

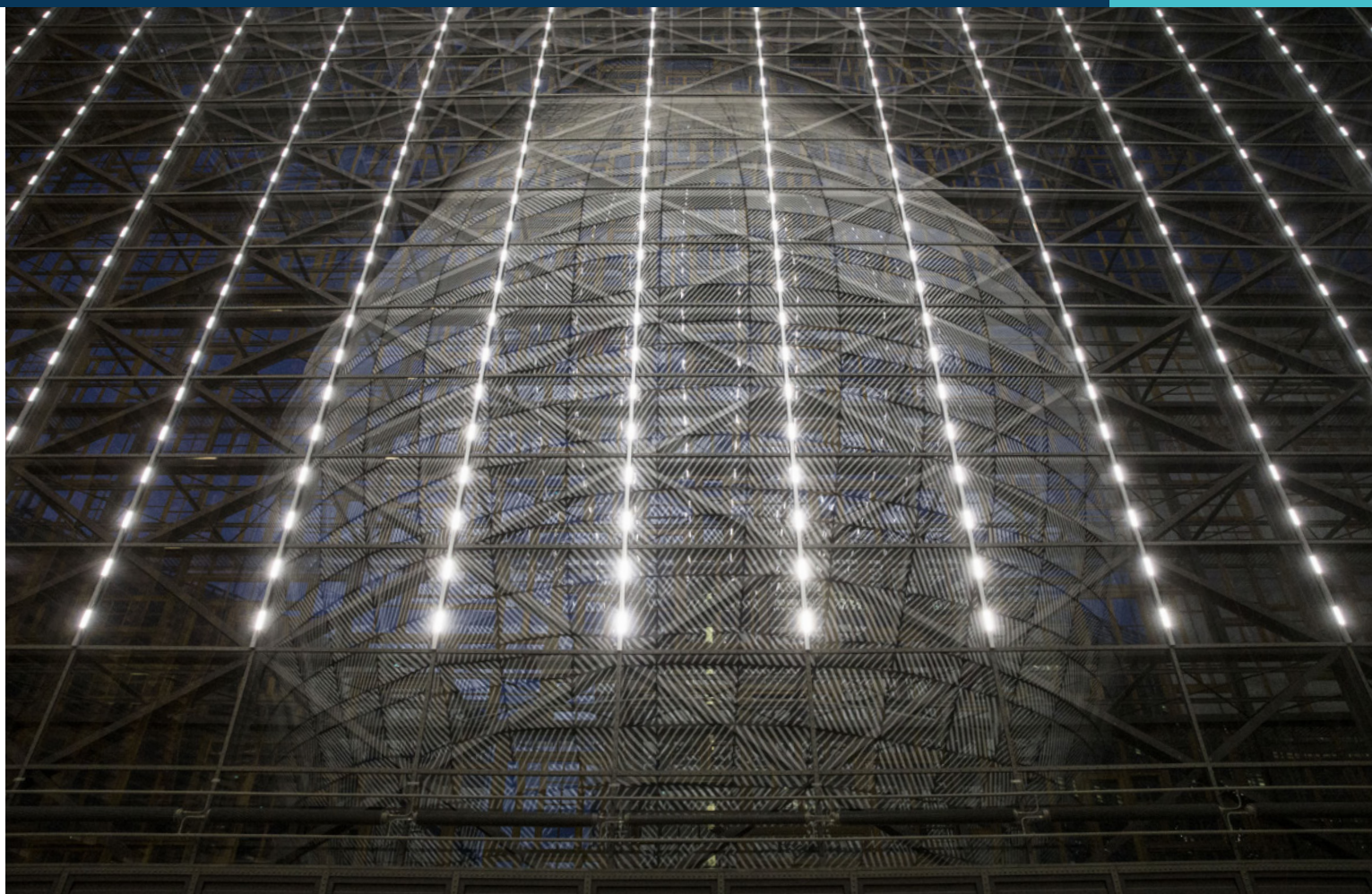


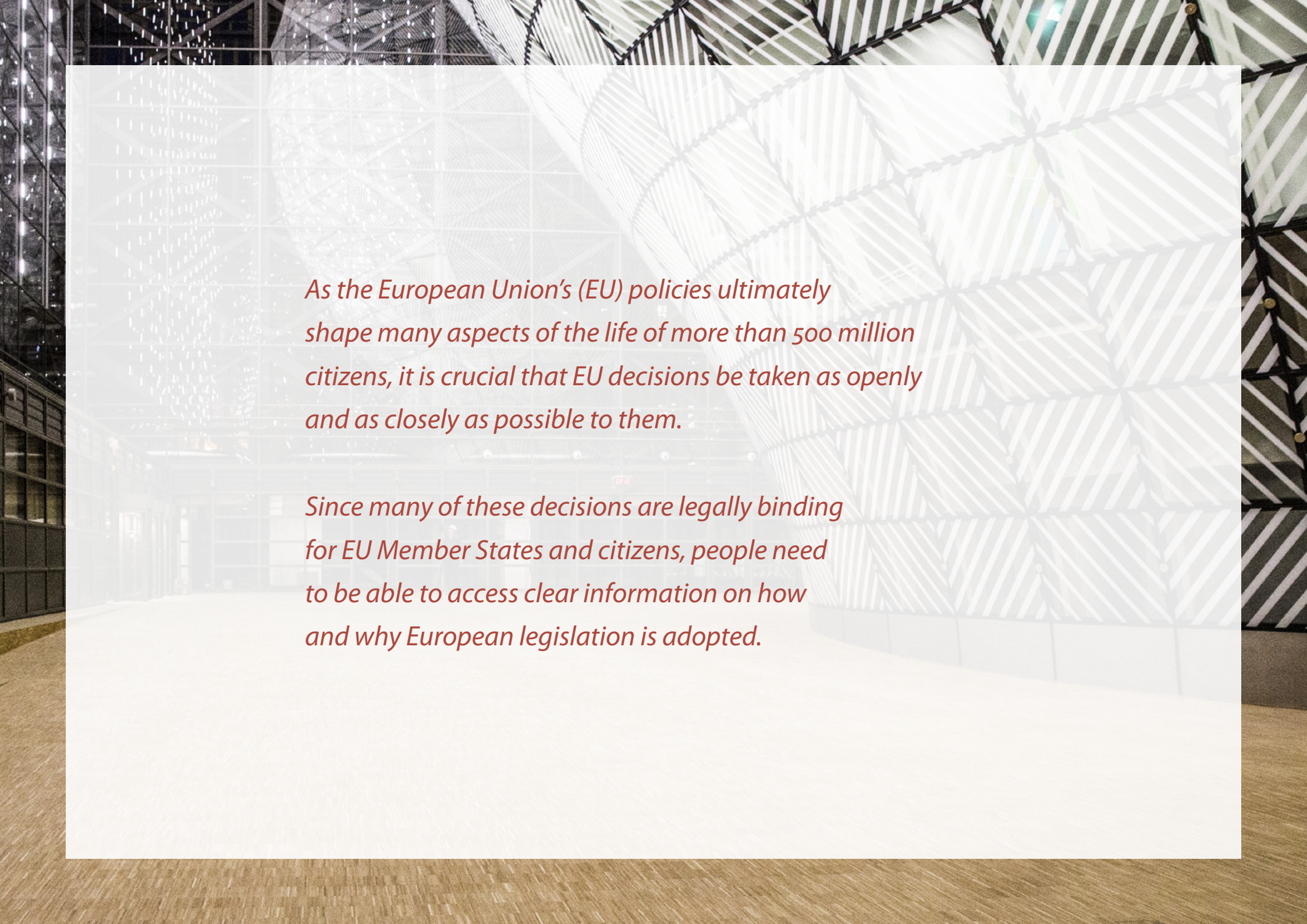
Council of the
European Union

OPENNESS AND TRANSPARENCY

at the European Council and the Council of the European Union

2019





As the European Union's (EU) policies ultimately shape many aspects of the life of more than 500 million citizens, it is crucial that EU decisions be taken as openly and as closely as possible to them.

Since many of these decisions are legally binding for EU Member States and citizens, people need to be able to access clear information on how and why European legislation is adopted.

Who are we?

The European Council is the EU institution that sets the general direction and priorities of the Union. It represents the highest level of political cooperation between the Member States. Your Prime Minister, President or Chancellor meets in Brussels with the other national leaders, along with the President of the European Council and the President of the European Commission, at least once every two to three months.



S3 room where the European Council meets.

The Council of the European Union – also known as the Council – is a EU decision-maker. It consists of the representatives of the governments of the EU Member States. Your national ministers and experts from national ministries come together in Brussels to adopt EU laws and the EU budget, together with the European Parliament.



General Affairs Council, November 2019

From left to right: Marja RISLAKKI, Permanent Representative of Finland to the EU; Tytti TUUPURAINEN, Minister for European Affairs of Finland.

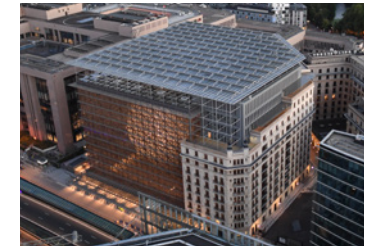
The Council Presidency rotates among the EU Member States every six months. It organises and chairs meetings of the Council, and draws up compromises to facilitate decision-making. Finland currently holds the Council Presidency until the end of December 2019. It will be followed by Croatia and Germany in 2020.



Flags of the EU Member States in the Europa building.

The General Secretariat of the Council supports the work of both the European Council and the Council, mainly by providing policy and legal advice, translation into 24 languages and logistical support for the organisation of meetings.

It is based in Brussels with around 3 000 staff members recruited from all over the EU.



Buildings of the European Council and the Council of the European Union.

Open communication

Through the [Council website](#), we communicate proactively on the way in which decisions are made throughout their various stages in the European Council and the Council of the EU.

Most of the Council website pages are available in **all EU languages**.

