

GOMUN 2026 OFFICIAL DOCUMENT

Study Guide

The Council of the European Union

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COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION

The Council of the EU is one of three executive bodies of the EU, where Member State ministers, according to the topic of the proposal being discussed, gather to debate upon and amend pieces of legislation proposed by the European Commission, and approved by the European Parliament. While most of the real negotiation and brainstorming work is done behind closed doors in permanent preparatory bodies of the Council of the EU (COREPER I and COREPER II), Council sessions are where important lobbying of the documents take place.

The topics chosen for this simulation, as discussed further through this Study Guide, are ones which have shaped the current political landscape, and the course the EU is taking. As of the current EU budget (2021-2027), tackling climate change represents more than half of the total spending (1) (either on a European level or through cohesion funds for poorer states), with security and border protection funding set to be five times bigger in the next budget. (2) These statistics clearly show the two topics as priorities for the Union, but due to varying national interests and the overwhelming bureaucratic process, progress is slow.

Regarding the task for you, the delegates, it is to take up the role of ministers in the final phase of the European Union's legislative process. During this, beware of both the European and national interests. In contrast to the classic MUN committees, where “sitting out” the debate is sometimes exactly the country's policy, in the EU, you can never win by not pushing your opinion. Both proposals by the European Commission you will be discussing are regulations, which means they are legally binding, and non-compliance (if not specified differently in the exceptions document) may be subject to fines, lawsuits, and other punishments for your Member State.

European politics and diplomacy is exciting. And much more close to us, Europeans, than the UN. During those 2 days you are preparing for, try to get rid of that MUN debate setting a bit, and remember, EU legislation actually matters.

Good luck.

Sincerely,

Fanda and Káťa

First Topic: Discussing the impact of migration

František Novák

TOPIC INTRODUCTION

Since the 1950s, migration has been one of the main political issues in the European Union. Starting with waves of refugees from the Eastern Bloc, the migration scheme has shifted heavily during the past decades, because the early 2000s brought a whole new group of immigrants to Europe - war zone refugees from the Middle East, triggered by the War on Terror and series of civil wars following the so-called Arab Spring of 2011.

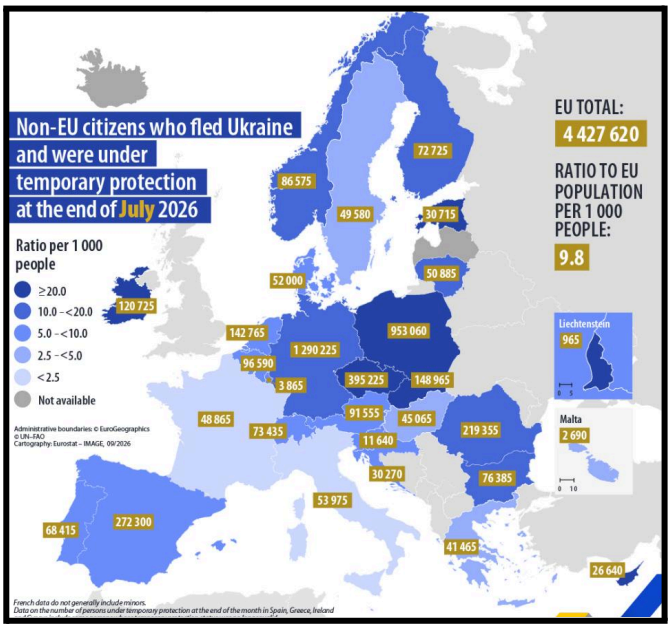
Reaching its peak in 2015, migration has since become a heavily divisive topic, with Europeans and politicians alike blaming migrants for many of the problems Europe is facing. Only last year, 1,3 million people applied for asylum, while almost 200 thousand more have been caught illegally crossing the Schengen borders. It will be your task, the representatives of the Member States, to finally come up with a thorough solution to this issue, calm panic, and fight against wide-spread propaganda.

