

# Outlook for the meetings of EU Heads of State or Government, 17-18 October 2018

As has become the norm with European Council meetings, EU Heads of State or Government will convene on 17 and 18 October 2018 in different formats with varying compositions and levels of formality: a regular meeting of the European Council, and an enlarged Euro Summit of 27 Member States on 18 October, preceded by a European Council (Article 50) meeting on the 17 October over dinner. The agenda of the European Council meeting focuses on migration and internal security. Specific foreign policy issues might also be addressed at this meeting. The Euro Summit will discuss the state of play of negotiations on the deepening of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), with a view to the next Euro Summit in December. However, the priority issue for Heads of State or Government will be Brexit. At the European Council (Article 50) meeting, EU-27 leaders are expected to discuss the progress that has been achieved in the negotiations so far, and possibly call for an extraordinary summit in November 2018.

## 1. Implementation: Follow-up on previous European Council commitments

The Leaders' Agenda identifies both migration and internal security as topics for the October 2018 European Council meeting. This is reflected in the annotated draft [agenda](#). Heads of State or Government will follow up on the discussions held at their informal meeting in Salzburg in September, and in accordance with commitments made in previous conclusions, return more specifically to the reform of the Common European Asylum System (CEAS, Table 1). However, the issue of international trade, which was planned to be discussed in a Leaders' Agenda session at this European Council meeting, will most likely not be addressed. This could be due to the change of length of this meeting – originally it should have taken place over two days, from 18 to 19 October – and/or because of [recent developments](#) regarding trade between the EU and the US.

Policy area	Previous commitment	Occasion on which commitment was made
Migration	Report on progress regarding the reform for a new Common European Asylum System	European Council June 2018
Migration	Issue conclusions on Migration	Leaders' Agenda October 2017
Internal security	Issue conclusions on Internal security	Leaders' Agenda October 2017
Trade	Hold a Leaders' meeting on future trade policy and the role of the EU in the multilateral trade system	Leaders' Agenda October 2017

## 2. European Council meeting

### Migration

As so often over the past three years, migration will again be one of the main priorities for discussion at the European Council meeting of 18 October 2018. As set out in the conclusions of [28 June 2018](#), Heads of State or Government will return to the sensitive issue of the reform of the CEAS, and be updated by the current Austrian Presidency of the Council of the European Union on progress on this matter.

The European Council will follow up on Heads of State or Governments' discussions on migration in the margins of the 20 September 2018 [informal European Council](#) meeting in Salzburg. Following that meeting, the President of the European Council, Donald Tusk, indicated that EU leaders had agreed to organise a summit with the League of Arab States in February next year. The October European Council might provide further details of this planned summit. President Tusk also reported that the recently-launched dialogue with the Egyptian President, as well as similar initiatives, received backing from the European Council. It can be expected that the European Council will be briefed on the follow-up to the dialogue with Egypt and other countries, and express its views on the process. In this context, the foreign minister of Morocco, Nasser Bourita, recently categorically [rejected](#) the possibility of his country hosting EU asylum centres. The idea of '[regional disembarkation platforms](#)' was one of the main migration-related [conclusions](#) of the 28 June 2018 European Council meeting. Also originating then was the agreement that, on a voluntary basis, Member States would share the effort to take care of rescued people on EU territory, according to international law. '[Controlled centres](#)' would be set up in the Member States, to distinguish irregular migrants, who will be returned, from those in need of international protection.

A continuous call of the European Council has been to work more closely with North African partners. A further [item](#) discussed in Salzburg, which might be further detailed at this European Council meeting, is the High-Level [Forum](#) Africa-Europe on 18 December 2018.

The recent Commission [proposal](#) for a strengthened European Border and Coast Guard is also expected to feature high on the European Council agenda. According to President Tusk, Heads of State or Government [agreed](#) in Salzburg to prioritise this proposal, even if further discussions are needed on issues regarding sovereignty and the size of Frontex. Until now, the European Council had always considered the European Border and Coast Guard in relation to migration, but in Salzburg, Heads of State or Government discussed this issue in the context of the internal security debate. This change of categorisation illustrates a recent trend in the European Council towards more blurred lines between migration and internal security. (See EPRS Briefing, [The role of the European Council in internal security policy](#)).

### Internal security

The October European Council meeting will be following up on the results of the previous discussions of Heads of State or Government at the Leaders' Agenda meeting on internal security in Salzburg in September, and issue conclusions. Those discussions on internal security were based on a Leaders' Agenda [note](#) by President Tusk, and concentrated on police and judicial cooperation, border security, cybersecurity and crisis-response capabilities.

Prior to the meeting in Salzburg, the European Commission had already adopted its [proposal](#) on 'preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online'. Heads of State or Government are expected to welcome this proposal in their conclusions. Other points agreed on in Salzburg are expected to be further detailed in the European Council's conclusions, notably those aiming to step up the fight against all forms of cyber-crime, manipulation and disinformation, and to speed up work on the [Civil Protection Mechanism](#).

The European Council will also call for greater protection of the Union's democratic systems and the combating of disinformation, including in the context of next May's European Parliament elections.

This issue was also an important element in the State of the Union [speech](#) by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, in September, which was accompanied by concrete [proposals](#). EU leaders are also expected to call to speed up legislation to better combat money laundering, and consider extending the competences of the European Public Prosecutor's Office to include cross-border terrorist crimes.

