



Brussels, 19 June 2014

BACKGROUND¹

GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL

Tuesday, 24 June in Luxembourg

*Starting at 10.00, the Council will begin its meeting by discussing **enlargement and the stabilisation and association process**, in particular whether to grant candidate status to Albania.*

*The Council will then turn to the Presidency report on the implementation of European Council conclusions, before discussing the preparations for the upcoming **European Council meeting on 26-27 June**, on the basis of draft conclusions. A discussion that will later continue over lunch via video-link with the President of the European Council, **Herman Van Rompuy**.*

*The Council is expected to approve the integrated country specific recommendations under the **European Semester** for transmission to the June European Council.*

*The ministers will adopt an **EU maritime security strategy** as well as discuss the **EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region**, on the basis of a presentation by the Commission.*

*Finally, the Council is also expected to endorse the **18-month programme of the Council** (1 July 2014 - 30 December 2015).*

A presidency press conference will be held after the end of the meeting (+/- 16.00).

Event in the margin

*In the margin of the General Affairs Council the **EU-Montenegro Stabilisation and Association Council** will be held in the afternoon, starting at 16.30, with a separate press conference at +/-18.15.*

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Public events and press conferences by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu>

Video coverage in broadcast quality (MPEG4): www.eucouncil.tv

Photos of the event: www.consilium.europa.eu/photo

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¹ This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

P R E S S

Enlargement and Stabilisation and Association Process

The Council will discuss enlargement and the stabilisation and association process. In particular, it is expected to adopt conclusions on the follow-up to its December [2013 Council conclusions](#), in terms of whether to grant candidate status to Albania, subject to endorsement by the European Council.

In December 2013, the Council invited the Commission to report as soon as the necessary progress had been achieved, also taking into account the further action taken by Albania to fight corruption and organised crime, including by proactive investigations and prosecutions of such cases.

The Commission presented its report and recommendation to grant candidate status to Albania on 4 June 2014.

Preparation for the June European Council

The Council will examine draft conclusions for the European Council meeting to be held on 26-27 June, prepared by the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, in cooperation with the Hellenic presidency and the Commission. Over lunch, ministers will have an exchange with the President of the European Council on the upcoming European Council.

The June European Council is expected to focus on:

- the *area of freedom, security and justice*: it will agree on the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning for the coming years, and will also address some related horizontal issues such as data protection and free movement of EU citizens;
- *growth, competitiveness and jobs*, endorsing the country specific recommendations, which are designed to guide member states in their structural reforms, employment and fiscal policies and national budgets, thus concluding the 2014 European Semester. In this context, the European Council will also recall the importance of deeper economic policy coordination for the Economic and Monetary Union and review progress in the area of regulatory fitness.
- *climate and energy*: it will take stock of progress made on the [key issues of the 2030 framework](#) and hold a first debate on the Commission's recent communication on a [European Energy Security Strategy](#), which is an integral part of this 2030 framework.

The European Council may also address, in the light of developments on the international scene, specific external relations issues, such as enlargement, the situation in Ukraine and the EU priorities for the next institutional cycle. Leaders are also expected to welcome the signature of the Association Agreements with Republic of Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine, and congratulate Lithuania on meeting the convergence criteria to adopt the euro on 1 January 2015.

On 26 June the European Council will meet in Ypres for a commemoration to mark the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War. The ceremony will begin in the late afternoon and will be followed by a dinner for the heads of state or government, where the topic of discussion is foreseen to be the strategic agenda for the EU in the coming years.

An annotated draft agenda was discussed by the Council on 13 May ([8280/14](#))

European Semester

As part of the European Semester, the Council is expected to approve draft country's specific recommendations (CSR's) and transmit them to the European Council for endorsement. The draft CSR's will also have been discussed in EPSCO and ECOFIN.

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.

EU maritime security strategy

The Council is expected to adopt the EU maritime security strategy.

The purpose of the strategy, which is based on EU's founding values of human rights, freedom and democracy, is to secure the maritime security interests of the EU and its member states against a number of risks and threats in the global maritime domain. It covers both internal and external aspects of the Union's maritime security and provides the political and strategic framework so as to effectively and comprehensively address maritime security challenges.

EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region

The Council will have an exchange of views on the basis of a presentation by the Commission on the new EU strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian region. The initiative brings together cooperation among 8 countries, four from the EU (Croatia, Greece, Italy and Slovenia) and four non-EU countries of the region (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia).

A macro-regional strategy is an integrated framework, endorsed by the European Council, to address common challenges in a given geographical area, be they of economic, social, or environmental nature. Until now the EU has initiated two macro-regional strategies, one for the Baltic Sea region and the other for the Danube Region.

18-month programme of the Council

The Council is expected to endorse the 18-month programme of the Council. The programme is drawn up by the incoming trio of presidencies (Italy, Latvia and Luxembourg) and it sets out the Council activities for the next 18 months. The policy debate will take place in public session.

Application of Article 10 of Protocol 36 to the Treaties

The Council will be briefed on the state of play as regards the preparations for the end of the post-Lisbon transition period for ex-third pillar measures on 30 November this year.