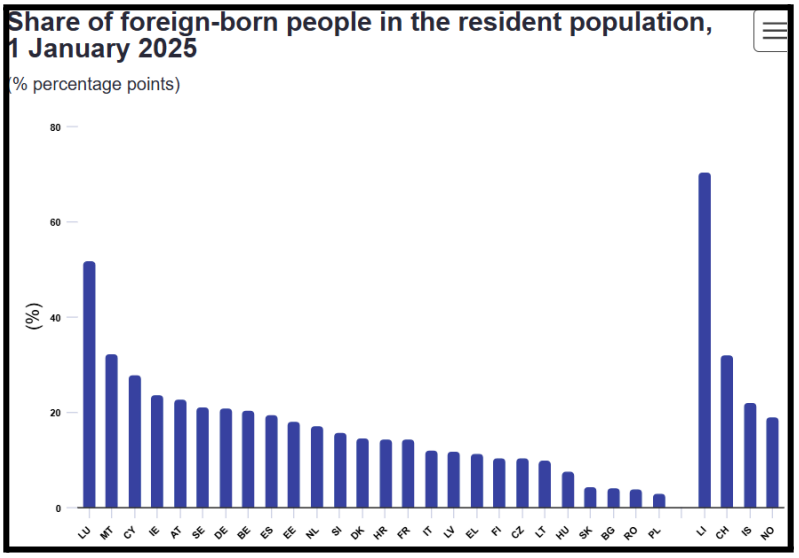
KEY TERMS

Immigrant – An immigrant is a person who has come to a different country in order to live there permanently. (3)

Refugee – A refugee is a person who has escaped from their own country for political, religious, or economic reasons or because of a war. (4)

Asylum seeker – An asylum seeker is a refugee who seeks a permanent legal status in a country to which he immigrated under the right of asylum according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights Article 14. (5)





Temporary protection status – Temporary protection is an exceptional measure meant to provide immediate protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced people from non-EU countries, who are unable to return to their country of origin. Established in 2001 after conflicts in Yugoslavia under the Temporary Protection Directive (6), it was triggered for the first time in 2022 after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine.

EU Blue Card – An EU Blue Card gives highly-qualified workers from outside the EU the opportunity to live and work in an EU Member State, provided they hold the necessary professional qualifications, and an employment contract or a binding job offer for at least six months with a salary at least equal to, but no higher than 1.6 times, the average gross national annual salary of the country concerned. (7) It applies in 25 of 27 member states, with the exceptions being Denmark and Ireland.

Schengen Area – Schengen guarantees free movement to more than 450 million EU citizens, along with non-EU nationals living in the EU or visiting the EU as tourists, exchange students or for business purposes, anyone legally present in the EU. (8) 29 countries are part of the Schengen, including four non-EU. (Switzerland, Norway, Lichtenstein, and Iceland) It is often confused with the Single Market, which guarantees free movement of people, goods, and services in EU countries.

Frontex – Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency, supports EU Member States and Schengen-associated countries in the management of the EU's external borders and the fight against cross-border crime. (9) Created in 2004, it is now the main body controlling airport immigration processes, and external border safety.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

46,2 million EU citizens and residents were born outside of the EU. (10) Immigration waves of the past few years, only slowed by the Covid-19 pandemic, have caused not only economic stress, but also political radicalization and have aided to the rise of extremist parties in Europe. While the number of acts of terrorism in the EU, often attributed to immigration, has risen during the past decade, it is overlooked that the foreign-born population objectively aids the EU economy, and balances the aging population.

The Union suffers from lack of cooperation when it comes to immigration, uneven placement, a weak deportation ability and unsatisfactory inclusion policies, which vary vastly between Member States. Statistics from countries such as Spain have proved that effective (though costly) inclusion programs correlate with less crime, acts of terrorism, higher GDP per capita, HDI and acceptance of European values (though when talking about European values always comes the difficult questions - what are they really?) among immigrant groups. (11)

Despite the adoption of the Migration and Asylum, funding for Frontex (the European Border and Coast Guard Agency) is lacking, because it is hard to sell politically for governments in Member States, especially for the ones not having an external border, leading to the need for internal border checks, and subsequent economic damages.

