Council of the European Union

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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	European Council meeting (15 and 16 October 2026) – Draft conclusions

Following the proceedings of the Council (General Affairs), delegations will find below the draft conclusions of the European Council, in accordance with Article 3(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Council.

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I. COMPETITIVENESS

1. Recalling its previous conclusions in March and June 2026, the European Council addressed ongoing efforts to strengthen EU competitiveness in all its dimensions, including Europe's prosperity and social model, and improve living standards in the challenging geoeconomic context.

2. The European Council reviewed the implementation of the 'One Europe, One Market' agenda in line with the interinstitutional roadmap, and welcomed the progress already achieved on key proposals. At the same time, it calls for additional progress by the co-legislators and Commission, both on the level of ambition and on the agreed timelines.

3. To that end, the European Council underlines in particular the importance of advancing negotiations on deliverables for 2026, notably the 28th regime for company law, the Industrial Accelerator Act, the European grids package, and the digital, environmental and automotive simplification packages. In this context, the European Council takes note of the recent Council position on the food and feed safety simplification package. It also takes note of the recent Council position on the market integration and supervision package, which, along with the securitisation package, is an essential component of the Savings and Investment Union. It invites the co-legislators to conclude negotiations on all these files by the end of the year.

4. The European Council reconfirms the urgency of making decisive progress on deepening and integrating the Single Market by removing remaining barriers, including territorial supply constraints, and preventing new ones; on simplification and reducing administrative burdens; on affordable energy prices and the Energy Union 2030; on fostering Europe's industrial renewal and innovation and reducing dependencies; and on mobilising investment.

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5. In this context, the European Council calls on the Commission to come forward with further initiatives to streamline and accelerate planning and permitting procedures, to avoid gold-plating and to reduce administrative and regulatory burdens, including by putting forward a proposal to cut reporting obligations, in particular for SMEs.
It reiterates its call for legislative and regulatory self-restraint and calls on the co-legislators to take appropriate steps to consistently avoid the introduction of unnecessary bureaucratic burdens during the legislative process.

6. The European Council underlines the critical importance of tackling high energy prices. It discussed the impact of the current geopolitical context on global supply chains, energy security, and energy and fuel prices, including the effects on citizens, in particular the most vulnerable, industry and the wider economy. The European Council underlines that the current situation urgently requires a coordinated European response of targeted and temporary measures, taking into account the Member States' specific circumstances and safeguarding the Single Market. To that end, the European Council welcomes the intention of the Commission to:

   – prolong the temporary state aid framework for the most exposed industrial sectors;

   – propose amendments to the Methane Regulation to postpone requirements for gas and oil imports;

   – develop a short-term framework to optimise the capacity and efficiency of EU refineries; and

   – take initiatives to bundle energy demand.

   The European Council invites the Commission to put forward further measures to address soaring energy prices in the short term.

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7. The European Council also emphasises the importance of internationally coordinated measures to stabilise energy supplies and calls for unrestricted trade in energy and energy products between partner countries.

8. Recalling the overarching imperative of reducing the EU's dependence on volatile fossil fuel markets, the European Council stresses that the energy transition remains the most effective strategy for achieving Europe's strategic autonomy, strengthening resilience, structurally lowering energy prices, and delivering the clean, abundant and homegrown energy needed to power the economy of the future, by accelerating electrification and deploying renewable and low-carbon energy sources, grids and energy storage, as well as fostering energy efficiency.

9. In the context of the ongoing review of the ETS system, the European Council highlights the need to ensure a well-functioning, transparent and predictable carbon market, to foster European industrial competitiveness, to effectively protect against carbon leakage, and to preserve the essential role of the ETS in the climate and energy transition.

10. The European Council took stock of global macroeconomic imbalances, and invites the Commission to continue to engage in results-oriented dialogues, to make effective use of the EU's instruments, and to urgently enhance the EU toolbox with new instruments to better address these imbalances.

II. UKRAINE

11. [The European Council held an exchange of views with Volodymyr Zelenskyy, President of Ukraine. It expressed its full and resolute support to the people of Ukraine as they face particularly brutal attacks.]

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12. The European Council reaffirms its continued firm and unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders. The European Union will continue to provide, in coordination with like-minded partners and allies, comprehensive political, financial, economic, humanitarian, military and diplomatic support to Ukraine and its people.

