Council of the European Union
General Secretariat

BACKGROUND BRIEF

22 September 2026

Competitiveness Council

24 September 2026, Brussels

PRESS

EN

Chair: Peter Burke, Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment

Commission representatives: Stéphane Séjourné, Executive Vice-President (EVP) of the European Commission for Prosperity and Industrial Strategy; Teresa Ribera, Executive Vice-President (EVP) of the European Commission for a Clean, Just, and Competitive Transition

Starting time: 09.30

Media opportunities:

- Doorstep with Peter Burke: 08.45
- Press conference: +/- 16.40, Justus Lipsius press room

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Main agenda topics:
Internal Market and Industry ministers will hold debates on the Chips act 2.0 and on the revision of merger control guidelines. They will be informed about the current state of negotiations on several legislative proposals, including the Industrial Accelerator Act, the 28th Regime/EU Inc. and the European Competitiveness Fund.

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Meeting page on the Council website
Video streaming of press conferences, doorsteps and other public events
High quality photo and video material

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Chips act 2.0 – Policy debate (in public session)

Ministers will hold a policy debate on the regulation on the European Chips act 2.0. The act aims to strengthen Europe's semiconductor industry, reduce foreign dependencies and boost local demand for chips.

The EU's first Chips act (Sept 2023) mobilised €53 billion in investments, creating five pilot production lines and a European network of competence centres. Yet Europe remains dependent on non-EU chips. Its 2025 consumption, for instance, was €41.1 bn (10.5 % of global shipments), with most production taking place abroad. The AI-driven demand has spurred calls for a more centralised strategy. The Draghi report and the May 2025 special report of the EU Court of Auditors demanded a substantial, time-bound boost in chip investment to strengthen technological sovereignty and reduce strategic dependencies. The Chips act 2.0 is a flagship measure of the broader European technological sovereignty package, which aims to create a coordinated strategy for semiconductors, data, cloud and AI. Under the One Europe, One Market Roadmap, the target is for Chips act 2.0 to be agreed upon by the second quarter of 2027.

The Irish presidency has prepared a note to guide the debate around two questions:

- How should Chips act 2.0 balance technological sovereignty, economic competitiveness and international cooperation in Europe's semiconductor ecosystem?
- Which semiconductor technologies or value-chain segments should Europe target to achieve global leadership, greater resilience and reduced vulnerability?

Chips act 2.0
The EU chips industry on the Council website (background information)

Review of the merger control guidelines - Policy debate

Teresa Ribera, the Commission's Executive Vice-President responsible for competition policy, will inform ministers about the state of play of the review of the merger control guidelines. After the presentation Ministers will exchange views on the issue.

The European Commission is revising the EU merger control guidelines to recognise the role of pro-competitive scale-ups in boosting the internal market's competitiveness, resilience and sustainability. The draft, released for public consultation on 30 April 2026, incorporates recent case-law and new tools such as the 'innovation shield', 'dynamic efficiencies', 'network- and portfolio-effects', and an updated approach to 'coordinated effects'. It expands the analysis of both theories of benefit (innovation, investment, dynamic competition) and theories of harm. A 2025 consultation on the existing horizontal and non-horizontal guidelines, which date from 2004 and 2008, showed most stakeholders found them useful but called for an update and a consolidation, to incorporate new case laws and emerging policy objectives. The 2026 draft reflects this feedback and aims to give businesses clearer guidance on which mergers are likely to be approved. Ultimately a merger will only be cleared if it does not lead to higher prices, poorer service or reduced innovation, unless clear offsetting efficiencies are demonstrated.

A note prepared by the Irish presidency will frame the debate around two questions:

1. Do the draft guidelines give clear enough rules to encourage investment, competitiveness and innovation in the EU market?
2. Do they balance openness to scale up mergers with the protection of effective competition?

The new Merger Guidelines are scheduled to be adopted by the end of 2026.

[Single market in the web site of the Council (background information)]

Embedding Economic Security in Competitiveness Policy – Lunch debate

During lunch time ministers will hold an informal debate on 'Embedding Economic Security in Competitiveness Policy.'