To preserve liberal democracy and European values, it is urgently needed to provide the citizens a thorough solution of the migration crisis, encompassing a strong external policy, cooperation with third states, more effective inclusion, and the legal ability to deport and deny entry to persons posing threats to the community. One thing is certain; without a common plan and yielding a part of Member States' security sovereignty, no Member State will be able to solve the issue alone.

TIMELINE OF THE TOPIC

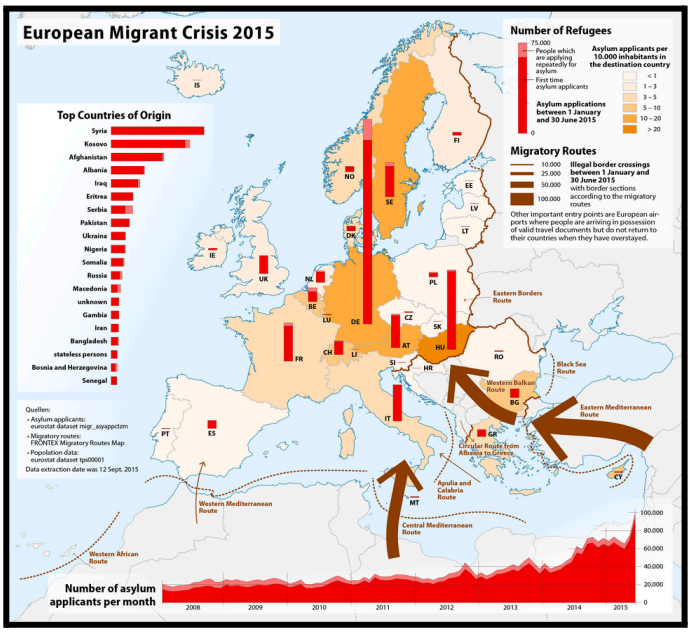
1955 – “Gastarbeiter” Programm – In post-war Western Europe, programs such as the well known German *Gastarbeiterprogramm* invited workers from less developed countries (mostly Turkey) to help with reconstruction of the continent and economic growth. Most of these immigrants have stayed and have since become part of European society. (12)

1961 – Erection of the Berlin Wall – When Berlin was cut in half overnight in 1961, more than three million East-Germans had already emigrated to the West. (13) Refugee camps and asylum stands were placed all over West Berlin as a response to the first modern migration wave in Europe.

2004 – Big enlargement of the EU – In 2004, 10 new countries (Czechia, Estonia, Cyprus, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Malta, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia) joined the European Union. (14) The biggest enlargement in the history of the EU was not without its difficulties, in relation to this topic mainly the hesitation of the older members to let the new countries join the Schengen Area over concerns of mass migration.

2007 – 7 countries join the Schengen Area – As a result, many countries (including Czechia) joined the Schengen Area three years later. Despite the fears, a mass migration wave never took place, and both the new and the old members benefited from exchange of workforce and brains.

2015 – Start of the Migrant Crisis – In 2015, more than 1,3 million refugees moved to Europe, the most in a single year since the Second World War. (15) The main reason for this sudden shift was the so-called Arab Winter, the return of authoritarianism and rule of the Islamic State in many Middle-Eastern countries following the largely unsuccessful Arab Spring. What also contributed to the situation was that Jordan, Lebanon and Egypt ceased to accept Syrian asylum seekers.



2022 – Russia attacks Ukraine – After the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February of 2022, more than 5 million Ukrainians, mostly women and children, moved to safety in the EU. (16) In contrast to the non-European immigration, Ukrainian refugees caused much less political controversy, and voices against their integration remain marginal, presumably because of cultural closeness to central European countries, which accepted most.

2026 – Ceuta Crisis – In late July of 2026, around 80 000 Moroccans overwhelmed the border of Ceuta, the Spanish exclave in Morocco on the coast of the Mediterranean sea. The incident, because of its shocking footage, quickly gained media visibility, and many European governments used it to justify implementing inter-Schengen border checks. In reality, the crisis hasn't been as significant as the media coverage depicted, and about 90 % of the immigrants voluntarily returned to Morocco. (17)

PAST ACTIONS



Schengen Agreement – In 1985, on board of a vessel on the river Mosselle near a town called Schengen (hence the name) (18), a treaty between Belgium, France, Germany, Luxembourg, and the Netherlands abolished cross-border checks, creating probably the most visible effect of European integration, the ability to cross borders without even noticing doing so.

