



European Council

Brussels, 23 October 2025
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EUCO 18/25

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: European Council meeting (23 October 2025)
– Conclusions

Delegations will find attached the conclusions adopted by the European Council at the above meeting.

EUCO 18/25

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I. UKRAINE

1. The European Council held an exchange of views with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine.
2. The European Council discussed the latest developments as regards Ukraine. The text set out in document EUCO 19/25 was firmly supported by 26 Heads of State or Government.
3. The European Council will revert to this issue at its next meeting.

II. MIDDLE EAST

4. The European Council welcomes the agreement reached on the first phase of the Comprehensive Plan to end the Gaza Conflict put forward by President Trump, as well as the outcome of the Sharm el-Sheikh Summit for Peace held on 13 October 2025. It commends the diplomatic efforts led by the US and the role played by the regional mediators, which the European Union has consistently supported. It calls on all parties to fully commit to implementing all phases and to refrain from any actions that jeopardise the agreement.
5. In this context, the European Council recalls the High-Level Conference for the Peaceful Settlement of the Question of Palestine and the Implementation of the Two-State Solution in New York co-led by France and Saudi Arabia. The European Council reiterates the European Union's commitment to international law and to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side in peace within secure and recognised borders.

6. Welcoming the release of all hostages that were held for two years by the terrorist group Hamas, the European Council calls on all parties to engage constructively and fully implement the agreement without delay, allowing for a permanent end to hostilities. To alleviate the dire humanitarian situation, the European Council calls for immediate, unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian aid at scale into and throughout Gaza and for the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to be able to work independently and impartially. The European Union will continue to contribute to peace efforts and to actively engage with partners on the next steps. It will support the rapid, safe and unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid in coordination with international partners, including via the Cyprus Maritime Corridor to supplement land routes. It will make full use of its missions European Union Border Assistance Mission to the Rafah Crossing Point (EUBAM Rafah) and European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS). Their mandates should be strengthened. The European Union stands ready to contribute to Gaza's stabilisation, transitional governance, recovery and reconstruction.
7. The European Union will continue to support the Palestinian Authority, including in its ongoing reform and with a view to its return to Gaza. The European Council calls on Israel to release withheld clearance revenues necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the Palestinian Authority and the delivery of essential services to the population.
8. The European Council stresses the importance of de-escalation in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and calls for an end to settler violence, including against Christian communities, to the expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law, and to Israel's military operation. It calls on Israel to reverse the E1 settlement plan that further undermines the two-state solution.

Lebanon

9. The European Council recalls its previous conclusions and reiterates the European Union's support for the Lebanese people. It welcomes the efforts of the new authorities to stabilise the economic and security situation and supports the Government's plan to establish the State's monopoly on holding weapons.

Syria

10. Recalling its previous conclusions, the European Council reiterates its support to a peaceful and inclusive transition in Syria, free from harmful foreign interference, and the importance of protecting the rights of all Syrians and of transitional justice and reconciliation. The European Union will continue to support Syria's path to stabilisation and reconstruction.

III. EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY

11. The European Council took stock of work aiming to decisively ramp up Europe's defence readiness by 2030. The European Council confirmed its determination to deliver at pace and at scale on this objective, so that Europe is better equipped to act and deal autonomously, in a coordinated way, and with a 360° approach, with immediate and future challenges and threats. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and its repercussions for European and global security in a changing environment constitute an existential challenge for the European Union.

12. Further to the presentation by the Commission and the High Representative of the European Defence Readiness Roadmap 2030, the **European Council** calls for Member State-led work on all the priority capability areas identified at EU level to be operationalised, with the support of the European Defence Agency (EDA) and on the basis of a coherent overall approach, building on the Strategic Compass, so that Europe develops the full spectrum of modern capabilities needed, in full coherence with NATO. The **European Council** acknowledges the work already undertaken by Member States, and calls on them to finalise the process of setting up capability coalitions in all the priority areas by the end of the year and to advance on concrete projects to be launched in the first half of 2026.
13. In doing so, the Union will reduce its strategic dependencies, address its critical capability gaps and strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base accordingly throughout the Union so that it is in a position to better supply equipment in the quantities and at the pace needed. This will also contribute to boosting European industrial and technological competitiveness, including for SMEs.
14. The **European Council** condemns the violation of the airspace of several Member States and stresses the importance of ensuring the defence of all EU land, air and maritime borders. The immediate threats on the EU's Eastern flank and the provision of concrete support to Member States need to be addressed as matters of priority.
15. In addition, considering the threats on the rest of the EU borders, the **European Council** stresses the importance of their defence.
16. In the light of Russia's and Belarus' intensified hybrid attacks and the recent violations of EU airspace, the **European Council** underscores the importance of close cooperation among Member States to comprehensively strengthen their defence and security capabilities. In this context, enhancing the resilience, security and protection of critical infrastructure, including energy, digital and undersea infrastructure, is also essential.

