

# Outcome of the European Council meeting of 15 December 2022

The last regular European Council meeting of 2022 ended with agreements on most open agenda points, notably the €18 billion of assistance to Ukraine and the ninth sanctions package. While the detailed decision on the cap for energy prices was left to the Energy Council to define, EU leaders specified in their conclusions that the proposal was to be finalised on 19 December 2022. In a long strategic discussion on EU-US relations, European Council members concurred that they want an active dialogue with the US on the latter's Inflation Reduction Act. Regarding the economy, EU leaders invited the European Commission to put forward, by the end of January 2023, short-term measures to mobilise both EU and national investment resources to safeguard the EU's economic base, as well as an EU strategy to boost competitiveness and productivity in the longer term. On security and defence, EU leaders focused on joint procurement, and insisted on the need to invest in defence capabilities to be able to conduct the full spectrum of EU missions and operations. As regards enlargement, the European Council endorsed the General Affairs Council [conclusions](#) on enlargement of 13 December 2022, and granted [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) candidate country status.

## 1. General aspects

The European Council, which lasted only one day, took place back-to-back with the [EU-ASEAN Commemorative Summit](#), at which a joint [statement](#), affirming the strategic partnership and the shared interest in peace, security and stability, was adopted. The EU leaders' meeting began with the customary address by the President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola. Her intervention was followed by a particularly long exchange of views involving many EU leaders, the substance of which was largely linked to the criminal proceedings involving the Parliament, among other issues. The EU Heads of State or Government expressed their support for the Parliament's handling of the matter. President Metsola used the opportunity to [announce](#) a wide-ranging reform package to be ready early in 2023, underlining that she would personally lead the work.

This was the first European Council meeting for the new Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni, and the last for the Irish Taoiseach, Micheál Martin, who subsequently handed over the office to Leo Varadkar.

In the context of attempts by certain Member States to block important decisions until the last moment, EU leaders defended decision-making by consensus, arguing that, ultimately, only the outcome mattered. As for the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, he once again stressed the continuing unity of the European Council.

President Michel [announced](#) that due to the rising number of irregular migrants, EU leaders would hold an in-depth debate on migration at a special European Council meeting on 9-10 February 2023.

## 2. European Council meeting

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

EU leaders [reaffirmed](#) their 'resolute condemnation of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine', reiterated the EU's 'full support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity' and



called on Russia to cease its attacks on Ukrainian civilians and infrastructure, and to stop endangering 'the safety and security of civilian nuclear facilities' in Ukraine. They once again reiterated the EU's political, financial, military and humanitarian support for Ukraine. President [Michel](#) underlined the Union's unity on Ukraine, which was demonstrated by the decisions taken at the summit on macro-financial assistance and military aid as well as the [ninth package of sanctions](#).

EU leaders notably agreed on the €18 billion package of assistance for Ukraine in 2023. Whilst [Poland](#) had initially threatened to block the decision, along with the minimum tax on multinational enterprises and Hungary's recovery and resilience plan, the set of measures was adopted by [written procedure](#) in the interim. EU leaders also welcomed the G7 agreement to establish a [donor coordination platform](#), which will help coordinate aid for repair, recovery and reconstruction efforts in Ukraine.

The European Council recalled the EU's commitment to support Ukraine militarily through the European Peace Facility (EPF) and the [EU Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine](#) (EUMAM Ukraine). It endorsed the [political agreement](#) reached in the Council to increase the financial envelope of the EPF by €2 billion (2018 prices) and to allow for additional financial increases at a later stage. EU leaders also reaffirmed the importance of stepping up bilateral military support, including air-defence capacities and demining aid. The Prime Minister of Latvia, [Krišjānis Kariņš](#), stressed the importance of continuing to support Ukraine militarily, including with air defence systems, and warned against talks regarding a 'premature peace or a truce'.

EU leaders also reaffirmed the need for support for internally and externally displaced persons, calling on the Member States 'to intensify contingency planning, with the support of the Commission'. They also confirmed the Union's commitment to 'urgently intensify the provision of humanitarian and civil protection assistance to Ukraine' as well as to support the rebuilding of damaged critical infrastructure. The President of France, Emmanuel Macron, noted that, earlier in the week, Paris had hosted the international support [conference](#) for Ukraine at which €1 billion was pledged for heating stations, power generators and lighting equipment to help the Ukrainians cope with the winter.

EU leaders took stock of the options put forward by the European Commission, at their request, regarding the use of frozen Russian assets in support of Ukraine's reconstruction, and invited the EU institutions 'to take work forward'. They discussed war crimes accountability, 'including ways to secure accountability for the crime of aggression'. They agreed that sanctions and the international oil price cap play a key role in maintaining pressure on Russia to end its war. EU leaders also condemned the Iranian authorities' support for Russia's war of aggression, and welcomed the additional [sanctions](#) agreed in the Council. The President of Lithuania, [Gitanas Nausėda](#), stressed the importance of 'keeping the sanctions as strong as possible' and [tweeted](#) that 'the Ukrainian nation is heroically withstanding Russian aggression'.

Moreover, EU leaders reiterated their [commitment](#) to food security, stressing the importance of the [solidarity lanes](#), the UN Black Sea Grain Initiative and the 'Grain from Ukraine' programme, and pointed out that access to affordable agricultural products and fertilisers remains key.

The European Council also considered the impact of the war on neighbouring countries, and notably the importance of supporting Moldova in coping with the energy security challenge.