Blue Card introduction – Presented in 2007 by the European Commission, the Blue Card was inspired by the *Green Card* in the USA (permanent residence permit), and is meant to serve as a pull-factor for highly skilled non-EU workers. (19) Since its adoption, tens of thousands of Blue Cards have been issued, the main country of origin of the workers being India.

New Pact on Asylum and Migration – In 2026, after long discussions, the Asylum and Migration Pact, put forward by the Commission, was agreed upon by all Member States, some having special exceptions. It replaced the ad-hoc migration quotas established post-2015, and aims to create a common asylum procedure at EU level, introduce more modern immigration systems, and update the member states immigrant quotas, while also promising significantly bigger funding for Frontex. (20)

“Return Hubs” Deal – The idea of designated non-EU countries serving the purpose of “return hubs” of some immigrants was first discussed last year, and continues to be crafted into a bill to this date. (21) While most Member States support the idea, some, together with legal experts, are raising concerns over legality of the proposal under EU and International law. The proposed return hubs, namely Rwanda and Uganda, are widely criticised by NGOs for being authoritarian regimes.

EU-India Agreement – The EU-India Free Trade Agreement was signed earlier this year (22), and while its main purpose is to create the World´s biggest free trade zone, it is also expected to attract much more skilled Indian workers coming to the EU using the Blue Card.

IMPORTANT COUNTRY POSITIONS

Germany

Germany has by far the biggest migrant population in the EU at more than 17 million people or 20,5 % of the whole population. Furthermore, 40 % of Germans have at least one parent of non-German ascent. (8) The country, then led by CDU/CSU chancellor Angela Merkel, has accepted most refugees since the start of the 2015 refugee crisis, and has long applied very pro-migrant policies.

Currently, the AfD far-right party, which has gained popularity over anti-immigration opinions, is leading the polls, and the current coalition government led by Fridrich Merz is historically unpopular. (23) This situation has pushed Germany from extremely pro-migrant to a more pragmatic stance on immigration, scaling up deportations, cracking down on Islamic extremism, and implementing border checks. On the European level, Germany remains constructive, and supports securing the external Schengen border as well as giving more authority to Brussels when it comes to migration policies.

France, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg

The western European countries, same as Germany, all have large migrant populations. But in contrast to Germany, they have developed substantial post-colonial and labour migration. Particularly in France and Belgium, there are many immigrant communities living in the country for generations and having assimilated completely, but difficulties of the past years have also led to stricter policies. (24)

Luxembourg, Belgium, and Netherlands have outstanding percentages of EU-internal highly skilled migrants, because they are home to many EU and UN institutions, NGOs, international firms and top EU universities. Luxembourg, for example, has more than 51 % of foreign-born population, about two-thirds of which are from other Member States. (10)

Spain

Spain is one of the only countries in the EU today, which is moving toward a more open migration approach, regularizing just this year more than 500 thousand illegal immigrants. (25) Prime minister Pedro Sanchéz has clashed repeatedly with the European Commission since, over fears of damaging Schengen, and because this plan was not consulted nor informed of in the Council.

Although controversial domestically and abroad, the government recalls that more than 40% of the jobs created since a labour reform 2 years ago have been taken by foreign workers, who are increasingly joining more highly qualified sectors. (25) Integration of migrants is from a significant part based on the perception of the public. In Spain, the public is disturbed by being one of the oldest and fastest aging in Europe, and (mostly) encourages integrating foreign

workers as an at least short-term solution, leading to less extremism and higher acceptance of European values. (26)

The Nordics and the Baltics

All of the Nordic countries, especially Sweden, have accepted many asylum seekers, but starting with Denmark, which has a Justice and Home Affairs opt-out, have moved towards greater restrictions and control.

