

## **JUSTICE and HOME AFFAIRS COUNCIL**

### **Friday 13 March in Brussels**

The Council will be chaired by, Davor Božinović, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior of Croatia.

In the morning, home affairs ministers will exchange views on the **strategic guidelines for justice and home affairs**, with a view to their endorsement ahead of the March European Council meeting. They will then come back to the **situation at the EU's external borders** with Turkey. The Council will further develop the EU's response to needs expressed by Greece.

Over lunch, ministers responsible for civil protection issues will discuss the **coronavirus outbreak**.

Representatives of the **Schengen associated countries** Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland will also be present for the point on the situation at the EU's external borders.

A **press conference** will take place at the end of the meeting **(+/-15.00)**

[\*Justice and Home Affairs Council, 13 March 2020 meeting page\*](#)

[\*Press conferences and public events by video streaming\*](#)

[\*Video coverage in broadcast quality \(MPEG4\) and photo gallery\*](#)

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

# HOME AFFAIRS

## JHA strategic guidelines

Ministers will exchange views on the **strategic guidelines for justice and home affairs**, with a view to their approval ahead of the March European Council meeting.

The draft strategic guidelines focus on how to organise the work, tools and structures in the area of justice and home affairs to achieve the EU's common objectives. On the basis of the strategic agenda 2019-2024, adopted by EU leaders in June 2019, the strategic guidelines define four cross-cutting blocks:

- **values and rule of law**: fundamental rights and the protection of the rule of law
- **mutual trust**: mutual recognition instruments, Eurojust and EPPO, cooperation in criminal and civil law matters and strengthening of the cross-border legal certainty, Schengen
- **one Europe, one space**: borders, migration, asylum, internal security and terrorism
- **mastering new technologies and artificial intelligence**: framework for the development of artificial intelligence, data security and data protection, ethics, challenges of technological development for security, law enforcement and justice

The Treaty of Lisbon tasks the European Council with defining the strategic guidelines for legislative and operational planning with in the area of freedom, security and justice.

Following the adoption of the June 2019 strategic agenda, justice and home ministers and experts took part in a reflection process on the different aspects of the area of freedom, security and justice which wrapped up in December 2019. On the basis of the results of this reflection process the Croatian Presidency prepared the draft strategic guidelines, which aim to take forward the strategic agenda and facilitate its implementation.

For more information:

> [Strategic guidelines for justice and home affairs \(background information\)](#)

> [A new strategic agenda 2019-2024, 20 June 2019 \(press release\)](#)

## Migration: situation at EU's external borders

Home affairs ministers will come back to the **situation at the EU's external borders** with Turkey. Ministers will be informed by the member states concerned, the Commission and the relevant EU agencies of the latest developments at the EU's external borders with Turkey, as well as on how the measures mentioned in the home affairs ministers statement of 4 March are being or will be implemented. The Council will further develop the EU's response to needs expressed by Greece and other member states who may be similarly affected.

Since 27 February 2020, Greece has experienced growing pressure on its border with Turkey. On 1 March Frontex received a request from the Greek government to launch a rapid border intervention at its sea borders in the Aegean. On 2 March, Frontex received a second request from Greece to launch a rapid border intervention at its external land borders. These interventions rely on the rapid reaction pools of 1500 officers and equipment from member states, which are required to provide officers and staff within 5 days and equipment within 10 days.

On 3 March, the Presidents of the European Council, European Commission and European Parliament, as well as the Prime Minister of Croatia, which holds the Council Presidency, travelled to Greece and Bulgaria and reiterated EU support to these countries.

On 4 March, home affairs ministers met at an extraordinary meeting and issued a statement on the situation at the EU's external borders. They expressed solidarity with Greece, Bulgaria, Cyprus and other member states who might be similarly affected, strongly rejected Turkey's use of migratory pressure for political purposes, reiterated the EU's and member states' determination to effectively protect the EU's external borders and indicated they stand ready to strengthen their support to areas under pressure.

On the same day, the European Commission presented an action plan for immediate measures to support Greece, including the provision of up to €700 million in financial assistance to the country. Greece has also triggered a call within the civil protection mechanism for medical equipment, shelters, tents, blankets and other necessary supplies.

On 6 March, foreign affairs ministers met at an extraordinary meeting to discuss the crisis in Idlib and the situation at the EU external borders with Turkey, and issued a statement.

On 9 March, Presidents Charles Michel and Ursula von der Leyen met President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in Brussels. The leaders discussed bilateral relations, the implementation of the EU-Turkey statement on migration, security and stability in the region and the crisis in Syria. They tasked the EU High Representative Josep Borrell and the Turkish Foreign Minister to work over the next few days on clarifying the implementation of the statement.

For more information:

- > [Statement on the situation at the EU's external borders, 4 March 2020](#)
- > [EU-Turkey leaders' meeting, 9 March 2020](#)
- > [Statement of the Foreign Affairs Council, 6 March 2020](#)
- > [Commission action plan for immediate measures to support Greece, 4 March 2020](#)
- > [Remarks by President Charles Michel following his visit to the Greek Turkish border](#)

### **Civil protection: COVID-19**

Over lunch, ministers responsible for civil protection issues will discuss the **coronavirus outbreak**, following the video conference discussion by EU leaders on 10 March.

They will focus in particular on:

- key lessons learnt so far in the tackling of the COVID-19 outbreak
- what additional preparedness and response measures can be expected from the EU civil protection mechanism and how to step up information sharing and the response to cross-cutting bottlenecks making full use of the IPCR toolbox
- what additional support would member states be ready to provide

For more information:

- > [COVID-19 coronavirus outbreak](#)
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