

A glance at:

- **The European Council meeting 20-21/10**

President Tusk sent the invitation letter to the members of the European Council on Tuesday (18/10) for the meeting that took place at the end of the same week. In the latter, the President introduced the three main topics that would be discussed during the meeting: Migration, Trade and Russia. Regarding the first, the President stated that the meeting would focus more on the Central Mediterranean route and, therefore, on the work done with countries of origin and transit in Africa. As far as Trade is concerned, the President mentioned a special responsibility regarding the European Union (EU)-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). Finally, the Russian discussion would be addressed bearing in mind the objective of framing long-term relations with the country, although the bombing of the Syrian city of Aleppo would also be discussed. In his doorstep remarks before the meeting, President Tusk mentioned a few of the topics already introduced, namely CETA and Russia, although the migration dossier was left out. President Tusk also welcomed Theresa May to the meeting, with the hope that she would realise that “the European Union is simply the best company in the world”. The High Representative also mentioned Russia amongst the topics, and echoed President Tusk in assuring that the scope of the meeting would not be to decide whether or not to impose sanctions to Russia for the bombing of Aleppo.

The President of the European Commission (EC), Jean-Claude Juncker, also gave a speech on the conclusions of the European Council meeting, underlining that not only CETA was discussed, but that positive results had been achieved also in other domains, such as migration.

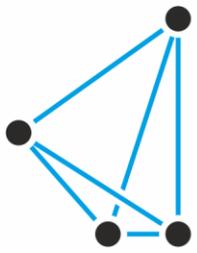
The main results stemming from the meeting are enclosed below and further addressed separately.

Links:

- [Invitation letter by President Donald Tusk to the members of the European Council](#)
- [Doorstep remarks by President Donald Tusk before the European Council meeting](#)
- [Remarks by the High Representative upon arrival at the European Council](#)
- [Speech by President Jean-Claude Juncker at the European Parliament Plenary Session on the Conclusions of the European Council meeting of 20 and 21 October 2016](#)
- [European Council 20-21/10: Main Results](#)
- [European Council conclusions](#)

1. Migration

As far as the Central Mediterranean route is concerned, the Heads of State and Government discussed cooperation with African countries to stem the flow of illegal migrants and improve return rates. The necessary leverage could be applied by means



of relevant EU policies and tools, including development and trade. Moreover, the EU leaders called for action regarding the Eastern Mediterranean route, in particular regarding EU aids to Greece and Turkey, as well as further work on the EU asylum rules. The European Council also calls upon all States to intensify their efforts to accelerate relocation, a call which appeals also to Hungary and Slovakia, notwithstanding the current court proceedings they have initiated against [Council Decision n°2015/1601](#), and Poland, which has intervened in support of the applicants.

Links:

- [European Council conclusions on Migration](#)

2. Trade and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

The Council assessed the state of play of the negotiations with key partners and called for a swift decision to sign and provisionally apply CETA. The ALDE Group also stands firmly behind the signing of said agreement (21/10). The EU leaders further called for the Commission to present and pursue negotiations for Free Trade Agreements with Japan and the US. On the other hand, the Greens/European Free Alliance calls the Commission to rethink the way Free Trade Agreements are being handled by the EU, accusing the EC of overloading them with non-trade content (27/10).

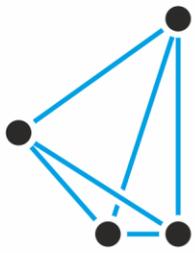
Links:

- [Guy Verhofstadt: "CETA is too important to be abandoned now"](#)
- [CETA or are we doomed? We don't buy it.](#)

3. EU-Russia Relations and the Bombing of Aleppo, Syria

The European Parliament think tank published an analysis of the five guiding principles of EU-Russia relations that were agreed upon in March 2016 by the EU Foreign Ministers and the High Representative. The study not only concentrates on the guidelines themselves, but also gives a comprehensive overview of EU-Russia relations of the past years (18/10).

Although the matter of imposing sanctions to Russia for the bombing of the Syrian city of Aleppo was not in the agenda of this European Council meeting, the topic has divided the EU to the extent that the discussions regarding Russia during the meeting have been strongly influenced by it. Namely, Poland, UK and Germany stand together in imposing new measures on Russia. On the other hand, Luxemburg, France and the countries of Southern Europe oppose the idea (17/10). Moreover, the ALDE Group leader co-ordinated a cross party letter addressed to the President of the European Council, urging him to initiate a decision on the activation of tougher sanctions against Russia at the European Council meeting (19/10).



The European Council strongly condemned the attacks by the Syrian regime and its allies, notably Russia, on civilians in Aleppo and called for humanitarian access to the city and an immediate cessation of hostilities and resumption of a political process under the auspices of the UN. On the other hand, no concrete results were mentioned regarding the long-term relations between EU and Russia. At the Council Summit, President Martin Schulz said the European Parliament (EP) called for consequences and accountability for Russian actions in Aleppo. The last article by the EP below summarizes the Parliament's positions regarding EU-Russia relations (20/10).