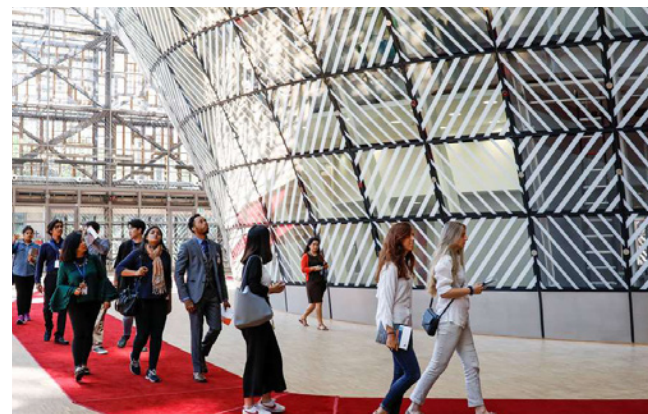
You can also sign up for our **email alert service**. This enables you to create your own personalised subscription so that the content of your choice is delivered directly to your mailbox.

We also aim to engage with persons or groups impacted by or interested in our activities. These include citizens, media, schools and academia, policy-makers from all levels of government (EU, national, regional and local), civil society and other interest groups.

- **Press releases and meeting information** about the Council of the EU, the European Council and the Eurogroup;
- **Information on the President of the European Council** and the President of the Eurogroup, their activities, statements and speeches;
- **Streaming of public discussions** on EU legislation, press statements by ministers and heads of state, and press conferences;
- A wide range of **Council publications** on EU policies and information and guides on EU procedures, as well as clarification on different aspects of EU legislation;
- The **results of Council voting** on EU legislation and a voting calculator that you can use to simulate the outcome of a vote (also available as an application for your mobile devices);
- The **latest developments and background information** on major EU initiatives under discussion in the Council;
- Access to the [Council library resources](#) and to the [Council archives](#) for documents dating back more than 30 years.



EU Open Day, May 2019.



Group of students visiting the Europa building.

- Step inside the iconic Europa building and learn about the Council's work in the [Visitors' Centre](#);
- Join the thousands of visitors who come to visit us every year, in May, during the **EU Open Day**;
- [Ask questions](#) about the work of the Council and the European Council in any of the 24 official EU languages. Our dedicated service will reply to you, in your (EU) native language, within 15 working days.

Transparent decision-making

We provide information on EU laws and how decisions are taken in the Council as openly and as quickly as possible.

The rotating Presidency of the Council of the EU also plays a key role in ensuring the openness and transparency of the work of the Council.

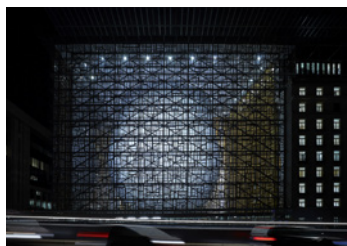


‘Transparency and effective communication are important tools that are used to bring the EU closer to citizens, strengthen democracy and counter disinformation. We need to work together to find pragmatic ways in which to make EU decision-making more open and understandable to citizens.’

— ANTTI RINNE, Prime Minister of Finland
(6.6.2019 to 9.12.2019)

Doing more to increase the EU’s openness and transparency is a long-standing goal of Finland, which currently holds the EU Presidency (until 31.12.2019). For more information, consult the [Finnish Presidency website](#).

The trio of the Romanian, Finnish and Croatian Presidencies is committed to making meetings between interest groups and their respective Permanent Representative and Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU conditional on the registration of such interest groups in the [EU Transparency Register](#). This commitment covers their term of office as Presidency of the Council and the six months preceding this term.



Official Council documents related to EU legislation are available in the Council's [public register of documents](#).

About 80 % of these documents are immediately accessible online. You [may apply for access](#) to any of the remaining 20 %. These documents are made public, subject to exceptions laid down under the EU rules on transparency.

The Council always meets in public when discussing draft legislation. You can follow [live sessions of Council debates](#) and [votes on legislative acts](#) in any of the EU languages.



Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council, public session.

You can consult or download the [conclusions of the European Council](#) meetings from our website, in any of the EU languages.

The [rules of procedure](#) of the European Council and of the Council respectively set out basic rules for their meetings, including voting rules, which sessions should be public, when documents should be published, etc.

You can follow [live or recorded briefings](#) of your political leaders and their public statements made at the Council.

You can download the [agendas of all Council meetings](#) and of the [Permanent Representatives Committee \(Coreper\)](#) – which prepares the Council's work.



Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council joint press conference of Education and Finance Ministers.



The Council has developed a policy on open data and re-use of Council documents. Data sets are available on the [EU Open Data Portal](#).

More information on the activities and work of the Council is available [here](#).



Rue de la Loi • Wetstraat 175
1048 Bruxelles • Brussel
Belgique • België
Tel. +32 (0)2 281 61 11

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www.consilium.europa.eu

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Rue de la Loi/Wetstraat 175,
1048 Bruxelles/Brussel,
Belgique/België
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