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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Council
Subject:	Implementation of the Strategic Agenda - Presidency discussion paper for the General Affairs Council on 18 July 2019

INTRODUCTION

The June 2019 **European Council** adopted the EU's Strategic Agenda 2019-2024. It is intended to guide the work of the Institutions in the next five years, focusing on four main priority areas.

As stated in the Strategic Agenda, the EU must give itself the means to match its ambitions, attain its objectives and carry through its policies.

The Council needs to do its part to turn the new priorities into reality and to ensure that the EU seizes its potential and meets citizens' expectations. This will require:

- integrating the priorities of the new Strategic Agenda into the Council's work,
- revisiting the working methods of the Council, and
- respecting the crosscutting principles that guide the Council's work.

Integrating the priorities of the new Strategic Agenda into the Council's work

The four main priorities of the Strategic Agenda are:

1. Protecting citizens and freedoms
2. Developing a strong and vibrant economic base
3. Building a climate-neutral, green, fair and social Europe
4. Promoting European interests and values on the global stage.

The Finnish Presidency will start integrating these priorities into the Council's work. It will ensure that the priorities are discussed in relevant Council configurations and, in certain cases, informal ministerial meetings. The annex to this paper provides a tentative indication as to when and in which configuration the main issues will be examined.

The **General Affairs Council** will play a coordinating role in this process. The exchange of views at its meeting on 18 July will contribute to promoting a comprehensive approach.

Revisiting the working methods of the Council

Under the Strategic Agenda, each institution should revisit its working methods and reflect on the best way to fulfil its role under the Treaties.

We need to ensure that the Council functions in a way that supports the successful implementation of the new priorities. It must be able to deal with multidimensional challenges and opportunities in a comprehensive manner.

Accordingly, the Finnish Presidency has set out a number of themes to be examined by Coreper, on the basis of Presidency non-papers, over the coming months. At the end of this process, the Presidency will present a summary report, which will include recommendations with a view to relevant decisions and other concrete measures.

Respecting the crosscutting principles that guide the Council's work

The last chapter of the Strategic Agenda ("Delivering our priorities") lays out several important principles, which should guide the Council's work.

The Institutions will work in accordance with the spirit and the letter of the Treaties. They will respect the principles of democracy, rule of law, transparency and equality between citizens and between Member States. The Strategic Agenda notes that good governance also depends on the rigorous implementation and enforcement of agreed policies and rules, which must be closely monitored.

In line with the Strategic Agenda, better regulation, including the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality, should remain at the core of the Council's work. It is also important to engage with citizens, civil society and social partners, as well as with regional and local actors.

Way ahead

As stated in the Strategic Agenda, the European Council will follow the implementation of the priorities closely and will define further general political directions and priorities as necessary. The European Council will discuss the follow-up to the Strategic Agenda in October 2019.

The General Affairs Council will revert to the implementation of the Strategic Agenda in October and December as part of preparing and following up on European Council meetings. The Finnish Prime Minister shall report to the European Council on the progress achieved in the Council in October and December.

Where necessary, documents on the way forward within the Council on key issues will be elaborated by the end of the year.

In the light of the above, Ministers are kindly invited to consider the following questions:

- 1. In your view, how can the Council best ensure efficient implementation of the Strategic Agenda, taking into account the multidimensional challenges and opportunities ahead of us?*
- 2. What could the Council do to further mainstream the crosscutting principles laid out in chapter V of the Strategic Agenda ("Delivering our priorities"), notably increasing transparency and bringing the EU closer to the citizens?*

The Presidency invites participants to limit their interventions to a maximum of three minutes.