13. Russia has escalated its large-scale, deliberate and systematic missile and drone attacks against Ukraine's civilians and civilian infrastructure, including energy and transport systems, and healthcare and educational facilities. The European Council strongly condemns these brutal attacks and commends the fortitude, determination and resilience of the Ukrainian people and their leadership in resisting Russian aggression and defending their land. Exercising its inherent right of self-defence, Ukraine has managed to stand its ground and push back against Russia's enormous pressure, preventing Russia from achieving its military and strategic objectives.

14. To help Ukraine prepare for winter, the European Council calls for further intensified efforts and coordination to urgently strengthen Ukraine's air and missile defence capabilities, the resilience of its critical infrastructure and energy system, including through the Ukraine Energy Support Fund, and to address other immediate needs. Enhanced regional energy cooperation and cross-border electricity interconnections play a pivotal role in this regard.

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15. The European Council reaffirms the strategic importance of security, stability and freedom of navigation in the Black Sea. By targeting Ukraine's agricultural infrastructure, Black Sea and Danube ports, border crossing points, export facilities and vessels, by blocking shipping lanes, and by destroying grain storage facilities, Russia is once again weaponising food and undermining global food security in particular in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Attacks against civilian shipping, including merchant and commercial vessels, such as the recent attacks in Bulgaria's and Romania's exclusive economic zones in the Black Sea, are unacceptable and constitute a serious violation of international and maritime law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). To avoid a further deterioration of the situation, the European Council calls for the immediate restoration of safe passage for grain cargo ships in the Black Sea, which is vital for sustainable grain exports. It also recalls the importance of measures aimed at further consolidating the EU-Ukraine Solidarity Lanes.

16. The European Union supports a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine based on the principles of the UN Charter and international law and underpinned by robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine. Only a solution that respects Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity can bring about a just and lasting peace. Borders must not be changed by force, the aggressor cannot be rewarded and Ukraine's long-term security and ability to defend itself must be guaranteed. The path to peace in Ukraine cannot be decided without Ukraine. The European Union will decide on matters of its competence or affecting its security.

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17. In accordance with the Union's aim to promote peace, as enshrined in the Treaties, the European Council reiterates its support for diplomatic efforts to bring Russia's war of aggression to an end, and underlines the EU's readiness to step up its engagement in that context. Europe has a key role to play in a future settlement and will defend its interests. The European Council urges Russia to show genuine willingness regarding peace, agree to a full, unconditional and immediate ceasefire and engage in meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting peace. Humanitarian relief efforts and confidence-building measures, notably the exchange of prisoners of war and the return of civilian detainees, in particular children, must continue as part of the pathway to peace.

18. The European Union and Member States stand ready to contribute to robust and credible security guarantees for Ukraine, notably through the Coalition of the Willing and in cooperation with the United States. This will include supporting Ukraine's ability to deter aggression and defend itself effectively, also in the long term. The contribution of the European Union and Member States will be based on their respective competences and capabilities and in line with international law. In this context, the European Council welcomes the agreement on the extension and revision of the mandate of the European Union Military Assistance Mission in support of Ukraine (EUMAM Ukraine). Member States remain committed to contributing to training and equipping the Ukrainian Armed Forces.

19. The European Council welcomes the ongoing disbursements to Ukraine from the EUR 90 billion Ukraine Support Loan for 2026 and 2027. It welcomes the fact that the means to cover Ukraine's budget and defence needs for 2026 have been identified. It calls on all actors, notably Ukraine, to intensify efforts, including to fulfil the requirements of the revised Ukraine Plan, to allow the timely disbursement of all the commitments from the Ukraine Support Loan and Ukraine Facility for 2026. The European Council recalls the importance of Ukraine continuing its reform efforts and upholding the rule of law.

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20. The European Council remains committed to addressing Ukraine's pressing financing needs, together with international partners, and in this regard looks forward to the updated assessment by the Commission and IMF. In this context, the European Council calls on international partners to swiftly step up their support to help meet Ukraine's pressing financing and military needs.