Links:

- [The EU's Russia Policy: five guiding principles](#)
- [EU divided over Russia in Syria and more sanctions](#)
- [Russian Sanctions: European Parliament leaders press Tusk to deliver](#)
- [Schulz at Council Summit: Russia is the one maintaining the painful status quo in Syria](#)
- [Speech of the President of the European Parliament at the European council](#)
- [Europe's strategy towards Russia: how Parliament sees the way forward](#)

● **2017 EU Priorities**

For the first time, aims and priorities agreed between Parliament, Council and Commission for the year to come will be written down in a joint declaration to be signed in December (25/10). During the debate, some members were disappointed for the absence of a number of Parliament priorities, such as a "social pillar". The European Parliament debate saw certain topics frequently raised: Migration, the threat of terrorism and Brexit, as well as EU trade policy issues (CETA in particular). The video recording of the latter is available at the link below.

Links:

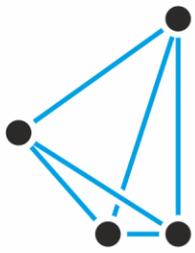
- [Commission Work Programme: Parliament debates EU priorities for 2017](#)
- [Commission Work Programme 2017 \(debate\)](#)

Monitored Policy Areas:

1. **Security and Foreign Policy**

● **News**

The European Council discussed the follow-up to the EU Global Strategy on foreign and security policy "Shared vision, common action: a stronger Europe" and adopted conclusions on Monday (17/10). In them, the Council highlights the "urgent need to focus on migration as well as counter-terrorism and hybrid threats and the need to support Member States in this regard". The conclusions also state that an



implementation plan will be prepared for consideration and decision at the Foreign Affairs Council in November 2016 and the European Council in December 2016.

Poland stated that there was “no point in continuing dialogue” with the Venice Commission, a body of the Council of Europe, as the government continued to put obstacles to the work of the Constitutional Tribunal and to undermine its independence (17/10). In July, the European Commission (EC) had given Warsaw until 27/10 to recognise both the top court’s rulings and the judges nominated by the previous parliament or else risk sanctions such as losing its Council voting rights. On the matter, the ALDE Group calls for the EC to trigger Article 7 of the [Treaty of the European Union \(TEU\)](#) after Poland’s refusal to implement the recommendations. Said article would imply Poland’s loss of certain rights of the Member States, such as the voting right within the Council (28/10).

Germany’s chancellor Angela Merkel has called on African leaders to stop migration to Europe and fight back against Islamic extremism (12/10). The Chancellor also vowed to help with development aid and military equipment and assured she will make Africa a priority of Germany’s G20 presidency in 2017.

Links:

- [Council conclusions on the global Strategy on the EU’s foreign and security policy](#)
- [No point talking to Rights Watchdog, says Poland](#)
- [Poland may remove Constitutional judges](#)
- [PiS government has hijacked democracy- Article 7 must be triggered](#)
- [African Nations must halt migration, says Merkel](#)

● Legislative Developments

The Foreign Affairs Committee in the European Parliament (EP) has approved a key report on the European Defence Union calling for more systematic defence co-operation between EU Member States (25/10).

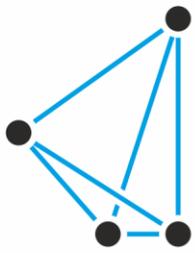
Links:

- [European Defence Union: Foreign affairs committee gives its green light](#)
- [Foreign Affairs MEPs call for common EU defence Policy](#)

● Publications

The EP think tank published a note offering links to commentaries, studies and reports by the major international think tanks, which discuss Russia’s policies and how to respond to them (14/10). The same kind of note including links to the main international think tanks was published on the implications and outlooks of Brexit (21/10).

The EP think tank also published a briefing on the link between security, peace and development, which is universally recognised and accepted, but is currently impeded



by the regulation that excludes EU budget activities aimed at enhancing cooperation with the defence sector and the military in third countries. The briefing analyses the proposed amendment to said regulation, that would allow for such support (19/10). Another briefing was published by the same think tank on the European Neighbourhood Instrument. The latter analyses the Neighbourhood Policy adopted by the EU in the 16 countries of the eastern and southern neighbourhood and describes its outcome as being a “*mixed success*”.

The EP think tank also published a study on the preparatory work on defence, launched by the EC. If the pilot project proves successful, the Commission plans to establish an EU-defence research programme for the 2021-2027 period (27/10).

The EU Institute for Security Studies organised a workshop dedicated to the Security and Defence Implementation Plan (SDIP), where leading experts and analysts shared their ideas with the main drafters of the SDIP. The experts’ memos resulting from the workshop were then included in a single production, the link to which is enclosed below (28/10). The same Institute also published a study on the possibilities of a closer EU cooperation, in particular addressing old ideas under a new perspective (24/10).