17. The European Council considers that, to respond to the most immediate needs and threats, work should focus in particular on concrete projects to reinforce Member States' joint efforts to enhance their anti-drone and air defence capabilities, in a coordinated manner, in particular making full use of the SAFE and EDIP instruments and other relevant existing financial instruments.
18. The European Council calls for accelerated joint development of space assets and services that serve security and defence purposes, as well as for the protection of existing assets, including dual-use assets, given their importance for Europe's strategic autonomy.
19. In order to ramp up the European defence industry's capacity, the European Council calls on Member States to increasingly gear defence investment towards joint development, production, and procurement, with the support of the EDA, as demand aggregation on the basis of standardised requirements and economies of scale are key to providing predictability to industry, lowering costs and fostering interoperability. The SAFE and EDIP instruments should be fully mobilised to that end. The European Council stresses the importance of the proper functioning and further integration of the European defence market across the Union, including cross-border access to defence supply chains, especially for SMEs and mid-caps.
20. The European Council underlines the importance of close cooperation with Ukraine and of its integration with and contribution to the European defence industry, notably as regards defence innovation and cutting-edge defence technology.
21. The European Council stresses the need to ensure effective political oversight and coordination to keep track of progress and to intensify work by defence ministers in the Council on Europe's defence readiness. This work will be informed by an annual defence readiness report, to be prepared by the EDA with the support of the Commission and the High Representative, and presented to the European Council. The report will take stock of progress towards closing the existing capability gaps, building on the Coordinated Annual Review on Defence (CARD).

22. The European Council calls on the Council to strengthen the European Defence Agency so that it can fully play its role in the field of defence capability development, research and acquisition and to report on the necessary measures by the end of 2025.
23. Recalling the commitment to substantially increase expenditure on Europe's defence and security, the European Council reviewed work on the relevant financing options and on cooperation to invest more efficiently in the field of defence. It welcomes the progress made since March 2025 with regard to the activation of the national escape clauses, the mid-term review of the EU cohesion policy, and the SAFE and EDIP instruments.
24. The European Council acknowledges the progress made on the Defence Readiness Omnibus, welcomes progress on the proposal on incentivising defence related investments in the EU budget and looks forward to a swift agreement by the end of 2025. It calls on the Commission to present new proposals on simplification as soon as possible.
25. The European Council also welcomes the efforts made by the European Investment Bank (EIB) to step up, simplify and accelerate its support for European security and defence capabilities. It encourages the EIB Group to further explore ways to finance industries and companies, and help start-ups to scale up in the security and defence sector in Europe.
26. The European Council underlines the importance of innovative technologies and disruptive solutions and calls on the Commission to present a roadmap for defence industry transformation.
27. The European Council reiterates its invitation to the Commission and the High Representative to present further proposals to strengthen military mobility throughout the Union.

28. The European Council recalls the importance of working together with like-minded partners, who share the EU's foreign and security policy goals.
29. The European Council recalls that a stronger and more capable European Union in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains, for those States that are members of it, the foundation of their collective defence.
30. The above is without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, and takes into account the security and defence interests of all Member States, in accordance with the Treaties.
31. The European Council will continue to provide strategic guidance and review progress on the implementation of the defence readiness objective.

IV. COMPETITIVENESS AND TWIN TRANSITION

32. The European Council held an in-depth discussion on how to further reinforce EU competitiveness, building on its conclusions of March and June 2025 and focusing on simplification, a competitive green transition and a sovereign digital transition. It calls for a step change in the EU's action and will keep all strands of the competitiveness and Single Market agenda under review, as this is key for sustaining Europe's prosperity and social model. The European Council calls on the Commission and the co-legislators to take the implementation of the Single Market Strategy by 2028 ambitiously forward, also in the light of the Commission's upcoming roadmap.

