



Council of the European Union

PRESS
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BACKGROUND¹
Brussels, 12 March 2015

GENERAL AFFAIRS Council **17 March 2015 in Brussels**

Starting at 10.00, the Council will prepare the **European Council** meeting on 19-20 March on the basis of draft conclusions.

The Council is also expected to take note of a presidency synthesis report on the discussions and main messages of the different Council configurations in relation to the 2015 **European Semester**.

Over lunch ministers will have a discussion with the Commission's First Vice-President Timmermans.

Press conference: at the end of the meeting (+/-14.30).

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Press conferences and public events by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4) and photo gallery on: www.eucouncil.tv

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the Press Office.

Preparation for the March European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 19-20 March, prepared by the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, in cooperation with the Latvian presidency and the Commission.

The European Council is expected to focus on:

- **Energy Union:** the European Council will return to the strategic priority of energy and set out further orientations in view of building an Energy Union. Leaders will build on work done by the Commission and in various Council configurations. They are likely to focus on energy security, completing the internal energy market and pursuing efforts for more renewable energies and increasing energy efficiency.
- **European Semester:** heads of state or government will have an exchange of views on the economic situation and conclude the first phase of the European Semester for 2015. They will also provide guidance to member states for the preparation of their national reform and stability or convergence programmes.
- **External relations:** leaders will take stock of preparations and are expected to provide a steer for the Eastern partnership summit on 21-22 May 2015 in Riga.

The European Council is also expected to revert to relations with Russia and the situation in Ukraine, in particular the implementation of the Minsk Agreement, and agree on possible further steps.

Moreover, leaders are to exchange views on the situation in Libya and its implications for the security of the European Union.

An [annotated draft agenda](#) was discussed by the Council on 10 February.

European Semester

As regards competitiveness, growth and jobs, the presidency has prepared a report ([6538/15](#)) providing a synthesis of the discussions and main messages of seven different Council configurations² involved in the current European Semester exercise.

The report highlights implementation of country specific recommendations as the most pressing issue within the European Semester. It also points to the importance of the digitalisation of the European economy, a Latvian presidency priority.

Moreover, the Council is also expected take note of an updated roadmap of the 2015 semester, prepared by the presidency and taking into account the postponement by the Commission of the Europe 2020 review.

The European Semester involves simultaneous monitoring of the member states' fiscal, economic and employment policies during a six-month period every year. In the light of the guidance provided by the European Council, the member states will prepare their national reform programmes (economic and employment policies) and stability or convergence programmes (fiscal policies) for this year.

² Economic and Financial Affairs Council, Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, Competitiveness Council, Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council, Environment Council, Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council and Justice and Home Affairs Council.