Addressing the European Council once again, the President of Ukraine, [Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#), stressed that Ukraine and all of Europe had become stronger in recent months; he underlined the importance of unity, thanked the EU for the 'multifaceted assistance' offered and underlined that Ukraine needs the EU's support to overcome the destruction of its energy system.

*Main message of the President of the European Parliament:* President [Metsola](#) stressed that the EU needs to stand with Ukraine and that sanctions need to be implemented. She emphasised that the European Parliament had awarded the Sakharov Prize to the people of Ukraine.

## Energy and economy

As stressed by [President Michel](#), 'our new energy horizon has had spill-over effects on our economy ... our future growth perspectives depend on our industries' ability to remain competitive'. The intertwined energy and economy topics were therefore at the core of discussions.

After reviewing progress made in implementing the [October 2022](#) conclusions, the European Council reaffirmed the importance of phasing out dependency on Russian fossil fuels, whilst promoting innovation, as well as investing in renewables. It notably called for the review of the Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and the Energy Performance of Buildings Directives to be finalised. EU leaders also underlined the need to accelerate preparations for the 2023-2024 winter, calling for the 'speedy operationalisation' of the [EU energy platform](#) for joint gas and hydrogen purchasing, for consumption reduction and for gas storage facilities to be filled efficiently. As regards the cap on the price of gas, the search for an agreement was delegated to the [Energy Council](#), which it was expected to reach at its meeting on 19 December 2022. Both the European Commission President, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), and the Prime Minister of the Netherlands, [Mark Rutte](#), expressed 'confidence' in the Council on this matter.

EU leaders [agreed](#) that the ongoing energy crisis endangers the EU's economic, industrial and technological base, requiring an 'ambitious European industrial policy to make Europe's economy fit for the green and digital transitions and reduce strategic dependencies'. They underlined that – if the single market is to be preserved – economic resilience and global competitiveness could only be achieved through coordinated European action. The European Council invited the European Commission to make, by January 2023, short-term proposals allowing mobilisation of European and national level resources to promote investment, and to present a (long-term) EU strategy to boost competitiveness and productivity.

The EU's economy and its industrial base will be central topics on the agenda of the next European Council meeting, of 9-10 February 2022. The European Commission President, [Ursula von der Leyen](#), called the European Green Deal the EU's 'most existential priority', recalling the progress made in this area under the current Czech Presidency of the Council of the EU. She stressed that she looked forward to cooperating with the incoming Swedish Presidency on competitiveness.

*Main message of the President of the European Parliament:* President Metsola stressed that 'growth will also come from reforming our energy market', underlined the importance of diversifying sources of energy, and confirmed the Parliament's readiness to help 'build our energy resilience together'.

## Security and defence

As [announced](#) by President Michel, EU leaders took stock of progress made in implementing the security and defence commitments undertaken in [Versailles](#). They confirmed their lasting consensus on defence cooperation and insisted on the need to increase the Union's capacity to act autonomously. The European Council [reaffirmed](#) the importance of the 'transatlantic bond', which is reflected in EU and NATO strategic documents.

As [expected](#), EU leaders focused on joint procurement, calling on the co-legislators 'to swiftly adopt the European Defence Industry Reinforcement through common Procurement Act (EDIRPA)', and on the European Commission 'to rapidly present a proposal for a European Defence Investment Programme' – much needed to help strengthen the European defence industrial sector. They also underlined that arms stocks, which are currently diminishing as a result of military aid provided to Ukraine, need to be replenished, and invited the European Commission and the European Defence Agency 'to identify needs and to facilitate and coordinate joint procurement'. Moreover, EU leaders reiterated their commitment to jointly invest in defence capabilities to be able to conduct the full spectrum of EU missions and operations. They also called for investment in strategic enablers, to promote a strong cyber-defence policy, to swiftly implement the EU Hybrid Toolbox, and to adopt a new Civilian CSDP Compact in 2023. Finally, the European Council recalled the global footing of the EPF and welcomed the [political agreement](#) reached in the Council on its financing.

## External relations

### Southern Neighbourhood

The European Council discussed the Southern Neighbourhood but, contrary to [December 2021](#), when the subject was last on the agenda, no conclusions were adopted this time. President [Macron](#) stressed the importance of joint action in and with the Southern Neighbourhood.

### Transatlantic relations

EU leaders 'held a strategic discussion on transatlantic relations' without adopting conclusions. President [Michel](#) underlined the centrality of the transatlantic relationship, recalling the unfailing cooperation on Ukraine. President von der Leyen stressed that the US decision to invest in clean tech was positive, but underlined that the EU needed to maintain its 'global leadership in the clean tech sectors'. She presented a [plan](#) allowing a response to the [US Inflation Reduction Act](#).

*Main message of the President of the European Parliament:* President [Metsola](#) highlighted the protectionist aspect of the US Inflation Reduction Act, and stressed that climate change should be fought jointly, 'not at the expense of each other's industrial base'.

### Iran

For the [second time](#) in a row, the European Council focused on Iran, calling on the regime to annul the 'death penalty sentences pronounced and carried out in the context of the ongoing protests in Iran', expressing opposition to such practices and noting the Council's recent [conclusions on Iran](#).

### Other items

### Schengen

The European Council welcomed Croatia's entry into the Schengen area as of 1 January 2023. President Michel [reported](#) on the political debate between EU leaders on Romania's and Bulgaria's accession to the Schengen area, and expressed optimism that a decision on that matter could be taken in the course of 2023. In that context, President Metsola [spoke](#) of a 'broken promise' and stressed there was 'no justifiable reason' to refuse admission to the Schengen area for Bulgaria and Romania.

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