21. The European Council underlines the importance of further sustained efforts to provide military support to Ukraine. In this respect, it welcomes the agreement to release EUR 6.6 billion under the European Peace Facility. The European Council also welcomes recent bilateral aid provided by Member States and progress made in EU-Ukraine defence industrial cooperation. It welcomes the establishment of the Integrated Anti-Ballistic Missile Coalition.

22. All military support as well as security guarantees for Ukraine will be provided in full respect of the security and defence policy of certain Member States and taking into account the security and defence interests of all Member States.

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23. The European Union remains determined to further increase pressure on Russia so that it stops its brutal war of aggression and engages in meaningful negotiations towards peace. The European Council welcomes the recent adoption of the 21st sanctions package and of a substantial number of further listings of individuals and entities.
It calls for the swift and effective implementation of the measures concerning Russian ex-combatants and for further measures, in coordination with partners, including to reduce Russia's energy revenues, and to effectively close loopholes and fight circumvention, and to curb shadow fleet operations and undermine their business model. This requires a 'whole of route' approach and coordination among Member States and with partners, including a common approach to addressing the significant environmental, security and maritime safety risks posed by such vessels, in particular through more boarding operations, in line with international law, including UNCLOS.
The European Council regrets the United States' decision to temporarily lift sanctions on Russian diesel. It stresses the need to prevent grain stolen by Russia from temporarily occupied Ukrainian territories from being exported via the EU.
The European Council reiterates that, as long as there is no just and lasting peace in Ukraine, there should not be a normalisation of Russia's and Belarus' participation in international sports and cultural events, particularly through the display of national symbols.

24. The European Council strongly condemns the illegal organisation by Russia of so-called 'elections' in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine, which represents yet another blatant violation by Russia of international law, including the UN Charter, and of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity.

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25. The European Council reiterates its call on all countries to immediately cease any assistance to Russia in its war of aggression against Ukraine, whether direct or indirect, and notably through the provision of dual-use goods and components. In particular, it strongly condemns the deployment of the DPRK's military forces in the war against Ukraine as well as the continued military support provided to Russia by Iran, Belarus and the DPRK, among others.

26. The European Union remains committed to ensuring full accountability for war crimes and the other most serious crimes committed in connection with Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and fully supports ongoing efforts within the framework of the Council of Europe towards the operationalisation of the International Claims Commission for Ukraine and the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. The European Council urges Russia and Belarus to immediately ensure the safe and unconditional return to Ukraine of all unlawfully deported and transferred Ukrainian children and other civilians.

27. The European Council acknowledges the importance of the extension of temporary protection for displaced persons from Ukraine until March 2028.

28. The European Union remains committed to supporting Ukraine's repair, recovery and reconstruction, in coordination with international partners, including in the areas of demining assistance and psychological and psychosocial rehabilitation.

29. [The European Council welcomes the holding of the Intergovernmental Conference on the accession of Ukraine to the European Union and the opening of clusters 2 and 3 on 13 October 2026, and looks forward to the opening of all the other clusters as soon as possible, in line with the merit-based approach.]

30. The European Council will revert to this issue at its next meeting.

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III. REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

31. [The European Council welcomes the holding of the Intergovernmental Conference on the accession of the Republic of Moldova to the European Union and the opening of clusters 2 and 3 on 13 October 2026, and looks forward to the opening of all the other clusters as soon as possible, in line with the merit-based approach.]

IV. NEXT MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

32. Following the presentation of an updated draft Negotiating Box by the Irish Presidency, the European Council discussed the key elements needed for a balanced compromise on the next Multiannual Financial Framework.

33. The European Council invites its President to take the negotiations forward with a view to a timely agreement. An agreement before the end of 2026 would allow for the adoption of legislative acts in 2027, which is necessary to ensure that EU funding reaches beneficiaries without interruption in January 2028.

V. MIDDLE EAST

34. The European Council expresses its grave concern about the current security situation and the continuing military escalation in the region. The European Union will continue to underline the need to respect international law and will engage, in close coordination with regional partners, in diplomatic efforts to de-escalate and ensure peace and stability in the Middle East.

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35. The European Council calls on all actors to cease destabilising activities and reiterates the vital need to ensure freedom of navigation and maritime security in accordance with international law and the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). The current situation risks leading to lasting disruptions to global supply chains, especially with regard to energy, fertilisers and food, which would be highly detrimental to economies and vulnerable populations around the world.

