

## European Council 21-22 March 2019

The European Council will start on Thursday 21 March at 15.00 with the traditional exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani.

This will be followed by a meeting of the European Council in Article 50 format, where EU27 leaders will discuss the latest developments related to **Brexit**, including a possible extension of Article 50 as well as preparedness for a no-deal scenario.

Over dinner leaders will discuss preparations for the upcoming **EU-China summit**, scheduled for 9 April 2019.

On Friday morning, starting at 09.30, the European Council will have an exchange of views with the Prime Ministers of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway on the occasion of the **25th anniversary of the European Economic Area (EEA)**. At 10.15 the 31 EEA countries will participate in a family photo in the forum of the Europa Building to mark the occasion.

At the following working session on Friday morning the Romanian President, Klaus Iohannis, of the current rotating presidency of the Council, will provide a state of play on the implementation of previous European Council conclusions. Leaders will then discuss and adopt conclusions on **jobs, growth and competitiveness, climate change and disinformation**, as well as the **external relations** topics discussed during the dinner the evening before. European Central Bank President Draghi will participate in this session to update on the economic outlook.

### Indicative programme:

Thursday: 15:00 Exchange of views with the President of the European Parliament  
15:30 Working session of the European Council (Art. 50)  
19:00 Press conference by Presidents Tusk and Juncker  
19:30 Working dinner of the European Council

Friday: 09:30 European Council meeting with the Prime Ministers of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway  
10:15 Family photo to mark the 25th anniversary of the EEA  
10:35 Working session of the European Council  
12:45 Press conference by Presidents Tusk and Juncker

### [Meeting page](#)

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<sup>1</sup> This note has been drawn up under the responsibility of the press office.

## **Brexit**

The EU27 leaders will meet in Article 50 format to discuss Brexit. Leaders will exchange views on the latest developments and discuss issues related to the ending - on 29 March 2019 - of the two-year period following the UK's notification of its intention to leave the EU. Leaders are also expected to discuss their preparedness for a no-deal scenario.

All the withdrawal issues are covered in the Withdrawal Agreement, including the rights of EU citizens living in the UK and of UK citizens living in the EU, the transition period, the financial settlement and the governance of the agreement, among a wide range of other separation issues. The Agreement also contains a legally operable solution to avoid the return of a hard border on the island of Ireland after the UK's withdrawal. The main purpose is to ensure the UK's orderly withdrawal so as to reduce uncertainty and, to the extent possible, minimise disruption.

On 25 November 2018 the EU27 leaders gave their political endorsement to the text and invited the EU institutions to take the necessary steps on the EU side to ensure the agreement can enter into force. The Council (Article 50) will conclude the agreement on behalf of the EU, after obtaining the consent of the European Parliament.

EU27 leaders also approved the joint political declaration which reflects an overall understanding on the framework for future relations. The parties will work on this basis for future negotiations after the withdrawal. An agreement on a future relationship can only be negotiated and concluded once the UK has become a third country.

The withdrawal agreement should be concluded by both parties, the EU and the UK, before the withdrawal date of 29 March 2019. Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union allows for a possible extension of the negotiation period. It would require a unanimous decision by the European Council, in agreement with the member state concerned.

[Brexit timeline and key documents](#)

[European Council \(Art. 50\) conclusions, 13 December 2018](#)

## **External relations**

The European Council will discuss preparations for the upcoming summit with China to be held in Brussels on 9 April 2019. Leaders will exchange views on overall relations with China in the global context. This is expected to include many different dimensions, such as trade, competition and industrial policy, WTO reform and climate change.

The outcome of the discussions will feed into the preparations for the EU-China summit declaration as well as the EU Strategic Agenda that will be discussed in Sibiu on 9 May and adopted at the June European Council.

The European Council is also expected to reconfirm its full solidarity and support to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity on the occasion of the 5 year anniversary of the Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea.

Leaders may also address other specific foreign policy issues, as appropriate in the light of events.

[EU-China fact sheet](#)

[EU-China Strategic Outlook: Commission contribution to the European Council](#)

[EU- China summit statement 2018](#)

[EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine](#)

## **European Economic Area - 25 years**

The Prime Ministers of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway will participate as guests to the European Council to mark the 25th anniversary of the EEA. The leaders will have an opportunity to exchange views before participating in an official family photo.

The Agreement on the European Economic Area was signed in Oporto, Portugal and entered into force on 1 January 1994. It provides for the inclusion of EU legislation covering the four freedoms - the free movement of goods, services, persons and capital - throughout the 31 EEA states.

[EEA on EEAS website](#)

## **European economic base**

The heads of state or government are expected to adopt conclusions on jobs, growth and competitiveness. The conclusions will focus on the future of the EU's economic base and leaders are expected to discuss the Union's response to current and emerging global, technological, security and sustainability challenges. The debate is likely to link a number of different policies and actions. The conclusions are expected to refer to the need for making progress on pending proposals and on the implementation and enforcement of decisions taken in the Single Market as well as a long-term vision for the EU's industrial future. The leaders are also likely to stress the need to embrace the digital transformation and strengthen the link to other policies, such as research, innovation and trade. The European Council is expected to return to these issues at its informal meeting in Sibiu, Romania, on 9 May, as part of the discussions for the next Strategic Agenda.

Leaders are also expected to exchange views on the current economic situation, in the presence of European Central Bank President Mario Draghi. The European Council will also endorse priorities for the 2019 European Semester and the Recommendation on the economic policy of the euro area.

[Communication Single Market: Europe's best asset in a changing world](#)

[European Semester 2019](#)

## **Climate change**

The European Council is expected to adopt conclusions on climate change, reiterating its commitment to the Paris Agreement. Leaders are expected provide guidance on the overall direction and political priorities, to enable the European Union to submit a long term strategy in line with the Paris Agreement by 2020.

[Clean Planet for All - Commission Communication](#)

[Tackling climate change in the EU](#)

## **Disinformation & free and fair elections**

EU leaders are expected to recall the importance of fighting disinformation and fake news. In particular the European Council is expected to call for increased information sharing and continued efforts by EU institutions, member states and private operators, such as online platforms and social networks, to protect upcoming European and national elections.

[Securing free and fair European elections](#)

[Action plan against disinformation](#)

- Media accreditation: <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/accreditation>
- Press conferences by video streaming: <http://video.consilium.europa.eu/>
- Video coverage in broadcast quality and photos in high resolution: <http://tvnewsroom.consilium.europa.eu>
- Meeting webpage: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/european-council/2019/03/21-22/>