Following a cyber-attack against the [Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons](#) in The Hague, which is [assumed](#) to have been carried out by the Russian military intelligence service (GRU), EU Heads of State or Government will consider cybersecurity as part of their deliberations, as Donald Tusk has [announced](#). They are expected to deplore the incident and discuss means to strengthen cooperation on cybersecurity. In this context, the Heads of State or Government are also [expected](#) to 'call for progress on the listing of relevant individuals and entities on the new EU chemical weapons sanction regime and to speed up cybersecurity legislation'. On 15 October 2018, the EU [Foreign Affairs Council](#) adopted a new sanctions-regime targeting the use of chemical weapons, as [requested](#) by the June European Council meeting.

The European Council will also reaffirm its previous conclusions regarding fighting terrorism and preventing radicalisation; inter-agency cooperation and improved information exchange; and improving the interoperability of information systems and databases

### External relations

The European Council [may](#) address certain foreign policy issues. EU leaders might refer to the [outcome](#) of the consultative referendum held on 30 September 2018 in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and reaffirm the EU's open-door policy. In a joint statement, the European Council President, Donald Tusk, and the NATO Secretary-General, Jens Stoltenberg, [stressed](#) that the 'overwhelming majority of those voting' favoured a European path for their country and invited the political elite 'to seize this historic opportunity'.

### Other issues

The European Council could reaffirm its commitment to the full implementation of the [Paris Agreement](#) in the run-up to the UN Climate Change Conference ([COP24](#)) to be held in Katowice in December 2018. The [special report](#) of the [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change](#), issued for COP24, also highlights the need to strengthen climate policies around the world to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. In the framework of the 'Future of Europe' debate in the European Parliament, several members of the European Council have stressed that the EU should set itself more ambitious goals in the fight against climate change.

## 3. Euro summit

On 18 October, EU leaders will meet for a Euro Summit in an inclusive format of 27 EU Member States (19 euro-area members, those Member States which have [ratified](#) the [Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the EMU](#), TSCG, plus the Czech Republic). They will discuss the state of play of negotiations on the deepening of Economic and Monetary Union (EMU), with a view to the next Euro Summit in December.

Although President Tusk, in his [letter to EU leaders of 21 September 2017](#), called for a first set of concrete decisions on EMU reform to be taken in June 2018, this did not happen. Instead, the June Euro Summit [invited](#) the Eurogroup and co-legislators to continue their work in the area of the Banking Union, so that the leaders could come back to these issues in December. Thus, the question of risk-sharing in financing the restructuring and resolution of failing banks will presumably be high on the agenda of the 18 October Euro Summit. It was [agreed on 29 June 2018](#) that the [European Stability Mechanism \(ESM\)](#), which is owned by the 19 euro-area members, could be called upon to provide loans and guarantees as a last resort, but only if sufficient progress has been achieved on reducing the risks of bank failure in Member States beforehand. At that time, leaders also noted that

the [Economic and Financial Affairs Council on 25 May 2018](#) adopted its position on a package of measures aimed at reducing risk in the banking industry. As the President of the Eurogroup, Mário Centeno, has [pointed](#) out, these efforts should pave the way to setting up the ESM as a backstop to the [Single Resolution Fund \(SRF\)](#); furthermore, work on the [European Deposit Insurance Scheme \(EDIS\)](#) could also begin.

The Euro Summit on 18 October could also take up a number of issues regarding reform of the ESM, especially its future role in crisis prevention and in the design and monitoring of programmes involving Member States in trouble. These topics were discussed in the [Eurogroup on 1 October](#).

#### 4. European Council (Article 50) meeting

On 17 October, the Heads of State or Government of the EU-27 will review the state of play in the Brexit process. [According](#) to Donald Tusk, this will be the ‘moment of truth’ for these negotiations, as the European Council (Article 50) is expected to decide ‘whether conditions are there to call an extraordinary summit in November to finalise and formalise the deal’.

In July 2018, the UK government published its negotiating position, in the [white paper](#) on ‘The Future Relationship between the United Kingdom and the European Union’, otherwise known as the ‘Chequers Plan’. Following the Salzburg summit, at which EU-27 leaders also addressed Brexit, Donald Tusk [reported](#) the European Council’s united view ‘that while there are positive elements in the Chequers proposal, the suggested framework for economic cooperation will not work. Not least because it risks undermining the Single Market.’ Donald Tusk also [indicated](#) that the Chequers proposals needed ‘to be reworked and further negotiated’ regarding the Northern Ireland border question. Finding an agreement for the latter issue remains one of the main stumbling-blocks in the negotiations for the withdrawal agreement. Following a meeting with the Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar, on 4 October 2018, President Tusk also recalled that the ‘EU is united behind Ireland and the need to preserve the Northern Ireland peace process’.

Besides the withdrawal agreement, the Article 50 negotiations should also produce a political declaration outlining how the future UK-EU relationship should look. President Tusk [reiterated](#) the EU’s willingness to conclude a ‘Canada plus, plus, plus deal’ with the UK, which would be far-reaching on trade, internal security and foreign-policy cooperation. Analysts report that there is a consensus among the EU-27 on a brief and relatively general declaration about the future relationship.<sup>1</sup>

If EU-27 leaders agree to hold an special summit on Brexit, this could take place in mid-November 2018, as [indicated](#) by Donald Tusk and Jean-Claude Juncker.

<sup>1</sup> See Eurocomment’s European Council Briefing Note 2018/5

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