

LXXI COSAC

Brussels, 24-26 March 2024

BACKGROUND NOTE

Session I: Review of the 2019-2024 European legislature and prospects for the Council's strategic agenda for 2024-2029

The 2019-2024 strategic agenda

Following the elections in May 2019, the European Union defined the priorities that have shaped the political agenda to date. Subsequently, in June 2019, European leaders translated the priorities into the European Union's strategic agenda for the period 2019 to 2024. The aim was to ensure and serve as guidance for the work that would take place within the European institutions during this period.

This programme is structured around the following four priorities: protecting citizens and freedoms; building a strong and dynamic economic base; building a climate-neutral, green, fair, and social Europe; and promoting Europe's interests and values on the world stage.

The European Commission's priorities for 2019-2024

The European Commission has also chosen six priorities for the period 2019-2024:

1. Transforming the European Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy, while preserving Europe's natural environment and combating climate change through a Green Deal for Europe. In addition, the aim is to make Europe carbon-neutral and resource-efficient by 2050.
2. Investing in business, research, and innovation to embrace digital transformation.
3. Achieving a people-centred economy by strengthening the European Union's economy while preserving jobs and reducing inequalities.
4. Promoting the European way of life, defending fundamental rights and the rule of law as the basis for equality, tolerance, and social equity.
5. Generating a new impulse for European democracy through transparency and integrity in the legislative process.

The priorities of the 2019-2024 strategic agenda and of the European Commission have been further developed in the European Commission's Annual Work Programme.

The 2024-2029 strategic agenda

The current strategic agenda guides the work of the European institutions until the European elections in 2024. Consequently, the process of drawing up the next strategic agenda, for the period 2024-2029, was initiated by the President of the European Council, Charles Michel, in a letter dated June 2023. In this letter, he listed four key points: consolidating our economic and social base (notably through economic and digital transitions, competitiveness, innovation and health); meeting the energy challenge; strengthening our security and defence capabilities; and deepening our cooperation with the rest of the world.

In his letter, the President of the European Council added that the European Union should also strengthen its general approach to migration. Finally, the issue of the enlargement of the European Union and its integration capacity were also addressed.

The informal meeting of heads of state or government in Granada

Discussions on the strategic agenda for 2024-2029 continued during the Spanish Presidency. At the informal meeting held on 6 October 2023 in Granada, the heads of state or government discussed the future priorities to be included in the strategic agenda for 2024-2029: security and defence, resilience and competitiveness, energy, migration, global engagement, and enlargement.

The Granada Declaration contains a basis for strategic reflection by the European Institutions over the coming months. In addition, and in order to make the Union more prosperous and stronger, the heads of state or government have committed themselves to making progress on enlargement. The Granada Declaration is therefore not only the beginning, but also the basis for the process of defining the guidelines and priorities of the 2024-2029 strategic agenda.

On the question of how migration is being managed within the European Union, the Union should be able to manage migratory flows more humanely, more effectively and also more fairly. Negotiations on the new migration and asylum pact are still ongoing.

Latest developments

As part of the priorities of the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union, Belgium will play - in close cooperation with the President of the European Council - a central role in the preparation and adoption of the Council's strategic agenda for the period 2024 to 2029.

The Belgian Presidency also intends to encourage the Member States and the EU institutions to continue their reflections on the future of Europe, in order for the EU to strengthen its capacity to act within and outside the Union, including in the long term. The

EU will need to review and, where necessary, reform its policies, institutional mechanisms and budgetary procedures in order to be able to serve and protect its citizens.

In terms of foreign affairs, the Belgian Presidency will facilitate a broader discussion on the future of the EU's foreign policy, development, trade, security, and defence in order to contribute to the preparation of the post-2024 strategic agenda.

With regard to employment and social policy, one of the main objectives of the Belgian Presidency is to consolidate the European Pillar of Social Rights. The Presidency will support ambitious new strategies to achieve equal opportunities, gender equality, and non-discrimination. It will also strive to achieve the objectives of the Porto Summit in terms of employment, skills and poverty reduction by 2030.¹

In terms of research and innovation, the Belgian Presidency is committed to promoting open strategic autonomy for the European Union. This requires a balance between security and competitiveness, strengthening the resilience and future capacity of the Union to act autonomously while collaborating with its global partners.

Discussion points:

- To what extent have the priorities of the 2019-2024 strategic agenda been achieved?
- Have the objectives of the European Commission's work programme for 2019-2024 been achieved?
- What could be improved to ensure the success of the next strategic agenda?
- Which political domain do you consider to be a priority for the next strategic agenda?

¹ See the Porto Declaration: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/fr/press/press-releases/2021/05/08/the-porto-declaration/>, consulted on 29 February 2024.