Finland, Norway and the Baltics prioritize border security, having completely closed the border with Russia, assessing it as a security risk, while also limiting asylum rights to Russians, which has caused tensions with Russian minorities. (27)

Nevertheless, the Nordics are still very open to skilled-worker non-EU immigration. During the last decade, the number of EU citizens seasonally working or studying in the Nordics has been booming, as they offer a good welfare state combined with attractive nature for tourism.

Greece, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia

Greece, Italy, Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia form the strongest anti-immigration bloc in the Union, though from different positions. The Greek and Italian coast guard deal with mass illegal crossing through the Balkan and North-African route on an everyday basis. The Greeks have been criticised for instances of letting boats full of immigrants sink in the Adriatic Sea, while Italy, since Georgia Meloni became the prime minister, has severely tightened up asylum criteria. (28)

Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and Czechia have rejected all immigration quotas, accepting close to none, mainly due to cultural and historical reasons. They have, however, given a temporary protection status to millions of Ukrainian refugees, which have integrated in said countries without major difficulties. (29) Poland also has the longest defended border in Europe with Belarus, which regularly uses artificial immigration waves as a hybrid weapon. (30)

Overall, all of these countries would favour a much stronger external Schengen border and a tougher stance on both asylums and deportations. They, however, are very cautious about limitations of sovereignty, directly funding the external border, and have only after long negotiations accepted financial reimbursements to countries complying with immigration quotas.

Romania and Bulgaria

For much of the post-communist era, Romania and Bulgaria were emigration countries, but rapid economic growth has slowed emigration and brought a lot of cheap labour to suit big infrastructure projects. (10)

They have also been classified as Member States facing a serious migratory situation by the European Commission. (31) Whether it is pressure on the border

with Turkey in Bulgaria, or Russian escalation in the Black Sea for Romania, security is key for these countries.

Ireland and Portugal

Though culturally and geographically different, both countries historically experienced large-scale emigration, including migration to other Western countries, before becoming significant immigration destinations themselves. Ireland now has a 23 % foreign-born population, with the most frequent countries of origin being the UK, Poland and India, while Portugal has a 12 % foreign-born population, mainly from Brazil and France. (10) Portugal also received substantial labour migration, while Ireland has high labour and international-student immigration.

Their migration systems therefore have a strong labour-migration dimension, with both countries simultaneously regulating migration more tightly, and making recruitment of foreign-worker easier. (24)

QUESTIONS A BILL SHOULD ANSWER

The Presidency of the Council of the European Union will issue a proposal to the representatives, comprising the basic theoretical and practical basis of the bill. They will be expected to amend and expand it, to come to a concession.

Nation-specific exemptions will be negotiated and, if deemed necessary by the Presidency, approved and added to the bill as a separate document;

- How can external borders be secured and irregular/unauthorized crossings be reduced?
- Should the member states pay more towards Frontex or be helped with their own border guard agencies?
- How to make the newly established biometric security screening at airports and external borders more effective and prevent queues?
- How should member states implement the new solidarity mechanism under the Pact on Migration and Asylum?
- How to ensure the safety of unaccompanied minors, and help with family reunifications during the Asylum process?
- How can return and deportation procedures be streamlined across member states, and what safeguards ensure case-by-case assessment remains compliant with EU and international law?

- How to prevent exclusion of immigrants from European society and the subsequent radicalization?
- Should the EU develop common legal pathways for labour migration to address demographic and labour-market needs, and how should this interact with national quota systems?
- How should the EU work with third countries to create a wider immigration system, while respecting human rights and EU and international law?
- How much migration policy should remain a national competence versus common EU-level regulation?

CONCLUSION

The European Union is again, after less than 10 years, addressing a migration crisis. But the dynamic and the context are completely different. States have much more experience with inclusion of immigrants, and the challenges it brings. Europe is facing a much more unstable and dangerous geopolitical situation than it did 10 years ago, and it fears migration waves provoked by new US wars in the Middle East, which Europe in effect has to be part of.

What all of this means is that the topic discussed isn't new, and states have become much more pragmatic and definitely more anti-migrant. The goal is therefore to learn from un/successful approaches of the past decade, refine them, implement new ones, and become much more effective on the European level.