Iran

36. The European Council reiterates its strong condemnation of Iran's attacks against countries in the region and its solidarity with countries affected. It calls on Iran and its proxies to refrain from such attacks and any destabilising activities, and to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of countries in the region.

37. The European Council also strongly condemns any acts that threaten navigation or prevent commercial vessels from entering and exiting the Strait of Hormuz. Any arrangement related to the Strait of Hormuz must be in line with international law and UNCLOS, and not limit freedom of navigation or alter its governance in any way.

38. The European Council strongly condemns the ongoing violence and repression by the Iranian regime against its own people. It calls for the respect of the universal human rights and fundamental freedoms of the Iranian people, including the right to choose their own future.

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Yemen

39. The European Council strongly condemns the Houthis' continued military escalation in Yemen and their strikes against Saudi Arabia, in particular those affecting civilians, and civilian infrastructure, and expresses its solidarity with the legitimate government of Yemen and with Saudi Arabia. It underlines the need to avoid aggravating the already dire humanitarian situation, and calls for increased international assistance in this regard.

40. The European Council calls on the Houthis to immediately cease all military action and all attacks against civilian shipping, which threaten maritime security in the Red Sea and Bab al-Mandab Strait.

41. The European Council recalls the role of the EU maritime defensive operations EUNAVFOR ASPIDES and EUNAVFOR ATALANTA, highlights their potential to contribute to stabilising the region, also by liaising with existing initiatives, and calls for their reinforcement, in line with their mandates. In this respect, it underlines the importance of complementarity between international initiatives to ensure freedom of navigation.

Gaza/West Bank

42. Recalling its previous conclusions, the European Council reaffirms the European Union's commitment to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace based on the two-state solution in accordance with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions where two democratic states, Israel and Palestine, live side-by-side in peace within secure and recognised borders. It strongly condemns actions, policies and rhetoric that undermine the viability of the two-state solution. The European Union will continue to support the Global Alliance for the Implementation of the Two-State Solution.

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43. The European Council reiterates its grave concern over the deteriorating situation in Gaza and the West Bank, including the persistent and devastating humanitarian crisis in Gaza, which risks worsening as winter approaches. It urges Israel to allow immediate, unimpeded access and sustained distribution of humanitarian assistance at scale into and throughout Gaza, including via the Cyprus Maritime Corridor to supplement land routes, to allow access for international media, as well as to reopen Gaza border crossings and the medical corridor between Gaza and the West Bank. Israel must enable the UN and its agencies, and humanitarian organisations, to work independently and impartially to save lives and reduce suffering, and comply with all its obligations under international law, including international humanitarian law. The protection of civilians must be ensured at all times.

44. The European Council expresses its concern about the lack of progress in the implementation of the ceasefire and all other provisions of United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2803. It calls on all actors to fully implement them without delay, in line with relevant UN Security Council Resolutions and international political and legal principles, in particular the permanent decommissioning of weapons from Hamas and other non-state armed groups, the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the civilian transition in Gaza. Hamas should not have any role in the future governance of Gaza.

45. The European Union will continue to contribute to the implementation of UNSCR 2803, as well as to the reconstruction and redevelopment of Gaza, in line with international law. In this context, the European Council welcomes the renewal of the mandates of the European Union Border Assistance Mission for the Rafah Crossing Point (EU BAM Rafah) and the European Union Police Mission for the Palestinian Territories (EUPOL COPPS). The European Council welcomes the launch of the Team Gaza Initiative and calls for close coordination with the Palestinian Authority, the United Nations and international partners on the early recovery and reconstruction of Gaza.

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46. The European Council regrets the announced postponement of the Palestinian elections. It calls on the Palestinian Authority to organise legislative and presidential elections as soon as possible in early 2027. The European Union will continue to support the Palestinian Authority, including in its reform agenda. The European Council calls again on Israel to urgently release all withheld clearance revenues and extend the correspondent banking services between Israeli and Palestinian banks, both being necessary to ensure the proper functioning of the Palestinian Authority and the delivery of essential services to the population.