Simplification

33. The European Council reaffirms the urgent need to advance an ambitious and horizontally-driven simplification and better regulation agenda at all levels – EU, national and regional – and in all areas in order to ensure Europe’s competitiveness, without undermining predictability, policy goals, high standards and the integrity of the Single Market. In particular it recalls the commitment to drastically reduce, as a matter of urgency, administrative, regulatory and reporting burdens for businesses, including SMEs, and public administrations.
34. Welcoming the progress achieved so far, the European Council urges the Commission and the co-legislators to accelerate their work, as a matter of utmost priority, on all files with a simplification or competitiveness dimension. In particular, the European Council welcomes the work done on the simplification omnibus packages on investment and the carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), as well as the stop-the-clock measures on sustainability reporting, battery due diligence and chemicals. It urges the co-legislators to swiftly conclude work on the proposed simplification omnibus packages on sustainability reporting and due diligence, agriculture, small mid-caps and digitalisation, defence readiness and chemical products. The package on sustainability reporting should be adopted by the end of the year and the others as soon as possible in early 2026. The European Council also calls on the Commission, in line with the respective competences under the Treaties, to propose without delay an optional 28th company law regime allowing innovative companies to scale up.
35. The European Council calls on the Commission to swiftly bring forward further ambitious simplification packages among others on the automotive industry, military mobility, digital, financial services, transport, the environment, energy, and food safety, as well as a review of the REACH Regulation aiming to boost the competitiveness of the chemical sector. It also recalls the importance of a strong pharmaceutical sector in Europe.

36. The European Council also reiterates the need to avoid over-regulation and the introduction of new administrative burdens, in particular on SMEs, throughout the legislative and implementation processes at all levels, and calls for legislative and regulatory self-restraint, in line with a ‘simplicity by design’ approach.
37. The European Council calls on the Commission to intensify its efforts to stress-test the EU acquis. In this context, it invites the Commission to:
- a) identify additional potential for further simplification and strengthening competitiveness, including in the context of the report assessing the overall situation of the banking system in the Single Market envisaged for 2026;
 - b) explore new proposals to streamline and accelerate planning and permitting procedures in Member States;
 - c) intensify simplification efforts regarding delegated and implementing acts;
 - d) consider the withdrawal of proposals, where appropriate.
38. The European Council calls on the Council (General Affairs) to assess the legislative work programme of the Commission in the light of these objectives.

A competitive green transition

39. The existential threat posed by climate change underpins the Union’s commitment to the Paris Agreement and drives the Union’s determination to harness the full potential of the industrial renewal and transformation of its economies required to create the clean technologies, markets, industries and high-quality jobs of the future. Enhancing the Union’s competitiveness, bolstering its resilience, and advancing the green transition are mutually reinforcing objectives that must be pursued together.

40. For such a fundamental transformation to succeed, it must be fair and just, pragmatic, cost-effective and socially balanced, taking into account different national circumstances, providing affordable solutions across the economy and for citizens throughout the Union, so as to secure Europe's competitiveness and prosperity for present and future generations.
41. The European Council calls for an urgent stepping up of efforts to secure the supply of affordable and clean energy and build a genuine Energy Union before 2030, including by leveraging the new Energy Union Task Force. This will require ambitious electrification using all net-zero and low-carbon solutions, and investment in grids, storage and interconnections at national and EU level. In light of the negative impact of high energy prices on the global competitiveness of European industries, on the Union's strategic autonomy and on European households, the European Council calls on the Commission to accelerate work aimed at lowering energy prices and supporting sustainable energy production in the Union. In this context, the European Council welcomes the Commission's intention to submit relevant proposals as soon as possible.

42. The **European Council** recalls the urgent need to intensify collective efforts to ensure Europe's industrial renewal, modernisation and decarbonisation in a technologically neutral manner. It underlines in this context that particular attention should be paid to traditional industries, notably the automotive, shipping, and aviation industries as well as energy-intensive industries, such as steel and metals, chemicals, cement, glass and ceramics, and pulp and paper, so that they remain resilient and competitive in a global market and a challenging geopolitical environment. In this regard, it welcomes the recent Commission proposal to protect the European steel sector from unfair impacts of global overcapacity. It welcomes the Commission's intention to take forward the review foreseen under the Regulation on CO₂ emissions performance standards for cars and vans, and calls for the swift presentation of this proposal, taking into account technological neutrality and European content. It looks forward to the Commission's proposal on industrial decarbonisation acceleration, which will contribute to boosting demand for 'made in Europe'. Further efforts are also needed to strengthen innovation and the Union's competitive edge in clean and digital technologies, and cutting-edge innovation.
43. In order to deter and counter unfair trade practices, the **European Council** invites the Commission to make effective use of all EU economic instruments.
44. In this context, the **European Council** held a strategic discussion on how to support the achievement of the EU's intermediate climate target for 2040.
45. In this regard, the **European Council** underlines the importance of taking into account the following elements:
- a) the realistic contribution of carbon removals to the overall emission reduction effort, while taking into account the uncertainties of natural removals and ensuring that possible shortfalls would not be at the expense of other economic sectors;