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Second Topic: European Green Deal

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TOPIC INTRODUCTION

The European Union's strategy for becoming climate-neutral is called the European Green Deal. Its goal is to achieve climate neutrality by 2050. It connects climate policy with energy, transport, buildings, industry, agriculture, land use, trade, and social policy. The challenge lies in putting the strategy into practice: emissions must be reduced quickly while preserving energy security, industrial capacity, and public support.

The key legal objectives have been set. The European Climate Law requires net greenhouse gas emissions to fall by at least 55% by 2030 and by 90% by 2040, compared with 1990 levels. Climate neutrality is to be reached ten years later, in 2050. Under the March 2026 amendment to the 2040 plan, at least 85 percentage points of the emissions reduction must be achieved within the EU, while high-quality international carbon credits may account for up to 5 percentage points from 2036.

This Council meeting should do more than reopen the issue. It should decide how the post-2030 framework will address it: how to divide the effort among sectors and countries, how to structure carbon pricing, which technologies to support, how to protect vulnerable households and regions, and how to keep European industry competitive.

KEY TERMS

European Green Deal – The EU's strategy, launched in 2019, to make Europe climate neutral by 2050.

Climate neutrality – A state in which greenhouse gas emissions are balanced by an equal or greater amount of greenhouse gas removals. The regional and local environmental effects of human activities should also be considered.

European Climate Law – The law that makes the European Green Deal's goal of climate neutrality by 2050 legally binding. It also sets targets for reducing greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in the years leading up to 2050.

Fit for 55 – A part of the European climate law, which outlines that by 2030, the emission levels should be reduced by 55%. This legislation has been adopted by all EU states.

EU ETS – The European Union Emissions Trading System is the EU's carbon market. The European Commission has proposed revising it to support European industry's competitiveness and help achieve the EU's 2040 climate target.

ETS2 – A separate EU emissions trading system that covers CO_2 emissions from burning fuel in buildings, road transport, and additional sectors.

CBAM – states for "Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism", it is the EUs tool to address carbon leakage by ensuring that the price of imports reflects their embedded carbon emissions.

Effort Sharing Regulations – ESR, establishes binding annual greenhouse gas emission targets for Member States from 2021 to 2030.

LULUCF – is designed to ensure that emissions and removals from Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry activities are accurately accounted for in the EUs climate target.

Carbon leakage – Transfer of CO_2 emissions from one country to another.

Carbon removal – Innovative processes that capture carbon dioxide (CO_2) from the atmosphere and store it durably in geological, terrestrial or marine reservoirs, or in long-lasting products.

International carbon credits - Financial instruments that represent a tonne of CO_2 removed or reduced from the atmosphere as a result of an emissions reduction project.

Social Climate Fund – A new EU fund that will help make the green transition fair and inclusive.

Just Transitional mechanism – A key tool to ensure that the transition towards a climate-neutral economy happens in a fair way, leaving no one behind.

NECP – National energy and climate plans, are an essential strategic planning tool to deliver a fair, resilient, and climate-neutral Europe, and to steer the much-needed investments for the climate and energy transition, helping to mobilise private and public spending.

Clean Industrial Deal – Outlines concrete actions to turn decarbonisation into a driver of growth of European industries.

Affordable Energy Action Plan – Offers a set of concrete short-term and structural measures to provide competitiveness, affordability, security and sustainability for citizens and businesses.

OVERVIEW OF THE TOPIC

The European Green Deal is no longer a strategy, it is now a legally binding legislation. This Council is no longer focusing on setting milestones and targets, but on the sole execution of the plan; financing the transition, speeding up infrastructure permitting, expanding power grids, and allocating costs fairly between Member States. The NECPs draft individual state actions, significant funding and ambition gaps remain across the bloc.

Milestone	EU objective
2030	At least a 55% net GHG reduction, a 42.5% renewable energy share, and 11.7% reduction in energy consumption.
2040	A 90% net GHG reduction (with at least 85% domestic reduction and up to 5% international carbon credits).
2050	Total Climate Neutrality.