47. The European Council reiterates its condemnation of Israel's unilateral actions aiming to expand its presence in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, which the International Court of Justice's advisory opinion of 19 July 2024 declared to be unlawful. It also strongly condemns the continued and growing settler violence against Palestinian civilians, including Christian communities and other minorities, calls for accountability, and reiterates its call for the preservation of and respect for the Status Quo of Jerusalem's Holy Sites. The European Council urges Israel to immediately reverse the expansion of settlements, which are illegal under international law, including by withdrawing its tender for construction in the E1 area. It reiterates that businesses should not bid for construction contracts for E1 or other settlement developments and underlines the legal, economic and reputational consequences for businesses and financial institutions participating in settlement construction, including the risk of serious breaches of international law.

48. The European Council underlines the importance of continued diplomatic presence in the occupied Palestinian territories, including that of EU Member States, in order to engage with the Palestinian Authority and thereby contribute to the two-state solution.

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Lebanon

49. The European Council welcomes the framework agreement signed by Lebanon and Israel in June 2026. It urges all actors to fully abide by the terms of the agreement and to engage constructively in further talks with a view to a permanent end to hostilities, in full respect of international law, including international humanitarian law.

50. The European Council calls on all parties to fully implement UNSCR 1701, on which any lasting solution must be based. It reiterates its call for the full disarmament of Hezbollah. It calls on Israel to respect Lebanon's sovereignty and territorial integrity and to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, in line with UNSCR 1701. The European Council recalls the crucial importance of a continued international presence in Lebanon in a post-UNIFIL context.

51. The European Union will continue to support the Lebanese people, including over the long term, in close coordination with international partners. The European Council reiterates the EU's full support for the Lebanese government's efforts to strengthen the Lebanese Armed Forces in view of gaining control of the whole Lebanese territory and to establish the state's monopoly on holding weapons. The European Council welcomes the establishment of the European Union Support Mission in Lebanon.

Syria

52. The European Council recalls its support for a peaceful, inclusive and Syrian-led transition, and in this regard welcomes recent developments including the inaugural session of the People's Assembly. The European Union is committed to deepening its partnership with Syria to the benefit of the Syrian people. The European Council urges all actors, both domestic and external, to fully respect Syria's unity, independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, in accordance with international law.

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VI. EUROPEAN DEFENCE AND SECURITY

53. In an environment where Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine remains an existential challenge for the European Union, the intensification of hybrid attacks, including acts of sabotage, against the Union and its Member States and the repeated violations of Member States' airspace and territorial waters in recent months reinforce the importance and the urgency of accelerating the delivery of the objective to decisively ramp up Europe's defence readiness.

54. The European Council strongly condemns Russia's escalating and increasingly reckless behaviour, and reaffirms its unwavering commitment to the security of all Member States. Russia's actions will not remain unanswered. In view of such intensified hybrid campaigns by Russia and other hostile actors, the European Council calls for additional efforts to urgently strengthen resilience, enhance preparedness and protect critical infrastructure. At the same time, the European Union and the Member States will make full use of all instruments and mechanisms available, including the EU hybrid toolbox, at the request of the Member State concerned, to prevent, deter and respond to hybrid attacks, and, recalling the primary responsibility of Member States in this regard, the Council should intensify work to that end. The European Union and the Member States will act resolutely and in a coordinated manner to address these actions. In this respect, additional measures will be considered as a matter of urgency, including further restrictive measures as well as reviewing and tightening visa requirements and policy regarding Russian nationals. The European Council calls on the Council to accelerate work on all relevant work strands and in particular on the Action Plan on Drone and Counter-Drone Security. The European Union will also continue to work closely with partners to detect and counter hybrid activities by third countries.

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55. The European Council reiterates its commitment to deliver at pace and at scale on its 2030 defence readiness objective, so that Europe is better equipped to act and deal autonomously, in a coordinated way, and with a 360° approach, with immediate and future challenges and threats. It also stresses the importance of ensuring the defence of all EU land, air and maritime borders. It encourages continued work on the 'Eastern Flank Watch' project and other initiatives, including relevant European Defence Projects of Common Interest (EDPCIs), that contribute to the protection of all EU borders.