Links:

- [Russia and security in Europe: what think tanks are thinking](#)
- [Brexit: Implications and outlook \(what think tanks are thinking\)](#)
- [The EU’s new approach to funding peace and security](#)
- [European Neighbourhood Instrument](#)
- [Preparatory action on defence research](#)
- [After the EU Global Strategy- consulting the experts- Security and Defence](#)
- [Making Europe and Europeans Safer](#)

● Events coming up:

Monday, 7/11: next meeting of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety;

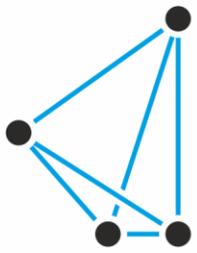
- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPARL&reference=CJ26-OJ-20161107-1&format=XML&language=EN&secondRef=01>

Monday, 7/11: Committee on Foreign Affairs, Committee on Development;

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPARL&reference=CJ19-OJ-20161107-1&format=XML&language=EN&secondRef=01>

Wednesday, 9/11 and Thursday, 10/11: Next meeting of the Subcommittee on Security and Defence;

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPARL&reference=SEDE-OJ-20161109-1&format=XML&language=EN&secondRef=01>



2. Economic Issues

• Publications

The European Parliament (EP) think tank produced a briefing on CETA, that summarizes all that has happened from initial discussions. The 'International Agreements in Progress' briefings are periodically updated at key stages throughout the process, up until ratification (26/10).

An article by the EP gives an overview of the EU trade agreements that are in various phases of the negotiations, including CETA (19/10).

Links:

- [International Agreements in Progress: CETA](#)
- [After CETA: the EU trade agreements that are in the pipeline](#)

• Events coming up:

Monday, 7/11: Eurogroup meeting;

- http://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/eurogroup/2016/11/07/?utm_source=dsms-auto&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Agenda+highlights+-+Eurogroup%2c+07%2f11%2f2016

Tuesday, 8/11: the Committee on Budgetary Control organizes an exchange of views with national parliaments on issues relating to the management of EU funds by national management authorities;

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/cont/events-nationalparl.html?id=20161108CHE00071>

Wednesday, 9/11 and Thursday, 10/11: Next meeting of the Committee on Budgets;

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/committees/en/budg/home.html>

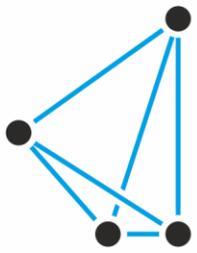
3. Energy Issues

• News

Poland, backed by the Visegrad Group, Baltic and Balkan countries, is putting pressure on the European Commission (EC) to rule whether the Nord Stream pipeline conforms with EU laws. Said pipeline would ship great amounts of gas from Russia to Germany bypassing Poland and Ukraine, thereby securing Germany gas supply but making Central Europe less secure (21/10).

Links:

- [Poland presses EU on Russian gas pipeline](#)



- **Legislative developments**

The first ever ministerial meeting between the EC and the Eastern Partner Countries, i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, on environment and climate change took place on Tuesday (18/10) in Luxembourg. Together they adopted a Ministerial Declaration confirming their joint commitment to cooperating on environmental challenges, climate change, and promoting sustainable and inclusive economic development.

The signing ceremony of the Balticconnector pipeline was held Friday (21/10). This pipeline will end the isolation of the Finnish gas market and boost the security of gas supply in the entire Eastern Baltic Sea region.

Links:

- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3443_en.htm
- [Ministerial Declaration](#)
- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_SPEECH-16-3497_en.htm
- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-16-3476_en.htm

- **Events coming up:**

Wednesday, 9/11 and Thursday 10/11: next meeting of the Committee on Industry, Research and Energy;

- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=COMPART&reference=ITRE-OJ-20161109-1&format=XML&language=EN&secondRef=01>

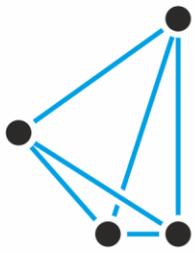
4. Digital Agenda

- **News**

The Commissioner for the Digital Economy and Society, Günther H. Oettinger and the Commissioner for the European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn hosted a ministerial level meeting on the Digital Community with the partners of the Eastern Partnership (18/10). The digital Community would deepen cooperation between the EU and its eastern partners with the aim of delivering the benefits of the Digital Single Market to the EU's neighbouring countries, bringing economic growth, generating jobs, improving people's lives and helping businesses.

Links:

- [EU and its Eastern Neighbours agree the way forward to a Digital Community](#)



Think
Visegrad
V4 Think-Tank Platform

EU POLICY MONITORING

Week 42-43 / 2016

Think Visegrad in Brussels

- **Legislative developments**

The European Commission (EC) has opened an investigation into a network sharing agreement between two Czech operators of mobile telephony, O2 CZ / CETIN and T-Mobile CZ. The Commission will examine whether the cooperation restricts competition and thereby harms innovation in breach of EU antitrust rules.

Links:

- http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-16-3539_en.htm

- **Events coming up:**

Events we will be attending:

Monday, 14/11 and Tuesday, 15/11: B-DAY: Going Giga Conference organized by the European Commission;

- <https://ec.europa.eu/digital-single-market/en/news/b-day-going-giga-conference-14-15-nov-brussels>

 EUROPEUM
Brussels Office

-  Visegrad Fund



Co-funded by the
Europe for Citizens Programme
of the European Union