High electricity prices and power grids remain a major political concern in many EU countries. Certain initiatives like the Clean Industrial Deal and the Affordable Energy Action strife at lowering the energy prices and accelerating the infrastructure approvals, however the energy sources that would satisfy every Member State remain in discussion. The use of nuclear energy persists to be a major friction point, with some countries insisting on natural gas as a necessary transition fuel. The neutrality of the council should allow for the countries to draw lines on their energy mixes, as long as they meet the shared emissions targets requirements.

Steel or cement manufacturing factories require a lot of energy. High energy prices make it significantly more challenging for them to compete with factories outside the EU. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) puts a carbon price on certain imports, hence foreign producers face costs similar to those paid by EU producers. Delegates must come up with a solution on how the EU can assist its factories to stay competitive and cut emissions. Possible tools may include government support, EU funding, and rules that favour cleaner products when public authorities buy goods. Any support must be impartial for all businesses across the EU.

Implementing a price on carbon emissions risks increasing the costs of heating and personal transport. The EU's updated carbon market mechanism for building and road transport fuels, ETS2, is scheduled to launch in 2028. To mitigate the

economic impact, European policymakers intend to cap extreme price volatility while deploying the Social Climate Fund to support vulnerable households. Additionally, agricultural land and forests offer significant potential for carbon isolation. The Council faces the challenge of incentivizing sustainable land management practices among farmers and forest owners without introducing market instability or unexpected cost burdens to food supply chains.

TIMELINE OF THE TOPIC

2015 – The Paris Agreement commits parties to hold the increase in global temperature well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C.

December 2019 – The Commission presents the European Green Deal and the objective of making Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050.

June 2022 – The European Climate Law enters into force, making the 2050 neutrality objective and the 2030 net reduction target legally binding.

July 2021 – The Commission presents the Fit for 55 package covering emissions trading, effort sharing, land use, transport, energy and taxation .

May 2022 – REPowerEU responds to Russia's invasion of Ukraine by accelerating savings, diversification and clean energy.

2023 – Major Fit for 55 acts are adopted, including ETS reform, ETS2, The Social Climate Fund, CBAM, stronger renewable-energy rules and revised national effort-sharing targets.

October 2023 – The revised Renewable Energy Directive sets a binding EU target of at least 42.5% renewable energy by 2030, with an aim of 45%.

2024 – The Net-Zero Industry Act, Critical Raw Materials Act and Nature Restoration Law broaden the industrial and environmental implementation of the Green Deal.

February 2025 – The commission presents the Clean Industrial Deal and Affordable Energy Action Plan, placing competitiveness and energy prices at the centre of decarbonisation policy.

July 2025 – The Commission proposes a 90% net emissions-reduction target for 2040.

December 2025 – The Council and European Parliament reach political agreement on the 2040 target, flexibilities and a one-year delay to ETS2.

1 January 2026 – CBAM enters its definitive regime.

March and April 2026 – The Council gives final approval to the amended Climate Law; the 2040 target subsequently enters into force.

July 2026 – The Commission presents an Electrification Action Plan and proposes a targeted review of the EU ETS as part of the emerging post-2030 framework.

(2028) – ETS2 is scheduled to become fully operational for buildings, road transport and additional sectors.

PAST ACTIONS

European Climate Law – Sets the legal binding EU-wide pathway for 2030,2040 and 2050 and requires regular assessment and review.

EU ETS and ETS2 – Uses declining emissions caps and tradable allowances. The original ETS covers major industrial and power sectors; ETS extends carbon pricing to fuels in buildings and road transport from 2028.

Effort Sharing Regulation – Allocates national 2030 reduction targets for non-ETS sectors according to national circumstances and economic capacity, with limited flexibilities.

Renewable Energy Directive – Sets the 42.5% binding EU renewable-energy target for 2030, aiming for 45%, and accelerates permitting and sectoral deployment.

Energy Efficiency Directive – Requires an 11.7% reduction in EU energy consumption by 2030 compared with the reference projection and strengthens national savings obligations.

LULUCUF Regulation – Sets targets for net removals from land and forestry and links climate policy to forest management, soils and ecosystem resilience.