**Tentative indication as to when and in which Council configuration
the main issues under the Strategic Agenda will be examined**

PRIORITY 1: PROTECTING CITIZENS AND FREEDOMS

*The broad issues falling under this priority heading include upholding the **rule of law**; developing the EU's comprehensive **migration policy**; fighting **terrorism and cross-border crime**; improving cooperation and **information-sharing**; and protecting against **malicious cyber activities, hybrid threats** and disinformation. These policy areas will be addressed in various Council configurations. Moreover, the Presidency intends to hold a series of debates at Council and committee level on the future of the area of freedom, security and justice in order to identify the building blocks for **strategic guidelines** to be adopted by the **European Council** under Article 68 TFEU.*

Rule of law

- *July - December GAC*: Rule of law features on all agendas. The Council's rule of law dialogue will be evaluated in *November GAC*, based on a discussion and a questionnaire launched in *September GAC*. Discussion also continues on establishing a well-balanced mechanism to protect the EU budget in case of rule of law deficiencies.
- *July Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs*: debate on the future of EU justice with a focus on strengthening the rule of law - independence, quality and efficiency of national justice systems and the importance of a fair trial.
- *December JHA Council*: Presidency report on the rule of law-related discussions in the justice field.
- *10-11 September*: Presidency Conference (Helsinki) on "How to ensure the resilience of our societies in a *changing* European landscape - The interaction between democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights", to be reported on at the September GAC and at the October JHA Council.

Criminal justice and cooperation in criminal matters

- *October JHA Council*: e-evidence; negotiations for a EU-US agreement on cross-border access to e-evidence; (poss.) partial general approach on the digitalisation of judicial cooperation; setting up of the European Public Prosecutors Office; environmental criminal law; 2018 annual report of Eurojust; strengthening mutual trust to support the principle of mutual recognition.
- *December JHA Council*: protection of victims of crime; (poss.) policy debate on the future of digital criminal justice.

Civil law

- *October JHA Council*: (poss.) policy debate on Better regulation, Quality of Legislation and Effective Implementation.

Migration

- *July Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs*: debate on the future of EU migration *policy* focused on the interaction between Schengen, asylum and return.
- *October JHA Council*: exchange of views on the state of play. Ministers will also receive information *from* the Presidency on the implementation of the Regulation amending the European Border and Coast Guard Regulation.
- *24-25 October*: Presidency Conference (Helsinki) on "From Tampere 20 to Tampere 2.0 – Towards a new programme for EU migration and asylum policies".
- *December JHA Council*: policy debate and wrap up of the reflection process on the future of EU migration and asylum policy.

Internal security/terrorism

- *July Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs*: debate on the future of internal *security* with a focus on operational cooperation and on the role of EU agencies.
- *October JHA Council*: policy debates on new technologies, on hybrid threats and on extreme right *terrorism*.
- *December JHA Council*: policy debate and wrap up of the reflection process on the future of EU internal *security*; *conclusions* on Europol's cooperation with strategic partners; policy debate / progress report on the Regulation on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online.

Information-sharing

- *December JHA Council*: (poss.) provisional agreement on ETIAS' consequential amendments; exchange of *views* on the implementation of large scale EU-information systems and interoperability between EU-information systems.

Hybrid threats

- *July Informal meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs*: scenario-based policy discussion on hybrid threats.
- *22 July First meeting of the new horizontal Working Party on Enhancing Resilience and Countering Hybrid Threats*.
- *August Informal meeting of Defence Ministers and Gymnich*: discussion on hybrid threats.
- *September Informal meeting of Ministers for Economic and Financial Affairs*: discussion on resilience of *financial* markets and the role of the financial sector in countering hybrid threats.
- *7- 8 October JHA Council*: discussion on internal security and hybrid threats.
- *6 November: Seminar* organised by the Presidency on "Critical infrastructure and hybrid threats" (Brussels).
- *10 December GAC*: exchange of views on responses to hybrid threats, including disinformation; adoption of Council conclusions on the way forward in countering hybrid threats.

