

GENERAL AFFAIRS Council

Tuesday 13 December in Brussels

Starting at 10.00, the Council will be informed by the presidency on the state of play of the **mid-term review of the EU's multi-annual budgetary framework for 2014-2020**.

Reflecting the Commission's **2016 enlargement package** the Council will discuss and adopt conclusions on **enlargement and the stabilisation and association process**.

It will prepare the **European Council of 15 December 2016** by examining draft conclusions.

The Council will be invited to approve a draft **joint declaration on inter-institutional programming**. It will be informed by the presidency on the **implementation of the better law-making agreement**.

Finally, the Commission will present its **annual growth survey for 2017**.

A presidency press conference will be held at the end of the meeting (+/- 14.30).

In the margins of the Council, the following meetings will take place:

- EU-Serbia Stabilisation and Association Council (14.30)
- EU-Serbia Accession Intergovernmental Conference (16.30)
- EU-Montenegro Accession Intergovernmental Conference (18.00)

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/en/webcasts>
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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

MFF mid-term review

The presidency will inform ministers on the state of play on the mid-term review of the EU's multi-annual financial framework (MFF) for 2014-2020.

On 15 November 2016, the Council gave broad support to the Slovak presidency's latest proposal on the mid-term review. However, one member state still has a reservation and can not yet give its agreement.

The overarching aim of the MFF mid-term review is to strengthen the EU's ability to address new priorities. To that end the Commission proposed to

- increase the resources for measures to tackle the migration crisis, reinforce security, boost growth and create jobs
- add flexibility by creating new special instruments outside the MFF and increase the allocations of existing ones

The MFF regulation sets out annual maximum amounts which the EU is allowed to spend on different policy areas over the period from 2014 to 2020. It translates political priorities into figures, ensures budgetary discipline for the EU and seeks to facilitate the adoption of the annual EU budget.

Enlargement and stabilisation and association process

The Council will reflect on the annual enlargement package adopted by the Commission with a view to discuss and adopt conclusions on enlargement and the stabilisation and association process.

The Council is expected to reaffirm its commitment to enlargement which remains a key EU policy. Enlargement represents a strategic investment in the peace, democracy, prosperity, security and stability in Europe. The EU unequivocally supports the European perspective of the Western Balkans. Recalling that Turkey remains a key partner in many areas, the Council is expected to note that the full respect of commitments and established conditionality in accession process can contribute to EU-Turkey relations achieving their full potential.

The Council is expected to underscore the need for strengthening the rule of law as it constitutes a fundamental value on which the EU is founded and which is at heart of both the enlargement process and of the stabilisation and association process.

It is also expected to welcome the Commission's continued efforts to address fundamental reforms early in the accession process. These include rule of law issues, fundamental rights, economic development and competitiveness, the strengthening of democratic institutions and public administration reform.

[2016 Commission communication on EU Enlargement Policy](#)

Preparation for the December European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 15 December, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Slovak presidency and the Commission.

The European Council will focus on:

- **migration:** it will 1) follow up to the EU-Turkey statement; 2) assess progress on the compacts with Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal and discuss the possible extension of the approach to other countries; 3) assess progress on the reform of the common European asylum system, including on how to apply the principles of responsibility and solidarity in the future
- **security:** it will review progress in the implementation of the security agenda and discuss the strengthening of EU cooperation on external security and defence
- **economic and social development, youth:** it will take stock of progress on the European fund for strategic investments, the single market strategies, the youth-related initiatives and the fight against youth unemployment
- **external relations:** it will address the ratification of the EU-Ukraine association agreement in the Netherlands

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 15 November 2016.

Implementation of the better law-making agreement

The Council will be invited to approve a [draft joint declaration](#) agreed with the European Parliament and the Commission setting out the EU's legislative priorities for 2017.

The purpose of the joint declaration is to strengthen the EU institutions' cooperation to tackle the big challenges which lie ahead. It is a new instrument set up by the [better law-making agreement](#) signed on 13 April 2016.

[The presidency will also inform ministers](#) on the implementation of other elements of the better law-making agreement.

The presidency will also update ministers on the negotiations on cooperation and information-sharing regarding the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements.

Annual growth survey for 2017

The Commission will present to the Council its [annual growth survey for 2017](#), in which it outlines the most pressing economic and social priorities on which the EU and its member states should focus their attention in the coming months.

The adoption of the annual growth survey kicks off the European semester of economic and budgetary policy coordination.