would have three main tasks:

- to develop common minimum standards applicable to the members of participating EU institutions and bodies
- to exchange views on each institution's internal rules in light of the standards to allow them to learn and benefit from each other's experience
- to promote a common culture of ethics for the members of all EU institutions and facilitate the public understanding of this framework

The new ethics body would not deal with individual investigations and should not interfere with, or limit in any way, the investigations of existing bodies, such as the European Public Prosecutor's Office, the European Anti-Fraud Office or the European Ombudsman.

In order to establish the new body, the Commission has proposed to conclude a draft agreement between all EU institutions and advisory bodies mentioned in Article 13 of the Treaty on the European Union, including the European Council and the Council.

Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová has invited representatives from the institutions and bodies concerned to a kick-off political meeting on 7 July.

[EU Ethics Body \(European Commission\)](#)

[Commission communication and draft agreement establishing an interinstitutional Ethics Body](#)