PRIORITY 2: DEVELOPING A STRONG AND VIBRANT ECONOMIC BASE

*The main issues under this heading include renewing the basis for long-term sustainable and inclusive growth; ensuring the resilience and international role of the **euro**; integrated approach to deepening and strengthening the **Single Market**; designing a modern EU **industrial policy**; addressing the **digital revolution and artificial intelligence**; ensuring fair and effective **taxation**; investing in **skills and education**; fostering **entrepreneurship and innovation**; ensuring a level playing field in the area of **trade** and ensuring **fair competition**. These policy areas will be addressed in various Council configurations:*

Single Market and industrial policy

- *July Informal Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Competitiveness*: Sustainable growth – Smart solutions for a *competitive* and climate-neutral Europe; – Integration of Single Market, Dynamic Digital Economy and Modern Industrial Policy.

- *July Informal meeting of Environment/Climate Ministers*: potential of circular economy solutions and discussion on the next steps for a possible EU circular economy 2.0.
- *September COMPET Council*: Presentation by the Commission of its "Competitiveness Check-up".
- *September COMPET Council*: Policy debates on a vision for a long-term strategy on sustainable growth.
- *October ENVI Council*: Conclusions on the circular economy follow-up.
- *November COMPET Council*: state of play of the long-term action plan for the Single Market and industrial policies.
- *November*: Commission to present its communication on fair competition within the Single Market and *globally*.

Digital policies

- *22 October*: Presidency Conference on Digital Government (Helsinki).
- *25-26 November*: Presidency Conference on the Data Economy (Helsinki).
- *November COMPET Council*: policy debate on "Governance for a competitive, secure, inclusive and ethical digital economy".
- *November EYCS Council*: Discussion on the education and training-related aspects of artificial intelligence.
- *December TTE Council*: policy debate on the next steps in the data economy.
- *December TTE Council*: exchange of views on the cybersecurity of 5G networks.
- *December JHA Council*: discussion on the judicial aspects of artificial intelligence.

Research and innovation

- *July Informal Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Competitiveness*: Sustainable growth – Research and innovation as drivers for sustainable growth.
- *September COMPET Council*: policy debate on Horizon Europe package: Synergies with other programmes.
- *November COMPET Council*: Conclusions on the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy.
- *November COMPET Council*: partial general approach or progress report on the Regulation establishing the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) and the Decision on the EIT's strategic innovation agenda.

Skills and education

- *October EPSCO Council*: policy debate on "Matching skills and labour market needs in the new world of work".
- *November Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council with Finance Ministers*: debate on pursuing *effectiveness*, efficiency and quality of education and training.
- *November EYCS Council*:
 - Conclusions on lifelong learning.
 - Council resolution on supporting future-oriented education and training systems in the context of the European Education Area.
 - Conclusions on youth work and the development of their skills.

Economic and Monetary Union

- *November ECOFIN Council*: state of play of the Budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness, as well as pending financial services legislative proposals.
- *December ECOFIN Council*: strengthening of the Banking Union.

Taxation

- *November ECOFIN Council*: digital taxation and other taxation issues (including a common corporate tax base and VAT-related items).
- *December ECOFIN Council*: report to the European Council on tax issues, and policy debate on the Definitive VAT System Directive.

PRIORITY 3: BUILDING A CLIMATE-NEUTRAL, GREEN, FAIR AND SOCIAL EUROPE

*Policy objectives within this heading include the EU leading the way on **climate change**; promoting **sustainable** agriculture; paying keen attention to **social issues** and addressing **inequalities**. These policy areas will be addressed in various Council configurations:*

Climate

- *July Informal meeting of Ministers Responsible for Competitiveness*: Sustainable growth – Smart solutions for a competitive and climate-neutral Europe.