56. In this context, recalling its conclusions of March and June 2026, the European Council welcomes the presentation of the first annual defence readiness report prepared by the European Defence Agency (EDA) with the support of the Commission and the High Representative and agrees with the overall assessment it presents, notably concerning strategic enablers. The European Council highlights the importance of stepping up efforts to reduce strategic dependencies and calls on Member States to accelerate work to address critical capability gaps. It welcomes progress in the priority capability areas identified at EU level in full coherence with NATO, and calls on Member States to redouble their efforts in all capability coalitions with a view to urgently making progress on existing joint projects and launching new ones.

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57. Further efforts are also required to strengthen the European defence technological and industrial base, so that it is able both to support Europe's defence readiness and to supply, at the necessary speed and scale, the priority equipment required to support Ukraine. This implies adapting and ramping up production capacities and delivering new technologies and innovation, through research, as well as ensuring resilient supply chains. This approach will also help boost European industrial and technological competitiveness, including for SMEs. The European Council recalls that demand aggregation on the basis of standardised requirements and economies of scale are key to providing predictability to industry, lowering costs and fostering interoperability, and that Member States should therefore increasingly gear defence investment towards joint development, production and procurement, with the support of the EDA. The European Council also recalls the need to continue to facilitate the defence industry's access to finance and invites the European Investment Bank to continue its efforts in this regard.

58. The European Council stresses the importance of defence industrial cooperation with Ukraine, which contributes to strengthening Europe's defence readiness, building on all existing initiatives and drawing on Ukraine's unique experience and know-how.
It underlines the need to deepen defence industrial partnerships with Ukraine by integrating its defence industry into the European defence technological and industrial base.

59. Full use should be made of available instruments for capability development and industrial reinforcement. The European Council welcomes in that regard the identification by the Council of EDPCIs, in the framework of the European Defence Industry Programme, and the adoption of the Regulation establishing the Programme for agile and rapid defence innovation. The European Council calls on the co-legislators to agree on the military mobility proposal by the end of the year. It looks forward to upcoming proposals from the Commission on defence procurement.

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60. The European Council recalls that a stronger and more capable European Union in the field of security and defence will contribute positively to global and transatlantic security and is complementary to NATO, which remains, for those States that are members of it, the foundation of their collective defence. The European Council underlines the importance of working together with like-minded partners, who share the EU's foreign and security policy goals.

61. The above is without prejudice to the specific character of the security and defence policy of certain Member States, and takes into account the security and defence interests of all Member States, in accordance with the Treaties.

VII. MIGRATION

62. The European Council held a strategic discussion on the EU's comprehensive approach to migration and took stock of progress in the implementation of its previous conclusions, including in the light of the recent letter from the President of the Commission.

63. The European Council welcomes the sustained progress achieved in significantly and consistently reducing the number of irregular border crossings into the European Union to the lowest level since 2021 as well as the steady decrease in the number of asylum applications.

64. Recalling that migration is a European challenge that requires a European response, the European Council calls for intensified work to continue on all strands, including on the implementation of adopted EU legislation and continued reporting and evaluation as well as on the external dimension and comprehensive partnerships with countries of origin and transit, following a whole-of-route approach, to address root causes and to fight human trafficking and smuggling with a view to preventing loss of life and irregular departures, in line with EU and international law.

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65. Making full use of the recent EU rules on return, the European Council calls on the Council, Commission and Member States to improve effective returns, including by increasing scrutiny over third countries which do not cooperate sufficiently on return and readmission. All relevant EU policies, instruments and tools, including diplomacy, development, trade and visas, should be used as leverage.

66. Recalling its conclusions of 17 October 2024, the European Council reaffirms the European Union's determination to ensure effective control of the EU's external borders, taking into account the diversity of migratory routes, and to prevent and counter irregular migration, including through new ways, in line with EU and international law.

67. The European Council underlines the need to intensify the fight against migrant smuggling, including against organised networks, and against all forms of instrumentalisation of migrants.

68. Moreover, the European Council underlines the importance of the European Union and Member States being in a position to anticipate, prevent and respond to situations of crisis in the field of migration, including mass arrivals and all cases of instrumentalisation. In this regard, the European Council takes note of the intention of the Commission to work closely with the Member States in the development of an emergency framework. It stresses the importance of improving situational awareness, including by enhancing social media monitoring capabilities.

69. The European Council recalls the importance of the proper functioning of the Schengen area, in accordance with the revised Schengen Borders Code.

