



Council of the
European Union

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Permanent Representatives Committee/Council

Subject: European Council meeting (18 October 2018)
– Draft conclusions

In accordance with Article 3(1) of the Rules of Procedure of the European Council, delegations will find attached the draft conclusions prepared by the President of the European Council, in close cooperation with the member of the European Council representing the Member State holding the six-monthly Presidency of the Council and with the President of the Commission.

I. MIGRATION

1. The European Council assessed the state of implementation of its June conclusions and called for work to be continued on all elements, as part of its comprehensive approach to migration.
2. Following the informal Leaders' discussion in Salzburg, the European Council highlights the importance of strengthening cooperation on migration with countries of origin and transit as part of a broader partnership. In this context, it welcomes the Commission's initiative for a new Africa - Europe Alliance for Sustainable Investment and Jobs.
3. The fight against people smuggling networks needs to be stepped up: work with third countries on investigating, apprehending and prosecuting smugglers and traffickers should be intensified and a joint task force should be established at Europol's European Migrant Smuggling Centre. Smuggling networks' online communications should be better monitored and disrupted. The Council is invited to develop a comprehensive, actionable set of operational measures to this end by December. More should also be done to facilitate effective returns.
4. The European Council invites the European Parliament and the Council to examine as a matter of priority the recent Commission proposals on the Return Directive, the Asylum agency and the European Border and Coast Guard, ensuring the most efficient use of resources and with due respect for the responsibility of the Member States. Existing readmission agreements should be better implemented and new agreements concluded, including by using the necessary leverage.
5. The Austrian Chancellor reported on the reform of the Common European Asylum System and on the prospects for progress on its various elements. The European Council encouraged the Council Presidency to continue its work with a view to concluding it as soon as possible.

II. INTERNAL SECURITY

6. In recent years, real progress has been made to strengthen our collective security through better cooperation and the adoption of a range of legal texts, such as on Passenger Name Records, combatting terrorism or ensuring a high common level of network and information security. These need to be fully implemented.
7. Recalling its previous conclusions concerning the Salisbury attack, the European Council condemns the hostile cyber-attack operation carried out against the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). Such threats and attacks strengthen our common resolve to further enhance the EU's internal security and disrupt hostile activities of foreign intelligence networks on our territories. The EU will further strengthen its resilience and capabilities to deal with cyber, hybrid as well as chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear (CBRN) threats. The European Council welcomes the adoption of the new regime of restrictive measures to address the threat from chemical weapons and looks forward to early progress on the listing of relevant individuals and entities.
8. The European Council also calls for measures to:
 - combat cyber and cyber-enabled illegal and malicious activities and build strong cybersecurity. In order to strengthen EU resilience against cyber-attacks, negotiations on all cybersecurity proposals should be concluded before the end of the legislature, while work on a European Cybersecurity Industrial, Technology and Research Competence Centre and a Network of National Coordination Centres as well as on preventing the dissemination of terrorist content online should be taken forward as a matter of priority;

- protect the Union's democratic systems and combat disinformation, including in the context of the upcoming European elections. In this respect, the measures proposed by the Commission on election cooperation networks, online transparency, protection against cybersecurity incidents, unlawful data manipulation and fighting disinformation campaigns and tightening the rules on European political party funding deserve rapid examination and operational follow-up. To complement those measures, the European Council looks forward to the Action Plan for a coordinated EU response to disinformation, to be presented by December 2018 as set out in its June conclusions;
- strengthen the capacity to prevent and respond effectively to radicalisation and terrorism. Solutions should be found to ensure swift and efficient cross-border access to e-evidence in order to effectively fight terrorism and other serious and organised crime; the Commission proposals on e-evidence and access to financial information as well as to better combat money laundering should be agreed on by the end of the legislature. The Commission initiative to extend the competences of the European Public Prosecutor's Office to cross-border terrorist crimes should be examined;
- provide Member States' law enforcement authorities and Europol with adequate resources to face new challenges posed by technological developments and the evolving security threat landscape, including through pooling of equipment, enhanced partnerships with the private sector, interagency cooperation and improved access to data;
- improve the interoperability of information systems and databases. Much progress has already been made in developing information systems and information exchange, but further efforts are needed to make them work together, in particular through a common identity repository. Negotiations on pending proposals, including on a strengthened European Criminal Records System (ECRIS), should be concluded by the end of the year and all measures needed for their implementation should be taken with the highest priority;

- strengthen our crisis management capacity and the coherence and effectiveness of the EU and national crisis response mechanisms. Negotiations on the EU civil protection mechanism proposal should be concluded by the end of the year.

II. EXTERNAL RELATIONS

9. In the light of events, the European Council may address specific foreign policy issues.
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