- b) the importance of contributing to the global emission reduction effort in a way that is both ambitious and cost-efficient, notably by defining an adequate level of high-quality international credits;
 - c) the need for a revision clause, in light of latest scientific evidence, technological advances, and evolving challenges to and opportunities for the EU's global competitiveness.
46. The **European Council** calls on the Commission to further develop the necessary enabling conditions to support European industry and citizens in achieving the 2040 intermediate target and, in this context, welcomes the recent letter from the President of the Commission on climate and competitiveness. It expects the Commission and the co-legislators to promptly take work forward.
47. The **European Council** takes note of the Commission's intention to propose measures to smoothen the entry into force of ETS2 and invites the Commission to present a revision of the ETS2 implementation framework, including all relevant aspects.

A sovereign digital transition

48. In the face of geopolitical shifts, rapid technological change, and growing global competition for innovation, talent and investment, it is crucial to advance Europe's digital transformation, reinforce its sovereignty and strengthen its own open digital ecosystem. This requires reinforced international partnerships and close collaboration with trusted partner countries and international organisations on digital innovation and governance.

49. In this regard, the European Council underlines that the Union's values, interests, and regulatory autonomy underpin EU action, including in the digital sphere. This means the EU will continue to foster human-centric technological solutions that protect individuals and their data, and safeguard digital accountability, transparency and societal resilience. The European Council stresses the importance of protecting minors, including through a digital age of majority for accessing social media, respecting national competences.
50. In addition, the Union's digital infrastructure and technological base must be protected, including by addressing risks arising from hybrid threats, cyber security challenges, and strategic dependencies. In order to avoid over-reliance on external suppliers, the European Council also underlines the importance of developing European technological capabilities and diversifying the EU's sources of critical raw materials.
51. To that end and to strengthen Europe's competitiveness, the Union must offer an environment conducive to increased innovation in the private sector, frontier technologies, the emergence of start-ups and the scaling up of European technological solutions. Market fragmentation, infrastructure gaps and high energy prices continue to hinder the growth potential of this technological transformation and must also be addressed. The European Council underlines that particular efforts are required to advance the rollout of connectivity infrastructure, deepen the Single Market for electronic communications, as well as to promote the development and deployment of sustainable digital systems, networks and technologies. It also calls for the Single Market to be digitalised and the uptake of digital technologies and interoperable data to be supported across the European economy.
52. The European Council takes note of the recent Commission initiatives on AI and quantum technology. It invites the Commission to remain ambitious regarding Europe's sovereign digital transformation in its upcoming proposals, including on the EU cloud and AI development.

V. HOUSING

53. In the light of the housing challenges faced by many citizens in the European Union, including access to affordable housing, the European Council discussed the various dimensions of this pressing issue.
54. The European Council calls on the Commission to swiftly present an ambitious and comprehensive plan for affordable housing, the aim of which should be to support and complement Member States' efforts, including in the context of the simplification agenda, having due regard for the principle of subsidiarity and national competences.

VI. MIGRATION

55. The European Council took stock of progress in the implementation of its previous conclusions on migration, including in the light of the recent letter from the President of the Commission. The European Council calls for work to be intensified on all strands identified in June 2025 and on the co-legislators to take work forward on relevant legislative proposals as a matter of priority.

VII. REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

56. The European Council commends the authorities of the Republic of Moldova for their firm commitment to and effective measures for safeguarding the integrity of the recent electoral process and for ensuring free and fair elections, despite sustained hybrid activities carried out by Russia to undermine the country's democratic institutions. The European Union will continue to work closely with the Republic of Moldova to enhance the country's resilience and stability and seek to draw lessons from the country's experience.

57. The European Council reaffirms the EU's steadfast support for the Republic of Moldova on its accession path and welcomes the significant progress achieved so far. The European Council encourages the Republic of Moldova, the Council and the Commission to take work forward on the accession process, in line with the merit-based approach. The fundamentals cluster will be opened first and closed last, with clusters being opened when the conditions are met, in accordance with the enlargement methodology. The European Council takes good note of the Commission's assessment that the fundamentals, internal market and external relations clusters are ready to be opened.
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