- *July Informal meeting of Environment/Climate Ministers*: working sessions on a) EU climate ambition and *messages* and b) enhancing global ambition and c) potential of circular economy solutions and discussion on the next steps for a possible EU circular economy 2.0.
- *July EPSCO Council*: employment aspects of the EU's strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy.
- *July AGRIFISH Council*: *policy debate on environment and climate aspects of CAP reform*.
- *September TTE Council*: transport aspects of the EU's strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy; exchange of views on the way forward for the energy sector beyond 2030.
- *September COMPET Council*: policy debates on a long-term strategy on sustainable growth.
- *September Informal meeting of Agriculture Ministers*: policy debate on climate change adaptation and on the role of carbon sequestration in agriculture.
- *October Environment Council*: policy debate on the EU's strategic long-term vision for a climate neutral economy; conclusions on the preparations of the COP 25; Conclusions on the circular economy follow-up.
- *30-31 October*: International conference "Greener finance for Sustainable future", co-hosted by the Bank of Finland and the Finnish Ministry of Finance (Helsinki).
- *November COMPET Council*: Conclusions on the updated EU Bioeconomy Strategy.
- *November ECOFIN Council*: conclusions on climate finance for the COP25 *December European Council*: provide guidance on the EU's long-term strategy since the EU, under the Paris Agreement, is to submit its long-term strategy for greenhouse gas emission reductions to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) by 2020.
- *Council in early 2020*: adopt the EU long-term strategy, to be proposed by the Commission in early 2020 on the basis of the *European Council* guidance.
- *December ENVI Council*: Conclusions on post-2020 global biodiversity framework.

Sustainable agriculture

- *July-December AGRIFISH Council*: sustainable agriculture and the post-2020 CAP reform package.
- *July AGRIFISH Council*: environmental and climate aspects of the CAP post-2020.
- *September Informal meeting of Agriculture Ministers*: carbon sequestration potential of agriculture *and* forestry.

Biodiversity

- *December ENVI Council: Conclusions on post-2020 global biodiversity framework.*

Energy Union

- *September TTE Council: Communication on the draft national energy and climate plans and united delivering the Energy Union and climate action.*

Social issues

- *July, October and December EPSCO Councils: the "economy of wellbeing" (July and October) and its health aspects (December), international developments in employment and social policies (July), (possibly) more efficient decision-making in social policy (October), the future of work and EU labour law, and conclusions on the integration into the labour market of people having difficulties finding a job (December), regular review of social and employment topics under the permanent "European Semester" item, and possible conclusions on enhancing occupational health and safety in the EU (December).*
- *16 October: Tripartite social summit, debrief to the EPSCO Council on 24 October*

Equality

- *23-24 September: Presidency Conference (Brussels) on "Advancing LGBTI Equality in the EU".*
- *October EPSCO Council: policy debate on "Strategic pathways for strengthening anti-discrimination measures".*
- *December EPSCO Council: debate on "The future of gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the EU", and conclusions on gender equality after 2020 ("Beijing +25").*

PRIORITY 4: PROMOTING EUROPE'S INTERESTS AND VALUES ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

The Strategic Agenda calls for making the EU more assertive and effective in defending its interests and values, more united in the stances we take, and more determined and effective in exerting our influence. The Strategic Agenda also calls for the EU's CFSP and CSDP to become more responsive and active and better linked to the other strands of external relations. It also highlights the need for the EU to take greater responsibility for its own security and defence.

*Policy objectives within this heading include upholding **multilateralism and the global rules-based international order**; promoting **democracy, human rights, sustainable development and implementing the 2030 Agenda**, upholding the **European perspective** for European States able and willing to join; pursuing an ambitious **neighbourhood policy** and an ambitious and robust **trade policy**; developing a comprehensive **partnership with Africa** and a more responsive and active **CFSP and CSDP**. These issues will be addressed in various Council configurations:*

Enlargement

- *October GAC: exchange of views and adopt conclusions on "Enlargement and the Stabilisation and Association Process for Albania and the Republic of North Macedonia".*

Trade

- *November Foreign Affairs Council (Trade): trade relations including WTO, bilateral and regional trade relations, implementation of FTAs, EU-US and EU-China trade relations.*

Development

- *October ECOFIN: Presentation of the report by the High-level Group of Wise Persons on the European Financial Architecture for Development and exchange of views.*

Comprehensive partnership with Africa

- *November Foreign Affairs Council (Development): discussion on a new Post-Cotonou agreement.*
- *December Foreign Affairs Council: discussion on EU-African Union relations.*

CFSP and CSDP

November Foreign Affairs Council (Defence): exchange of views on security and defence, on EU-NATO relations and on CSDP missions and operations.