



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹

Brussels, 18 September 2023

General Affairs Council Brussels, 19 September 2023

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

The meeting will begin at 10.00.

The Council will discuss, with a view to adoption, a request by Spain to amend Regulation No 1/1958 to include Catalan, Basque and Galician in the EU's language regime.

Following the State of the Union address by President von der Leyen, ministers will exchange views on the Commission's 'letter of intent' setting out the main elements guiding the preparation of the 2024 Commission work programme.

The Council will take stock of rule of law developments across the EU and exchange views on the evaluation of the Council's annual rule of law dialogue.

Ministers will also start preparations for the European Council meeting on 26-27 October.

Over an informal breakfast, they will exchange views with Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister for European and Euro-Atlantic Integration Olha Stefanishyna.

Over a working lunch, they will focus on the future of Europe.

A press conference will take place after the meeting (+/- 16:30).

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[General Affairs Council, 19 September 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.

Catalan, Basque and Galician

The Council will discuss, with a view to adoption, a request by Spain regarding the inclusion of Catalan, Basque and Galician in Regulation No 1/1958, which governs the EU's language regime.

The request was notified to the Council presidency on 17 August 2023, in a letter by Spain's Minister for Foreign Affairs, the European Union and Cooperation. In this letter, the Spanish government also requested the inclusion of the matter on the agenda of the General Affairs Council meeting of 19 September 2023.

On 3 September 2023, Spain circulated a proposal for amendment of Regulation No 1/1958.

The EU has currently 24 official languages. The use of Catalan, Basque and Galician is governed by administrative arrangements between Spain and individual EU institutions and advisory bodies. Such arrangements allow, among other things, Spanish citizens to use these languages in their written communication with the EU institutions and advisory bodies, under the conditions defined in the respective agreements. The translations to and from Catalan, Basque and Galician are provided by the Spanish government.

Amending Regulation No 1/1958 requires unanimity.

[Request by Spain for modification of Regulation No 1 determining the languages to be used by the European Economic Community](#)

Legislative work

During a public debate, ministers will exchange views on the Commission's letter of intent, presented on 13 September 2023 and setting out the main elements guiding the preparation of the 2024 Commission work programme.

Ministers will be invited to indicate whether they agree with the envisaged initiatives 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 2024 work programme. The discussion will be summarised by the Presidency in a letter addressed to the Commission.

[Presidency background note](#)

[2023 Strategic Foresight Report](#)

[Letter of intent](#)

Annual rule of law dialogue

Ministers will have two agenda points related to the Council's annual rule of law dialogue.

- Horizontal discussion

They will hold a horizontal discussion on key developments related to the rule of law in EU member states, making use of the Commission's 2023 rule of law report.

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 country-specific discussion at the meeting of the General Affairs Council in October, focusing on key developments in Denmark, Germany, Estonia, Ireland and Greece.

[2023 Rule of law report \(European Commission\)](#)

- Evaluation

Ministers will also exchange views on the evaluation of the Council's annual rule of law dialogue.

The discussion will feed into the preparation of a set of conclusions on the evaluation. The aim is to reach a consensus on the conclusions before the end of the year.

The Council's annual rule of law dialogue, which was initiated by the Council conclusions agreed on 16 December 2014, has been earlier evaluated in 2016 and 2019.

The presidency conclusions of 19 November 2019 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 this 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.

The 2019 conclusions also laid down an evaluation of the experience acquired based on the dialogue by the end of 2023.

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

[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](#)

[Rule of law \(background information\)](#)

October European Council

The Council will start preparations for the European Council meeting on 26-27 October 2023 by discussing an annotated draft agenda.

The European Council will take stock of the latest developments in Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and review all aspects of the EU's response.

Leaders will discuss the proposed revision of the Multiannual Financial Framework for 2021-2027.

The European Council will assess progress in boosting Europe's competitiveness, with a particular focus on industrial policy and energy.

Leaders will hold a strategic discussion on the external dimension of migration, with a particular focus on cooperation with third countries.

They will also take stock of preparations for the UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai (COP28).

In the light of events, the European Council may address specific foreign policy issues (such as the situation in the Sahel).

[Annotated draft agenda](#)