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VIII. ENLARGEMENT AND REFORMS

70. Recalling the Granada Declaration, the European Council held a strategic discussion on the way forward on enlargement and internal reforms.

71. Recalling its previous conclusions, the European Council stresses the continued importance of enlargement as a geostrategic investment in peace, security, stability and prosperity. It is a driver for improving the economic and social conditions of European citizens, reducing disparities between countries, and must foster the values on which the Union is founded. Looking ahead to the prospect of a further enlarged Union, both future Member States and the EU need to be ready at the time of accession. Aspiring members need to continue their reform efforts, notably in the area of rule of law, in line with the merit-based nature of the accession process and with the assistance of the EU. In parallel, the Union needs to advance internal work and reforms, set its long-term ambitions and the ways to achieve them, and address key questions related to its priorities and policies as well as its capacity to act. This will make the European Union stronger and enhance European sovereignty.

72. The European Council recalls that the accession process is merit-based and that therefore each candidate country advances in its accession negotiations on the basis of its individual progress.

73. In that light, the European Council takes note of the Commission's Communication on 'Preparing for a wider Union' and calls on the Council to analyse all strands and, on the basis of this analysis, to take work forward.

74. The European Council welcomes the ongoing work on drafting the accession treaty with Montenegro. It notes the intention of the Council Presidency to reach an agreement on the provisional closure of all negotiating chapters by the end of this year, subject to the implementation of the corresponding reforms by Montenegro, and to work towards finalising the drafting of the accession treaty as soon as possible.

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IX. OTHER ITEMS

The Arctic region

75. The European Council underlines the strategic importance of the Arctic region for European and global security and prosperity and the need to further step up EU engagement to promote a secure, peaceful, sustainable and resilient Arctic. In this context, the European Council takes note of the European Arctic Summit in Rovaniemi on 13-14 September 2026 and looks forward to the upcoming Joint Communication by the Commission and the High Representative on Europe's Northern Neighbourhood.

Ceuta and Melilla

76. The European Council underlines the specific situation of Ceuta and Melilla, which have the only EU land borders on the African continent. It expresses its solidarity with and support for Spain in relation to the sudden mass influx of migrants into Ceuta on 30 and 31 July 2026, and welcomes EU financial and operational support, given the specific situation of Ceuta and Melilla.

A safer digital sphere

77. In the face of increasing foreign information manipulation and interference, the European Council recalls the importance of strengthening Europe's democratic resilience and the legal responsibility of online platforms to fight the dissemination of disinformation and illegal content. To that end, the European Council calls on the Commission to swiftly finalise the revision of the guidelines on the mitigation of systemic risks for electoral processes adopted under the Digital Services Act.

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78. To protect minors in the digital sphere, the European Council calls for the effective implementation of existing regulation and the development of a clear, robust, effective and proportionate EU framework that strengthens the responsibility of online platforms to ensure a safe environment for all users, especially children and the youth, while preserving the privacy of users and respecting national competences. It takes note in that context of the Commission proposal for an EU KIDS Act, which includes a minimum age for access to social media, and invites the co-legislators to examine it swiftly.

Gulf Cooperation Council

79. The European Council looks forward to the upcoming EU-Gulf Cooperation Council Summit, to be held on 24 October 2026.

Upholding international law

80. Recalling its June 2026 conclusions, the European Council deeply regrets the announcement by the United States to impose sanctions against the International Criminal Court as an institution. The European Council urges the United States to reverse these latest measures, while noting the United States decision to delay the entry into force of the measures and its readiness to discuss its concerns with the State Parties to the Rome Statute. This creates space for diplomacy, with a view to securing the prompt reversal of these measures and preventing any further measures that seek to undermine the independence and integrity of the Court.

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81. The European Council reaffirms the European Union's support for the institutions upholding international law, including by effectively protecting international courts and their officials from any threats or sanctions, and in this regard underlines the importance of unimpeded access to financial and other services and the value of EU operators' continued service to the International Criminal Court. In that light, the European Council reaffirms the EU's readiness to take all necessary measures. The European Council requests the Commission to take all appropriate initiatives contributing to the protection of the Court and the mitigation of sanctions, specifically towards EU companies so that they can continue providing services to the Court.

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