



## The Estonian Presidency Programme for the General Affairs Council (GAC)

In the General Affairs Council, the Estonian Presidency will focus on promoting and consolidating the European project. In doing so, we will concentrate on, among other things, the preparation of the European Council.

The discussions on the **future of the European Union** and how to protect the needs and interests of EU citizens need to continue, taking into account the Bratislava Roadmap and the goals set in the Rome declaration. The Estonian Presidency is ready to advance the discussions on the vision of the European future; inter alia taking into account the thematic reflection papers published by the European Commission.

During our Presidency, we will continue the implementation of the **Inter-Institutional Agreement on Better Law-Making (IIA)** with the aim of improving the legislation process to make it less burdensome and to make policy making more effective. On legislative programming, the Estonian Presidency intends to hold discussions on priorities for 2018, so that the European Commission will be able to take into account the Council's views when adopting the Commission's 2018 Work Programme. Our aim during the Presidency is to agree on a joint declaration between the European Parliament, the European Commission and the Council on the legislative priorities for the year 2018. In addition to the discussions of legislative programming, the Estonian Presidency will also be ready to continue work on other items of the IIA, like improved practical arrangements for cooperation and information sharing regarding the negotiation and conclusion of international agreements and work on delegated and implementing acts.

The Estonian Presidency considers the **promotion and strengthening of inter-institutional cooperation and transparency** very important, and is committed to working towards achieving an agreement on the mandatory transparency register. Estonia also stands ready to carry forward the work on the composition of the European Parliament, before the elections in 2019, based on proposals by the European Parliament.

In accordance with the Council conclusions on the **rule of law** adopted by the General Affairs Council in 2014, the Estonian Presidency aims to continue the discussion on the principles and protection of the rule of law, including through a rule of law dialogue in the General Affairs Council. Considering that media freedom and pluralism are the cornerstones of a functioning democracy, Estonia would like to discuss how these tenets of democracy are challenged in the digital age.

The Estonian Presidency will continue to advance **EU enlargement** within the broader framework of security, stability, democracy and rule of law in Europe. The Estonian approach is based on the understanding that countries which respect and promote the core values of the European Union and meet the strict and fair conditionality should be able to advance in the enlargement process. The Estonian Presidency remains open to discussions on the enlargement process and the progress of individual candidate countries or potential candidates based on reports by the Commission.

The Estonian Presidency will continue the discussion on the **European Union Semester**. The General Affairs Council will hold a debate on the European Commission's Annual Growth Survey, which outlines the economic growth priorities for the next year.





Keeping in mind the need to create a safer Europe for our citizens, the Estonian Presidency plans to promote **cybersecurity cooperation** and raise awareness of this area as a source of opportunities rather than an obstacle. We seek to update the European Union Cybersecurity Strategy, and we will pursue the adoption of Council conclusions in that regard.

The Estonian Presidency will continue to pay close attention to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the EU.

## **GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (COHESION)**

The promotion of cohesion policy is an important part of strengthening the European Union. In the Cohesion format, the Presidency will **discuss the results, implementation and the future of the cohesion policy**, based on the Commission's Seventh Report on Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion, discussion papers, published research and earlier discussions in other Council configurations.

## **GENERAL AFFAIRS COUNCIL (ART 50)**

Between the meetings of the European Council, the General Affairs Council will ensure that the negotiations are conducted in line with the European Council guidelines and the Council negotiating directives. During these negotiations, the overarching aim of the Estonian Presidency is to maintain the unity of the 27 Member States and to facilitate reaching an agreement with the United Kingdom. As the Presidency, we consider our role to be at the service of the 27 Member States, and to work closely and in a transparent manner with the relevant EU institutions.

