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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Legislative programming: Annual and multiannual programming - Exchange of views

Introduction

1. In 2016, the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission agreed to reinforce the Union's annual and multiannual programming through the interinstitutional agreement on better law-making¹ (IIA-BLM, paragraphs 4-11). Also in 2016, the Council approved its practical arrangements on annual programming².
2. With regard to multiannual programming, it is foreseen that upon the appointment of a new Commission, in order to facilitate longer-term planning, the three Institutions will exchange views on the principal policy objectives and priorities for the new term. They will, on the Commission's initiative and as appropriate, draw up joint conclusions to be signed by the Presidents of the three Institutions.
3. With regard to annual programming, the Commission should engage in a dialogue with the European Parliament and the Council, both before and after the adoption of its annual work programme. Following the adoption of the Commission work programme and drawing on it, the three Institutions will exchange views on initiatives for the coming year and agree on a joint declaration on annual programming, to be signed by the Presidents of the three Institutions.

¹ OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, p. 1

² 6879/16

4. The Council aims to ensure that the three Institutions, each acting within their own powers and prerogatives, work effectively together to deliver on the Strategic Agenda 2024–2029 agreed by the European Council in June 2024 which guides the work of the Institutions over the next five years.
5. At its meeting on 17 December 2024, the Council (General Affairs) held an exchange of views on programming with the Commission. A summary of the exchange of views and of the written comments received after the meeting was reflected in a letter³ by the President of the Council to the President of the Commission.

The Commission work programme for 2025

6. The Commission work programme for 2025⁴ encompasses seven headline ambitions and 12 policy objectives, identifying 45 new initiatives (18 or 19 of which legislative), 37 evaluations and fitness checks, 37 proposals for withdrawal and 4 envisaged repeals, in addition to listing 123 pending proposals.

It also identifies simplification of rules and effective implementation as a horizontal priority, calling on all institutions at EU and Member State level to take ownership of this agenda.

7. On 25 February 2025, the Commission will present its work programme 2025 to the Council (General Affairs), which will subsequently hold an exchange of views in the context of the annual and multiannual programming exercises. The ministerial discussion will be primarily intended to identify, in the light of the Council's policy objectives, the policy areas or themes which should be highlighted in the Joint Declaration on the EU's legislative priorities for 2025 and in the Joint Conclusions on policy objectives and priorities for 2025-2029.

The Joint Declaration on legislative priorities

8. Joint Declarations have proved valuable in the past in helping to streamline cooperation between the three Institutions on the legislative procedure and to deliver tangible results. They are political documents and do not entail any legal commitments on the part of the Institutions.

³ 16982/24

⁴ 5985/25 + ADD1

9. Previous Joint Declarations included a general and more political part highlighting broader policy areas or themes and were accompanied by a Commission working document with a list of major legislative proposals subject to the ordinary legislative procedure (OLP), including both new legislative initiatives and pending proposals.
10. The IIA-BLM refers to the items of major political importance as receiving “*priority treatment in the legislative process*”. This does not *per se* mean fast-tracking and/or setting deadlines and it should be understood as signalling common willingness to make progress on the listed proposals in 2025.

The Joint Conclusions on policy objectives and priorities

11. Joint Conclusions are meant to facilitate longer-term planning in the agenda of the three Institutions. Similarly to the Joint Declarations, they are political documents not entailing legal commitments on the part of the Institutions. These conclusions, structured around a limited number of headline objectives, were approved for the first time for the 2020-2024⁵ period.

Next steps

12. Delegations will find in the Annex a background note with the Presidency questions for the exchange of views at the Council (General Affairs) meeting on 25 February 2025.
13. The outcome of this exchange of views and the letter mentioned in paragraph 5 will be the basis for engaging with the other two Institutions. The Presidency will keep delegations informed throughout the interinstitutional negotiation process of the Joint Declaration for 2025 and Joint Conclusions for 2025-2029.
14. The Presidency will propose to the Council (General Affairs) to approve the Joint Declaration for 2025 and the Joint Conclusions for 2025-2029, as resulting from the negotiations with the other two Institutions, at its meeting on 18 March 2025 in order to have them signed by the Presidents of the three Institutions shortly thereafter.

⁵ OJ C 18I, 18.1.2021, p. 5

Legislative programming:
Commission work programme for 2025
Annual and multiannual programming

Exchange of views

The Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 recalls that *“the European Union was founded on the imperative of securing peace in Europe, building on cooperation, solidarity and common economic prosperity. This original promise still guides us and serves as the basis for our priorities for a strong and sovereign Europe”*. On this basis, the Agenda identifies a number of priorities to be put into action in the new institutional cycle to deliver on the goals of a European Union that is free and democratic, strong and secure, prosperous and competitive.

These same goals also inspired the declarations agreed by EU leaders in Versailles, Granada, and Budapest. In the last one, in particular, the leaders committed to making the Union *“more competitive, productive, innovative and sustainable, building on economic, social and territorial cohesion, and ensuring convergence and a level playing field both within the Union and globally”*.

Furthermore, the Commission work programme for 2025 refers to the need to reinforce the competitiveness of the European economy, including by simplifying rules and ensuring effective implementation, in the face of increased economic competition and threat to the rules-based order.

Against this background, and following the presentation of the Commission work programme for 2025, the Presidency invites Ministers to exchange views on legislative programming focusing on the following questions:

- Having regard to the Strategic Agenda and in a context of *“strategic competition, growing global instability, and attempts to undermine the rules-based international order”*, which major policy objectives can help the EU institutions respond to the current challenges in the 2025-2029 term?
- Which policy areas or themes should receive priority treatment during 2025?