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OUTCOME OF THE COUNCIL MEETING

3820th Council meeting

General Affairs

Luxembourg, 19 October 2021

President **Gašper Dovžan**
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P R E S S

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- Where declarations, conclusions or resolutions have been formally adopted by the Council, this is indicated in the heading for the item concerned and the text is placed between quotation marks.
- Documents for which references are given in the text are available on the Council's internet site (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu>).
- Acts adopted with statements for the Council minutes which may be released to the public are indicated by an asterisk; these statements are available on the Council's internet site or may be obtained from the Press Office.

ITEMS DEBATED**GENERAL AFFAIRS****European Council on 21-22 October**

The General Affairs Council exchanged views on the draft conclusions of the European Council meeting to be held on 21-22 October.

EU leaders will meet in Brussels to discuss COVID-19, digital transformation, energy prices, migration, trade and external relations.

The European Council will take stock of the epidemiological situation following the significant progress brought by the vaccination campaigns against **COVID-19** around Europe. Leaders are also expected to discuss free movement and travel, as well as prevention, preparedness and the response to future health emergencies. International solidarity and the need to ensure access to vaccines for all will also be addressed.

Concerning Europe's **digital transformation**, leaders are expected to review and call for progress on the digital agenda and key legislative files and highlight the importance of digital connectivity and global partnerships.

EU leaders will discuss the recent hike in **energy prices** and assess what measures can be taken at both national and European levels to address the impact of this price increase.

Regarding **migration**, the European Council will assess the implementation of its conclusions of June 2021.

EU leaders will also hold a strategic discussion on **trade**.

With regard to **external relations**, the European Council is expected to take stock of preparations for:

- the ASEM summit to be held virtually on 25-26 November 2021
- the Eastern Partnership summit on 15 December 2021
- the meeting of COP26 on climate change on 31 October-12 November 2021 in Glasgow
- the meeting of COP15 on biological diversity in Kunming

In the light of events, the European Council may also address other specific foreign policy issues.

European Council on 21-22 October

Annual rule of law dialogue

In the framework of the **annual rule of law dialogue**, ministers held a horizontal discussion focusing on developments in the EU structured around four pillars: justice systems; the anti-corruption framework; media pluralism; and other institutional issues linked to checks and balances.

The discussion centred on the rule of law **report by the European Commission** published on 20 July 2021.

The **General Affairs Council** in November will cover country-specific aspects for five Member States (Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania).

On 16 December 2014, the **General Affairs Council** adopted conclusions that established an annual political dialogue among all member states within the **European Council** to promote and safeguard the rule of law within the framework of the treaties.

This dialogue is currently organised around two different types of political discussions: a horizontal discussion covering general rule-of-law developments in the EU; and country-specific discussions addressing individual key developments in each Member State.

The aim of this structured approach is to enhance the preventive and constructive nature of the tool, allowing 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.

[2021 Rule of law report \(European Commission\)](#)

Conference on the Future of Europe

The presidency informed participants about the state of play of the Conference on the Future of Europe following the first European **citizens' panels**.

All four panels have already had their inaugural sessions. The fourth panel, focusing on the role of the EU in the world and on migration, met for the first time on 15-17 October. The first sessions of each panel served to identify streams and subtopics that participants will discuss in greater depth in subsequent sessions.

The presidency also provided updates on the preparations for the next **plenary** of the conference, which will take place in Strasbourg on 23 October.

The Conference on the Future of Europe is aimed at involving citizens in a wide-ranging debate on Europe's future over the coming decade and beyond, including in the light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On 10 March, the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission signed a joint declaration that sets out the objectives, structure, scope and timing of the conference.

The Conference on the Future of Europe was formally inaugurated on 9 May in Strasbourg, following the launch of the conference's digital platform on 19 April.

[Conference on the Future of Europe: citizens in the spotlight](#)

[Conference on the Future of Europe: launch of the citizens' platform on 19 April](#)

[Joint Declaration](#)

Other business

The presidency informed participants of the outcome of the international conference 'Illusive Reconciliation: Transitional Processes in Central and Eastern Europe in a Comparative Perspective'.

[Presidency press release on the international conference](#)

OTHER ITEMS APPROVED

JUSTICE AND HOME AFFAIRS

Joint Cyber Unit initiative

The Council today adopted conclusions inviting the EU and member states to further develop the EU cybersecurity crisis management framework, including by exploring the potential of a joint cyber unit ([12534/21](#)).

For more details, see the [press release](#).

Schengen evaluation

The Council adopted an implementing decision setting out a recommendation on addressing the deficiencies identified in the 2020 evaluation of Austria on the application of the Schengen acquis in the field of police cooperation ([12987/21](#)).

ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

Council Decision approving the external auditors of the Banca d'Italia

The Council adopted the decision to approve Deloitte & Touche S.p.A. as the external auditors of the Banca d'Italia for the financial years 2021 to 2022 ([11971/21](#); [11970/21](#)).