CBAM – Places a carbon adjustment on selected carbon-intensive imports. Its definitive regime started in 2026 as free ETS allocation for corresponding EU sectors began to phase down.

Social Climate Fund – Finances structural measures and limited temporary support for groups vulnerable to the effects of ETS2.

REPowerEU – Accelerates energy savings, renewable energy, infrastructure and diversification away from Russian fossil fuels.

Just Transition Mechanism – Supports regions most affected by fossil-fuel phase-out and industrial restructuring through grants, investment mobilisation and public-sector lending.

Clean Industrial Deal – Reframes decarbonisation as an industrial strategy focused on energy costs, lead markets, finance, circularity, skills and external partnerships.

National Energy and Climate Plans – Require Member States to set out national policies and projections for the Energy Union and 2030 targets, allowing the Commission to assess collective progress.

Official 2040 Climate Law vote

Position among listed delegations	States
For 21 states	Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Findland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden
Against 4 states	The Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary
Abstained 2 states	Belgium, Bulgaria

BLOC ANALYSIS

The Nuclear Alliance

On 11 March 2026, a Declaration of the Nuclear Alliance was signed in Paris by 14 EU states: Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czechia, Finland, France, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Sweden. The 2026 declaration calls on the European Commission to give nuclear energy the same status as wind and solar under EU climate law, state-aid rules, and the next Multiannual Financial Framework. It frames this as "technological neutrality," citing the Net-Zero Industry Act and the revised EU Climate Law as legal grounds. It also urges the Commission and the European Investment Bank to make funding through programmes such as InvestEU available for both large reactors and small modular reactors (SMRs).

High-Carbon and Transition States

Five EU nations - Austria, Czechia, Hungary, Slovakia, and Poland are advocating for targeted adjustments to the bloc's carbon market.They argue that additional flexibility is needed so domestic manufacturers can reduce emissions without losing their market edge, noting that European companies face heavy decarbonization costs while competing against foreign firms exempt from similar carbon pricing.

The Climate Ambition Group

A group of climate-led EU countries, including Denmark, Spain, Germany, Ireland, Portugal, and Austria are pushing for fast emission cuts, strict carbon market rules, and a rapid rollout of wind, solar, and grid power. Although they disagree on temporary energy sources, they strongly oppose lowering carbon prices or delaying target deadlines. They contend that firm regulatory frameworks and aggressive emissions caps spur long-term competitiveness and energy self-reliance.

The Industrial Powerhouses

Major manufacturing nations, including Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium, focus on shielding heavy industries, such as steel, chemicals, autos, and cement, against overseas competitors and elevated energy expenditures. Their strategic priority is sustaining European industrial capacity. They advocate an integrated policy approach that aligns decarbonization efforts with competitive electricity pricing, adaptable state aid frameworks, strict carbon border enforcement, and strong financial support via the Clean Industrial Deal.

QUESTIONS THE COUNCIL MUST ADDRESS

A proposal will be suggested by the Council to the representatives, establishing a certain basis. However, they will be expected to revise and modify, come to a concession or request nation-specific exemptions across all remaining tracks;

- How should sector coverage, transitional milestones, and national effort sharing be divided?
- What are the appropriate EU ETS caps, ETS2 price safeguards, and rules for income usage?
- How can the Council streamline permitting rules for interconnectors, nuclear energy, and renewable grids while remaining technology-neutral?
- What state aid frameworks and carbon leakage protections are necessary to maintain European manufacturing?
- How should the Council protect vulnerable households and support coal-dependent or island regions?
- What constitutes a permanent carbon sink, and under what conditions should national derogations (exceptions) be granted?

CONCLUSION

The European Green Deal has reached its most difficult stage yet. Its goals have been set in law, but the path to 2040, and who will bear the costs, remains unclear. Will the burden fall on citizens and heavy industries? Where should investment be focused? This Council is not here to reopen laws or targets that have already been agreed upon. Its assignment is to plan out and come up with frameworks of how to practically apply them. A successful meeting would find a proper balance between common rules and flexibility, protect the 2040 target, give investors the certainty they need, and provide direct support to vulnerable groups and regions. We hope this Council will agree on practical steps to move the Green Deal forward.

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