The Irish presidency has prepared a note to frame the ministers' exchange of views. The document recalls that rising global tensions and the weaponization of trade and supply chains have pushed economic security to the centre of EU policymaking. Given the strong link between competitiveness and economic security, there is an important role for the Competitiveness Council to play in strengthening the internal economic and technological foundations that underpin the EU's economic security strategy. This requires structured partnerships with the private sector to build a resilient economy capable of identifying vulnerabilities before they become crises. Since economic security cuts across multiple sectors, the Council needs a coordinated governance framework to facilitate decisions and share risk insights across different policy areas without duplicating existing sectoral expertise.

Ministers will be asked to express their views around two questions:

1. How can the work of the Competitiveness Council (Internal Market & Industry) contribute more effectively to the promote pillar of the EU's economic security agenda?
2. How can evidence gathering, risk assessment and engagement with business be strengthened and coordinated within the Council to support a common understanding of economic security risks and vulnerabilities?

Other items

The Council will tackle several any other business items at the meeting.

- Current legislative proposals – information from the presidency (public session)

  The Irish presidency will inform ministers about the state of play of the following legislative proposals:

  - Industrial Accelerator Act

    The Industrial Accelerator Act (IAA) is a flagship legislative proposal that aims to strengthen European industrial competitiveness, economic resilience and security by boosting the EU's manufacturing capacity and accelerating the decarbonisation of energy-intensive industries. It includes measures such as speeding up permitting, boosting demand for low carbon or 'Made in EU' products, and ensuring foreign investment delivers strong added value for the Union. The IAA is a priority proposal in the One Europe, One Market roadmap.

    [Industrial Accelerator Act]
    [Industrial policy on the Council website (background information)]

  - Regulation on the 28th Regime corporate legal framework - 'EU Inc.'

    The proposal for a 28th Regime/EU Inc. creates an optional, fully digital corporate law framework that allows businesses to start, operate and grow across the EU. EU Inc's single harmonised set of rules would help innovative companies to scale up and would incentivise them to stay in or return to Europe. EU Inc is a priority proposal in the One Europe, One Market roadmap.

28th Regime Corporate Legal Framework / EU Inc.
Single market on the Council website (background information)

- Regulation establishing the European Competitiveness Fund

The ECF is one of the main pillars of the forthcoming multiannual financial framework (MFF) and aims to address the EU's competitiveness gap, fragmented funding systems and the reliance on global supply chains for critical technologies, as recommended in the Letta and Draghi Reports. It focuses on four key areas: clean transition and decarbonisation; digital transition; health, biotech, agriculture and bioeconomy; and defence and space. The ECF will streamline funding by merging 14 existing EU programmes into a unified investment framework, promoting private investment and maximising impact. It will also foster synergies with other EU programmes, while remaining flexible enough to respond to emerging needs. The regulation is expected to enter into force on 1 January 2028.

Proposal for a Regulation establishing the European Competitiveness Fund ('ECF')
The EU's long-term budget (background)

- Critical raw materials projects – Information from the Commission

The Commission will inform ministers about the state of play of the critical raw materials projects. The critical raw materials act (CRMA) aims to secure a stable, diversified and sustainable supply of raw materials vital to Europe's industrial economy. The CRMA entered into force on 23 May 2024, and on the same day the Commission launched a call for proposals to designate strategic projects for the extraction, processing, recycling or substitution of strategic raw materials, with a deadline of 22 August 2024. The applications were first assessed by the Commission and then submitted to the Critical Raw Materials Board, which adopted its opinions on the list on 20 February and 12 March 2025. On 4 June 2025, the Commission approved a first list of 13 Strategic Projects outside the EU, complementing the 47 EU-based projects adopted on 25 March 2025. This brings the total to 60 initiatives aimed at strengthening the competitiveness of European industry, particularly in e-mobility, renewable energy, defence and aerospace.

List of strategic projects in the EU
List of strategic projects outside the EU
Strategic autonomy: Council gives its final approval on the critical raw materials act
Critical raw materials act (background information)
Critical raw materials explained (background)

- Towards a European action plan for the household appliances sector – information from the French, German, Italian, Polish, Slovak and Spanish delegations (public session)
- Meeting of the ministerial alliance for energy intensive industries – information from the German delegation (public session)
- EU critical chemicals alliance – information from the French and Dutch delegations (public session)
- Extended producer responsibility under the urban wastewater treatment directive – information from the Polish delegation (public session)
- De minimis framework – information from the Latvian delegation (public session)

- European product act – information from the Belgian delegation (public session)

Items for approval without discussion

- Regulation on temporary trade-liberalisation measures applicable to Armenian products
  Adoption of the legislative act